SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN BEADS: CASE STUDIES OF THE YORUBA AND BINI PEOPLES

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
ILA PELKEY POKORNOWSKI
1974

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN BEADS:
CASE STUDIES OF THE YORUBA
AND BINI PEOPLES

By

Ila Pelkey Pokornowski

The two main purposes of this study were to research material related to the general study of beads; and to study literature on the history, production and functions of bead use by two peoples of West Africa, the Yoruba and the Bini.

The method used was historical research with a case study approach. Literature was reviewed starting with the bibliography from Eicher's African Dress (Eicher, 1970) and continuing with available material from professional journals in anthropology, African history, archaeology, religion, and art, and books by travellers, ethnographers, and historians.

It was found that authoritative opinion as to the value of bead research varied; progress was occurring in methods of analysis of beads; and interest appeared to be increasing in research both scientific and popular. Difficulties were prevalent in both archaeological and

historical study of bead use. Interpretation of results of bead study required a knowledge of the culture as well as of the beads being studied.

Research findings were organized according to the theoretical framework developed by Roach and Eicher in Dress, Adornment, and the Social Order (Roach and Eicher, 1965), and analyzed, using as a base, theoretical material developed by Roach (Roach, 1974). Beads were found to serve a variety of functions for the individual as a member of his society; including allowing him to assert local aesthetic values; to communicate his social achievements or religious beliefs; and to establish his identity, either permanently or temporarily. Beads played a functional role in regulating the conduct of the society members. They served a function in the governmental system; for example, as a symbol of status in a system of titles or of legitimizing installation of a new ruler. Symbolic value of the beads was of vital importance and was not necessarily related to their monetary value.

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN BEADS: CASE STUDIES OF THE YORUBA AND BINI PEOPLES

By

Ila Pelkey Pokornowski

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Human Environment and Design

1974

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express gratitude to her advisor, Dr. Joanne B. Eicher, who not only acquainted her with the general area, but offered sustained enthusiasm and encouragement throughout; to each of the members of her committee, Dr. Robert R. Rice, Dr. Holly L. Schrank, and Dr. Alfred E. Opubor, who granted such a large measure of independence; and to her husband, Edward L. Pokornowski, without whose continuous understanding support she could not have finished this study.

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN BEADS: CASE STUDIES OF THE YORUBA AND BINI PEOPLES

Ila Pokornowski

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued Page

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued Page

I. THE PROBLEM

I. THE PROBLEM

Justification

Many authorities agree that beads are a significant aspect of culture. Cohn has said they are more than mere ornament; in fact they are an intimate part of the culture (Cohn, 1959:77). In view of the human ecologist's concern with the near environment of people, this would seem a logical area for study. In addition, this 'potentially fruitful subject' has hardly been touched (Carey, 1968:141). At the present time no grouping of information exists relating to West African beads, particularly one concerned with their social significance.

Material which is available occurs in articles or sections of articles concerning their history, descriptions, sources, social significance, trade patterns, and methods of manufacture. Isolated references and chance observations are scattered through books and periodicals devoted to art, anthropology, history, descriptions of museum exhibits, reports of early travellers to Africa, and other sources. To be of value, it must be collected and arranged in some sort of framework.

Objectives

1. To locate and collect material relative to the general study of beads.

2. To collect material related to history, production and function of beads in two western Nigerian cultures: the Yoruba and the Bini, and to arrange according to the theoretical framework developed by Roach and Eicher (Roach and Eicher, 1965:57-63).

3. To evaluate and present an analysis of this material related to social significance, utilizing as a base theoretical material developed by Mary Ellen Roach (Roach, 1974).

Procedure

1. The method used will be historical research with a case study approach.

2. Literature will be reviewed on sub-Saharan African beads, starting with the annotated bibliography from Eicher's African Dress (Eicher, 1970). Additional library research will be executed, including the reading of professional journals in anthropology, African history, archaeology, religion, and art, and books by travellers, ethnographers, and historians.

3. Secondary sources will be traced back to original sources where possible and all sources critically evaluated.

4. A case study involving aggrey beads will be presented to help illuminate the problem in historical research into beads.

5. Two case studies involving two Nigerian peoples will be presented.

6. An attempt will be made to present some generalizations concerning findings relative to social significance of beads in these groups.

II. BEAD RESEARCH

II. BEAD RESEARCH

Introduction

Pervasiveness of Beads

The use of beads is probably as old and as widespread as mankind. Certainly the pervasiveness of their use in many African cultures is acknowledged. The archaeologist Van Riet Lowe has said that "Africa was sprinkled with them daily, in hundreds of thousands" (Van Riet Lowe, 1955: 3). Leuzinger, the artist, has commented on the use of "gaily-coloured beads" that help give African jewelry its "distinctive cachet" (Leuzinger, 1960:62). The modern tourist so thoroughly associates beads with the Masai that he eagerly buys their "traditional" beadwork made of beads from Hong Kong (Anon., 1971:17).

Literary references document the geographic extent and the duration of the use of beads in trade in Africa. The writer of the famous Periplus of the Erythraean Sea mentions the trade in beads in East Africa around 60 A.D. (Van Riet Lowe, 1955:2). Ibn Battuta, traveling to Mali in Northwest Africa in 1353 (Iba Battuta, 1929:317), said a traveler in that country carried no food, gold, or silver; only salt, aromatic goods and beads for barter (Ibn Battuta,

1929:322). Andrew Battell, on a trading trip in 1600 to Benguella, in the southwest, said he bought cattle for inch-long blue-glass beads called Mopindes, each cow costing fifteen beads (Battell, 1901:17).

The beads were used for a wide variety of purposes by the Africans. For example, in the Zulu culture, beads marked stages of development of both males and females (Twala, 1968:366), and defined social position. In olden times, Zulu who wore beads reserved for royal use, without the king's consent, were put to death (Schofield, 1958:194). Among the Lovedu, who deprecated display of all kinds, elaborate beadwork was absent (Krige and Krige, 1963:76), but beads did play a part in the rites of ancestor worship and appeared to be important enough that capricious ancestors might even cause illness to a loved one in order to have their beads worn (Krige and Krige, 1963:63) and thus provide recognition to the ancestors. The Kikuyu used a sacred bead (Chuma cha mchugu) in the ceremony of oath taking. Perjury was believed to result in the death of the perjurer and serious harm to his relatives (Hobley, 1922: 241-42). Among the Thonga, as soon as a child had cut his incisors, a white bead (tjambu) was tied to one of the hairs above his forehead, to help the rest of the teeth come through normally. If this were not done, it was believed that the child would not become intelligent (Junod, 1927, Vol. I:51). The Thonga also wore large white beads in the

hair, or sometimes hung short strings of small beads from the head to indicate possession by spirits (Junod, 1927, Vol. II:480).

Certainly, this interest in beads has been shown over time in the west of Africa. Archaeologists have uncovered Nok terracotta figures dating from 900 B.C. to 200 A.D. which have representations of detailed beadwork (Fagg, 1963: 29), in addition to actual cowrie-form tin beads (Shaw, 1972:70), stone beads, and a grinding stone thought to have been used for making ornaments (Willett, 1967:116-17). Glass beads and fragments, as well as sculptures with elaborately modelled beaded ornaments have been found in Ife, indicating that these beads were made in great quantities in ancient Ife (Fagg, 1963:27) during the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries (Fagg and Willett, 1960:33). Bronze figures found at Benin even indicate the style changes which took place in bead ornaments. The heads of the middle period (mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries) have beaded decoration which leaves only eyes, nose and upper lip visible; earlier ones show only a small collar of beads; and later ones show that the beaded collar had become deeper (Fagg, 1963:33-37).

In Western Africa, this variety of uses of beads also appeared. The legendary aggrey beads, which will be used later as the subject of a case study, were considered to have a variety of functions. In the eighteenth century,

Isert wrote that these beads were worn by people of greatest distinction with the highest value being placed on the ones formerly worn by a great chief of the army or by a king (Cardinall, 1925:289). The Ewe-speaking peoples believed that the Aggrey beads of the Gold Coast (popo beads) were made by the rainbow-snake god Anyi-ewo (Ellis, 1890, 48-49), and that one bead worn around the neck was a charm against sickness (Ellis, 1890:93). These aggrey beads were considered by the Ashantee to be buried in the ground where a spiral vapour indicated their presence; the finder was assured of good fortune. The beads ground into powder, and rubbed daily on a child with a rich inheritance would hasten his growth and maturity. In addition, the beads taken with water, into the mouth of an accused thief were considered powerful enough to kill him if he were guilty (Bowdich, 1966:266-67).

Indications are that African interest in beads is being maintained. Schofield says that beads "still play an important role in the lives of Zulu people, and they purchase some 40 tons of them a year" (Schofield, 1958:195). Gardi reports that in Bida the Nupe glass makers presently make beads (Gardi, 1969:87) which are popular and easily sold by peddlars in Lagos and Kano, and are found as far off as Agades and Djanet in the middle of the Sahara (Gardi, 1969:102).

Values of Bead Research

Because of this geographical and chronological pervasiveness of the use of beads, it would appear that study of them could result in an increase of knowledge in several fields. Beads found in ancient ruins could be used to date those ruins, to shed light on the technological development of the people who made them (Van Riet Lowe, 1955:12), or to provide evidence of migrations, trading activities, and contact with other cultures. Beads could indicate the taste of those wearing them* (Eisen, 1916A:1). For example, Nok and Ife sculptures contain large numbers of beads in a similar arrangement of heavy and small beads, which indicates an artistic and cultural connection (Willett, 1971: 73). Beads could further our knowledge of social aspects of a culture. The Ingombe Ilede site in what is now Zambia, contains burials with gold-decorated skeletons contemporary with much simplier burials, indicating considerable social stratification (Davidson, 1972:97-8).

Some authorities in particular have stressed the value of study of beads. Eisen in 1916 has commented that their study "has been much neglected" (Eisen, 1916A:1). Beck, in

*Brottem and Lang comment that Zulu beadwork has been recognized as a social regulator and index of status within the society (see Schoeman, 1968a, 1968b, and Twala, 1968), but has received little attention as an artistic expression (Brottem and Lang, 1973:8).

1928, developed a classification system (Beck, 1928) which remains the standard work on the subject. Caton-Thompson was one of the earlier people to consider study of beads of great possible significance, particularly for dating purposes. She says of the material published in her 1931 Zimbabwe Culture that it was a

> pioneer attempt to get them taken seriously as a potential aid to chronology before the days of carbon were even imaginable. (Caton-Thompson, 1971; new introduction 13)

At that time she wrote that within their limitations beads were a more sensitive chronometer than glass or porcelain, as they were more likely to be lost because of their minute size and daily wear (Caton-Thompson, 1971:186-87).

In spite of the promise which many people felt bead study held, advancement has not been rapid. Fourneau, in a 1955 article quotes Mauny as writing to him, "The whole study of African beads still remains to be done" (Fourneau, 1955:17). Ryder, in his 1969 book says:

> A ... general and cooperative approach is needed to elucidate the mysteries that at present surround the bead trade of medieval Africa. (Ryder, 1969:60; footnote 3)

Difficulties in carrying out bead research exist.

Problems of Bead Research

Definition.--Caton-Thompson says, "The first step toward knowledge is classification and definition" (Caton-Thompson, 1971; new introduction 7) but simply defining

bead is difficult. Most authorities seem to avoid the problem by ignoring it: Van der Sleen and Beck appear to admit to the difficulties without actually offering a definition; only Eisen volunteers a definition.

Van der Sleen quotes two "unsatisfactory" definitions from the Encyclopedia Brittanica: "A bead is a small globule or ball, used in necklaces, etc., and made of a great variety of materials," which he considers "too narrow" and "A bead is any pierced object, that might be strung" which he considers "too wide" (Sleen, 1967:11). He does indicate that he does not generally consider "teeth, bits of bones, shells, seeds," and others as "being beads, unless they are worked into regular forms" (Sleen, 1967:55).

Beck's view appears to be broader. He includes in his classification system such things as "complete shells," "real teeth," "small bones" (Beck, 1928:28,38-39), irregular natural materials "roughly ground," and natural materials which require very little doing to them (Beck, 1928: 51,52). He confesses his inability to make a satisfactory distinction between inscribed beads and perforated seals, and between pendants and beads where often the only difference is the perforation (Beck, 1928:1,11).

Eisen, ignoring beads which are attached to another surface, suggests this definition: bead is "a unit of a necklace and perforated by one or several bores" (Eisen,

1916A:2). However he later writes of unperforated "button" beads formed by cementing together two halves with a string through the cement (Eisen, 1916B:305). Beck, somewhat doubtfully, considered these to be beads. He also included unperforated dumb-bell shapes, suspended by means of circumferential grooves (Beck, 1928:39-40).

From a common sense approach, distinguishing a bead is not that difficult. We recognize beads as small objects of various shapes, of more or less regular form, made of naturally occurring and artificial materials, with some provision (generally by perforations) made for human use, by stringing or attaching in a series.

Description.--Eisen commented that the biggest problem in studying beads is the neglect of proper description of them by investigators (Eisen, 1916A:1). According to Beck's classic work the necessary characteristics to state are: form, perforation, color, material, and decoration (Beck, 1928:1). The main problem here seems to be that of color. Van der Sleen says:

> One of the most important and at the same time almost impossible tasks is to describe the colour of a bead. There is such an enormous difference between a brilliantly shining, transparent bead and an opaque lustreless bead with the same chemical composition, that it is practically impossible to recognize them as being coloured by the same amount of the same agent. (Van der Sleen, 1967:50)

He suggests using a color guide intended for stamp collectors but adds it may not be of much help (Van der Sleen, 1967:50).

Margaret Carey who reviews his book takes him to task for his "defeatist ... approach to colour classification" (Carey, 1968:141) but many agree that it is exceedingly difficult. Beck himself says that color matching is only approximate as parts of a single bead may vary considerably in color (Beck, 1928:52). Caton-Thompson says:

> Blues are hard to define as shades have a wide range and grade imperceptibly. Moreover translucent glass displays a different 'nuance' to opaque. (Caton-Thompson, 1971:15, new intro.)

Schofield agrees as to the difficulties encountered with light blues and greens and the transparency and translucency of colors. He says of work he has done that it is probable another worker would have classified the beads differently (Schofield, 1958:208).

Eisen suggests that in addition to Beck's requirements, glass should be described as clear or streaky with air bubbles and that the size of the bore should be specified* (Eisen, 1916A:2,3).

Van der Sleen says that according to knowledge of today the method of manufacture must be included in the description (Van der Sleen, 1967:16). As a matter of fact, in 1970, Kidd and Kidd, interested in North American Indian beads, proposed a classification and nomenclature "based, in the first instance, upon the processes of manufacture;

---

*Beck does have a system of classifying the size of the bore in relation to the diameter of the bead. (Beck, 1928:51)

in the second, upon such physical characteristics as shape, size and colour (including translucency and opacity)" (Kidd and Kidd, 1970:47-48). This system, however, applies only to glass beads and it is also important to know manufacturing methods in other types. For example, the Bantu-speaking peoples, having the use of iron tools, made their ostrich egg shell beads in a slightly different way from that of the Wilton folk whom they displaced, thus enabling the distinguishing of the earlier beads from the later ones (Schofield, 1958:182).

Classification.--Van der Sleen states that to be useful, a system of classification must answer two questions: "from where" and "when." (Van der Sleen, 1967:51). These obviously important questions create many problems.

Once a bead type becomes a favorite it persists. While different localities do not produce exactly the same type of bead in the same material with the same technique, it may be impossible to date the production, because the manufacturing method remains unchanged for centuries (Arkell, 1936:304). Early traders frequently had prized beads imitated. Glass making reached a high degree of perfection early and glass beads have been imitated for at least 2000 years (Schofield, 1958:180). Arkell has reported a still active bead factory which has been making cornealian, quartz, and other stone beads in Cambay, India for a time span which Van der Sleen interprets to be at least 7000 years (Van der Sleen, 1967:18,69).

Research in a geographical area believed to have been the source of particular beads might help (Van Riet Lowe, 1955:15), but it must be remembered that a bead type may never have been used in the country of its origin (Van Riet Lowe, 1955:6).

Quiggin has commented succinctly:

> An extensive trade in beads spreading so widely, and over so many centuries makes identifications and dating peculiarly difficult and ... at present there is not sufficient evidence to prove where the ancient trade beads came from, whether from one centre or, as seems more probable, from many; nor who were the intermediaries responsible for their distribution. (Quiggin, 1963:41)

Nevertheless, techniques which show promise for dating of glass beads are being tried.

Microscopic Analysis.--DuToit has reported the use of microscopic investigation to study glass texture and method of manufacture. The texture of the glass is one indication of the relative firing temperature and amount of impurities. The furnaces in the ancient bead factories did not create sufficient heat to melt impurities such as aluminum or nickel with high melting temperatures which were contained in the raw material. The glass was brittle as a result. "In fact the heat was even insufficient to melt the glass itself completely so that a porous material resulted" (DuToit, 1965:12). Improvement in heating methods gradually took place so that the beads can be relatively dated and series of beads can be differentiated from the same site.

Chemical Analysis.--Schofield indicates that most glass ingredients are distributed world-wide and have been known as long as glass has. However, a few have had a more limited use (Schofield, 1958:181). For example, Van der Sleen indicates that even small splinters might tell whether glass is from Venice or Amsterdam according to whether potash or soda is present (Van der Sleen, 1963:261). To a limited extent the constituents of the glass will also indicate the age of a bead (Schofield, 1958:181).

However, weathering of glass may result in a change of composition, single samples may vary so completely that results are not dependable, and results may even indicate the source of glass scrap used in their manufacture (Lamb, 1965:36), rather than place of manufacture.

Spectroscopic Analysis.--Spectroscopic analysis can render valuable assistance (Schofield, 1958:181). Beads are examined under ultra violet light (Fourneau, 1955:16) using two possible techniques. One technique indicates proper proportions of elements but its low sensitivity means some elements in low concentration may not show. Another technique is more sensitive to detection, but relative proportions of the elements may be inaccurate (Newton and Renfrew, 1970:200). Fourneau says this technique is capable of defining chronology of one object in relation to another of unquestioned authenticity (Fourneau, 1955:16).

There are problems and disadvantages to this method. Ion-exchange may occur between soil and bead. The analyses suffer from insensitivity when trace elements may be present in only a few parts per million. Similarity of results may spring from precise technique of manufacturing or from ingredients (Newton and Renfrew, 1970:202,204).

> [The technique has] the disadvantage of being difficult to apply. Also, before modern methods of manufacture were introduced, glass-making was largely a matter of rule of thumb in which every glass-maker had secret recipes of his own, and every batch differed more or less from every other batch. Such circumstances can be traced by the spectroscope; it may therefore be overwhelming in the mass of detail it supplies. (Schofield, 1958:181)

While spectroscopic analysis is not proof and needs support from chemical and mineralogical analysis and further interpretation, it does indicate possibilities (Fourneau, 1955: 16,18).

Interpretation.--Even with advancements in technique of analyzing beads, experts indicate the key to the value of the material is the knowledge and ability of the investigator to interpret the findings. Caton-Thompson has said that a bead expert needs to be versed in chemistry, spectroscopic analysis, archaeology and history (Caton-Thompson, 1971:194, footnote 3). Schofield comments:

> [Beads] are subject to so many vagaries of custom and fashion that each area has its own peculiarities to unravel, and, until this has been done, generalizations ... are apt to be misleading. (Schofield, 1958: 228)

Some examples will indicate difficulties in interpretation.

Beck says the lack of stone beads in an excavation is difficult to account for, unless there was a taboo on wearing stone. On the other hand, there is also the possibility the inhabitants were unable to make them (Beck, 1931:236). Schofield, in connection with a different site, cautions that it cannot be assumed that small glass beads were unknown simply because they were not found at the lowest earlier levels. At a higher, later level large beads fabricated from smaller beads were found, which had been worn so long that the ends were smooth from usage. He concludes, therefore, that the smaller beads were in early use but so valuable that the wearers were careful not to lose them (Schofield, 1958:208).

Beads found in small amounts may indicate either that the beads were valuable enough to receive careful attention or that their use was restricted (Schofield, 1958:221) by certain age, sex, or class restrictions. For example, gold beads have been found in royal graves but rarely elsewhere. Differences in amount may be explained by fashion or tribal and individual preference. It appears that each local center had preferences and that individual taste was important, particularly concerning beads which were placed in graves (Schofield, 1958:199,215,218).

Large numbers of beads may indicate that they had become so numerous they were not valuable enough to be picked

up when the string broke. Numerous bead fragments may indicate the fragility of a certain type of bead. Occasional precious beads are likely to be preserved for generations and are of little help in dating the whole group (Schofield, 1958:199,203,214).

Problems of Historical Bead Research

Difficulties in conducting bead research are found not only in archaeological studies but in those involving search into traditions and historical readings. Information from traditional sources may vary tremendously. Schofield discovered that an important part of current identification of beads by tribal members was the way the beads were strung on a thick fiber, so carefully matched that they resembled a rod of glass. A people may use a single word for quite different kinds of beads. The Venda apply the word Mavhadwa meaning 'shaped or cut' to both opal translucent beads of wound glass and light blue hexagonal beads of cane glass (Schofield, 1958:190,91). The Pedi used Talama for discs ground from Conus shell as well as for large blue beads (Schofield, 1958:183).

Terminology has also changed over time. Schofield compared Burton's translation of Portuguese journals of 1798 with journals of Livingstone. Great changes had taken place in the bead trade of East Africa in 75 years; bead fashions had not only changed; the nomenclature was different (Schofield, 1958:187-89).

There are problems with language translations. For example, this difficulty complicates research into beads which may have come from China to the southern part of Africa.

> ... the Chinese word for bead is the same as that for pearl and most translators of old Chinese records have consistently used the word pearl where bead was probably meant--a very understandable mistake on the part of translators who are not interested in archaeological problems, but an extremely discomforting one from the point of view of the African archaeologist especially if the translation is in French, where perle adds confusion to confusion. (Van Riet Lowe, 1955:15)

Present Status of Bead Research

Interest in bead research appears to be increasing* and a state of cautious optimism seems to exist today concerning its future. This is not to downplay the continuing problems already discussed for the archaeological and historical bead researcher: definition, description, classification, analysis, and interpretation. In addition there appears to be a problem of communication among workers in the field. Much important work has been written in Russian, Polish, and Japanese which few westerners can read or understand (Van der Sleen, 1967:13). There also seems to be a minimum

---

*An increase in popular interest is indicated also. Two recent publications have appeared: Erikson's The Universal Bead, a general work on beads (Erikson, 1969); and an article on American Indian beads, "The Enduring Intrique of Glass Trade Beads," by Sorenson, in Arizona Highways (Sorenson, 1971).

of communication among the groups researching beads of different cultures or geographical areas; for example, Newton and Renfrew who are studying British faience beads (Newton and Renfrew, 1970), Karklins and Sprague who have published "Glass Trade Beads in North America: An Annotated Bibliography" (Karklins and Sprague, 1972), and Dikshit who has recently published History of Indian Glass (containing much material on glass beads) and has a book in press on Indian beads (Dikshit, 1969).

In spite of the problems, interest and actual research is continuing in the study of beads in Africa. As previously mentioned, in his writings on western Africa, Ryder has called for a "general and cooperative approach" to the study of the bead trade of medieval Africa (Ryder, 1969: 60, footnote 3).

Schoeman is working on a three-part study of traditional beadwork in one area of Zululand: survey of types, analysis, and a functional and historical survey (Schoeman, 1968a, 1968b). Brottem and Lang have published an article on Zulu beadwork which discusses stylistic development of beadwork to a limited extent (Brottem and Lang, 1973).

DuToit, in an undertaking which exemplifies both the progress and problems, is establishing archives of the beads of southern Africa and attempting to augment the collection with bead types and data from different periods and origin. The difficulty of the task is made apparent by the

list of information he asks to be sent along with a representative sample of the beads:

A. General information
   1. Description (as grave or habitation), area, and extent of site.
   2. Locality in relation to other significant sites.
   3. Geography.
   4. Climate including rainfall.
   5. Vegetation.
   6. Results of C14 tests.
   7. Data from qualitative analysis.
   8. Data from spectrographic analysis.

B. Stratification
   1. Horizon.
   2. Type of ground from preceding strata to ground level, including drainage, chemicals present.

C. Position and other circumstances under which material is found
   1. Beads found in isolation.
   2. Beads on skeleton or portion as arms, waist, etc.
   3. Estimates of quantities of each bead type.
   4. Stringing order.
   5. Associated material of metal, wood, etc., and position in relation to beads.

D. Archaeological significance of site
   1. Isolated.
   2. Part of complex.

E. Preliminary interpretations and deductions

F. General remarks
   1. Concerning site or environment.
   2. Available historical data.

G. Bibliography, if any (DuToit, 1964:98-99)

A case study on aggrey beads will be presented which exemplifies the problems encountered by the bead researcher.

Aggrey Beads

Introduction--What is an Aggrey Bead?

Literature on aggrey beads was first surveyed as a part of this more general topic of the social significance of beads and adornment in Western Africa. The result was to have been a short explanation of what an aggrey bead is. Problems appeared almost immediately. Generally, available material proved to be either popularly written, incomplete, and undocumented, and therefore unreliable (DeNegri, 1962b: 49; Erikson, 1969), or so scholarly in approach as to be incomprehensible to the non-specialist (Fage, 1962; Kalous, 1966). Evidences of slipshod scholarship on the part of some authors complicated the research. These will be discussed later.

Other difficulties were more or less unavoidable. The early explorers and traders whose accounts we are dependent upon were not professional observers. Beads were not considered important, so information is incomplete and buried among other items.

Early authors commonly 'borrowed' from other authors* without credit so that the exact source of the information

---

*According to Jeffreys (Jeffreys, 1961:103), even as late as 1898, MacDonald's The Gold Coast Past and Present (MacDonald, 1898) contains material plagiarized from Bowdich (Bowdich, 1966).

is not always known (Willis, 1967:xii). The non-Africanist has particular difficulty assessing the accuracy or originality of the information.

Language created several problems. Original references were written in many languages. Many of these sources are unavailable in English versions. Others have been translated and re-translated with resultant inaccuracies.

The wide number of languages used resulted in many variations of the word aggrey itself. Van Kreiger lists sixteen forms resulting from mutilation by "various ... nationalities to suit their various tongues" (quoted in Jeffreys, 1961:99). Most authorities would have little difficulty in agreeing that those he lists,* particularly aggrey and akori, are variations of the same word, or in accepting koli, which is in modern use (Sordinas, 1964). However, Jeffreys questions if the old agate beads he purchased near Awka, and called Aka locally, are aggreys (Jeffreys, 1954:44). Basden, in his book, did equate aggrey beads with aka beads among the Niger Ibo (Basden, 1938:198). The student must make his own decision.

---

*Cori, agyiri, aigris, agiri, akoli, akori, aggry, accori, accaray, agrie, akkerri, aigrie, aggrey, aggri, agori, agra (Kurt von Kreiger, quoted in Jeffreys, 1951: 99).

There are also two words related in sound and meaning to cori and aggrey: cowrie, the small shell used for hundreds of years as currency and adornment over a large part of Africa, and coral, the precious red beads of the rulers of Benin.

One of the variations which Von Kreiger listed, cori, Fage cites as another source of misunderstanding because of the ease with which early printers and editors in Portuguese, Dutch, and English alike could confuse it with coral. The confusion is compounded by the use of coral as a synonym for bead from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, a fact not always understood by later commentators (Fage, 1962:344).

Further research indicated the impossibility of presenting a single definitive statement on aggrey beads. In 1905, Read said "I have never yet been able to get a satisfactory answer to the enquiry, 'What is an aggry bead?'" (Read, 1905:1). A half-century later the situation seems no clearer. In 1966 Kalous wrote:

> Akori beads represent one of the unsolved enigmas of West African history.... Akori were beads of oval or cylindrical shape, highly appreciated on the Gold Coast, but also known in other parts of West Africa--this is all that is certain. (Kalous, 1966:61)

The writer's objective, therefore, was changed to an attempt to indicate various theories concerning aggrey beads, to be preceded by quotations from the 'original' sources arranged in chronological order.

Historical References by Europeans

Period Before 1600.--History provides tantalizingly brief clues, some of them seemingly contradictory, as to the identity of the early akori. The earliest European references appear to have been made by Duarte Pacheco Pereiro, "the Portuguese explorer who probably assisted at the founding of the Castle of Elmina in 1481" (Quiggin, 1963:37). Pacheco indicates that akori were blue and distinguished from other beads at this time. He wrote that trade at Elmina included:

> ... red and blue cloth ... corals, and certain red shells which they prize as we prize precious stones ... and blue beads, which they call 'coris'.... (Pacheco, 1937:120)

Later he says "certain blue beads with certain red lines or stripes which they call coris" came from Benin through trading at the Rio dos Forcados in the Niger Delta (Quiggin, 1963:37). This second reference becomes especially important because Kimble, in one of the standard English translations of Pacheco, mistranslated coris as 'blue shells with red stripes' (Pacheco, 1937:128) causing later confusion.

Coris are again mentioned in a list of merchandise from the accounts of Botelho, a Portuguese agent on the Gold Coast in 1508. His list contains "coris from the river" (Botelho, 1942:98). Blake footnotes his translation of Botelho's use of coris with Kimble's mistranslation of Pacheco, thus increasing the circulation of the error.

From the National Archives in Lisbon,* Ryder reproduces with commentary, a 1522 ship's book from a Portuguese trading vessel. Although the vessel carried "long coloured Venetian glass beads" and "cylindrical glass beads" purchased from a Castilian merchant, and "glass beads from Flanders" (Ryder, 1959:302, note 3), the pilot and clerk of the ship are instructed to purchase coris at the Forcados River. In the same collection, documents from another ship indicate that pilot "was told that he might buy yellow beads as well as coris in Benin" (Ryder, 1959:305, note 1). These references indicate coris were distinguished at this time from both yellow, locally available beads and imported European glass beads.

Mauny listed two quotations from the first half of the sixteenth century, which he translated from collections of accounts of voyages (Mauny, 1958:210). He tells us that an anonymous Portuguese pilot of 1520 says:

> at Mina people are very fond of azure blue stones that are not lapis-lazuli but another that is to be found in Manicongo and which the King of Portugal gets out of that country. They are pierced by little tubes. These corili are highly esteemed. And as they know very well that they can be imitated with coloured glass, they put them in the fire for, if they are genuine, they support this proof without being altered, the others not.**

---

*Arguivo Nacional da Torre de Tombo, Lisbon, Corpo Cronologico, II. 102. 20. (Ryder, 1959:297).

**Translated by Mauny from Walckanaer, Collection de Voyages, I (1842), pp. 385-86 (Mauny, 1958:210).

Mauny then says that Ramusio (1554) gives us more details:

> the inhabitants of Mina exchanged their gold with Europeans especially against glass beads (pater nostri) and another kind of bead made of a blue stone, not lapis-lazuli but another mineral (minera) our King gets out from the Kingdom of Manicongo where grows the said stone and these beads are made in the shape of little thin tubes and they call them corili and, for that kind, they give a lot of gold, for they are highly esteemed by all the Negroes, who put them in the fire to see if they are not false ones, for some are made in glass, very much like them, but which do not resist the test by fire.*

Blake translated selections from Ramusio and included another similar quotation attributed to an anonymous Portuguese pilot (Ramusio, 1942:153). The likeness of the quotations leads one to believe that Mauny must have mistakenly quoted one reference as two. While this does not invalidate the reference to the non-glass composition of the beads, it does cut its impact.

A traveller visiting Mina around 1555 describes the inhabitants as wearing "collars, bracelets, garlands and girdles, of certain blew stones like beads" (Eden, 1942:343). Authorities (Fage, 1962:344; Mauny, 1958:210-11) seem to consider he is speaking of aggrey beads, although he does not mention them by name.

At the end of the century the cori appears to be non-glass and blue.

---

*Translated by Mauny from Ramusio, Navigationi e Viaggi, Venetia (1554). (Mauny, 1958:210)

Period from 1600-1700.--Pieter de Marees was a Dutch trader and navigator who was on the Gold Coast in 1601 (Mauny, 1958:211). In references important for later discussion, he indicated that at this time there was a flourishing trade in Venetian beads, as well as a tradition of bead-working:

> They also use great store of Venice Beads, of all kinds of colours, but they desire some colours more than others, which they break in foure or five peeces, and then grind them upon a stone, as our children grind Cherrie stones; and then put them upon strings, made of Barke of trees, ten or twelve together, and therewith Traffique much. Those ground Corals they weare about their neckes, hands and feet. They also use round Beads, and specially great round Counters, which they hang and plait among their haire, and let them hang over their ears. (DeMarees, 1905:282)

> There we sell many Venetian Madrigetten, and Corals (for the common people traffique much therewith by grinding and selling them one unto the other). (DeMarees, 1905:302)

During this century, most references made to aggrey beads by Europeans, seem to suffer from some question as to authenticity. DeMarees* in speaking of the Forcados River, says:

> In this River there is no speciall thing found, which is of any value, but some Blew, Greene,** and Blacke stones, wherewith they grind colours, and for their fairnesse are desired of other Negroes, specially in the golden Coast of Guinea, where they are much esteemed of by them. (DeMarees, 1905:354)

---

*This section of the work is published by DeMarees under the initials D. R., and is often attributed to Dierick Ruiters. (Ryder, 1965:197)

**Ryder translates this as blue-green. (Ryder, 1966: 205)

Samuel Braun, from Basel, who served as barber-surgeon on Dutch vessels, visited the Coast of Forcados, some time between 1614 and 1624.* He adds details:**

> The inhabitants of this country have nothing in exchange for European goods but a kind of little stone, they call accarin, they pretended to make us accept as a variety of precious stone. That stone grows in the sea, along the cliffs and reefs, like coral. If looked at a distance, it seems shiny and sky-blue, but if examined close by, it is easy to see it is transparent greenish. In exchange for these stones, be they precious or not, the Africans only ask for a large quantity of these little shells used as money (cowries). Transported to Guinea (Gold Coast), these blue stones are sold at high prices and are esteemed at their gold weight.***

Fage says Ruiters**** in 1623, "writes of 'a substance of stone, like blue beads (Kralen) named Coril'" (Fage, 1962:344).

Dapper***** is quoted as saying in 1668 (Fage, 1962: 345):

---

*There is disagreement about the date. Jeffreys, quoting Von Kreiger, says 1614 (Jeffreys, 1961:101); Mauny says 1617 (Mauny, 1958:211); and Weiner (Weiner, 1922:244) and Fage (Fage, 1962:345) say 1624.

**Weiner says, "However, Braun's opinion is merely based on heresay and does not tell us anything certain of the material of these beads." (Weiner, 1922:244).

***Translated by Mauny from R. P. Bouchaud, "Notes d'histoire du Cameroun." Douala, Bull. Soc. Et. Camer., No. 19-20, 1947, p. 112 (Mauny, 1958:211).

****Ryder says Ruiters' information about the trade of the Forcados River is "wholly derivative, most of it having come indirectly from ... Pacheco Pereira" (Ryder, 1965:205).

*****Lawrence says Dapper's book is obviously "a compilation from sources of various dates and naturally of unequal value" (Lawrence, 1961:227). According to Ryder, the sources are DeMarees and more especially Samuel Bloomart, once a "merchant in the Guinea trade and later a director of the West India Company, who was able to draw upon personal experience and company records" (Ryder, 1969:87-88).

> akori ... is a sort of blue coral, obtained from the bottom of the water by diving; for it grows like other coral, in the form of trees on stony ground under water. The Dutch export these akories (which the natives of the place make into coral beads) to the Gold Coast in order to sell them to the blacks, as the women wear them as an ornament in their hair. (Dapper, in Roth, 1968:133)

Barbot,* Agent-General of the French West Indian Company, who made his last trip to Africa in 1682, claims that "blue stones called Agry or Accory, very valuable at the Gold Coast" (Barbot, 1732:348) were among the most profitable items for trading in Dohomey. He adds the local belief that:

> ... blue coral grows in branchy bushes, like the red coral, at the bottom of the river and lakes in Benin; which the natives have a peculiar art to grind or work into beads like olives, and is a very profitable merchandize at the Gold Coast. (Barbot, 1732:361)

Bosman, a Dutch official on the Coast of Guinea from 1688 to 1702 (Willis, 1967:vii) described the inhabitants thus:

> ... others turn their Hair into very small Curls ... between which they wear Gold Fetiche's, or a sort of Coral here called Conte de Terra, which is sometimes of a quadruple value to Gold, as also a sort of blew Coral, which we call Agrie, and the Negroes Accorri, which being moderately large, is so much valued, that 'tis generally weighed against Gold. (Bosman, 1967: 119)

---

*Willis says, "Barbot appears to have relied heavily upon the work of Dapper...." (Willis, 1967:xiii)

Period from 1700-1800.--At about the beginning of this time period references to the bead appear to change. Both Mauny (Mauny, 1958:211) and Fage (Fage, 1962:347) agree that somewhere around 1700-1750, indications are that the traffic in akori stopped. Now the word seems to allude to beads of other colors and materials. References are made to finding the bead in the ground.

Two eighteenth-century German-Danish sources are referred to by authors. Kalous discusses material published in 1788 by P. E. Isert* a Danish naturalist (Curtin, 1964:16) which

> ... indicates that the inhabitants of Whydah and Popo dug out two kinds of stone resembling respectively lapis-lazuli and hyacinth. One kind was deep-blue with an admixture of small metallic grains, maybe gold or pyrites. The stones were ground to cylinders of the width of a little finger, which were put into the ears. For want of these, the natives used true red coral. The other kind, similar to hyacinth, was reportedly found in the ground, bored in the shape of short beads.
>
> Isert remarks it might be interesting to verify this assertion, because, if it was true, these beads would have to be considered as a special kind of stone with incrustation(!), for he did not know any tool of the negroes fit for boring such small, long and hard stones. Both kinds were highly valued, being exchanged for an equal weight of gold. (Kalous,** 1966:62)

---

*Cardinall indicates he wrote in 1701 (Cardinall, 1925:289), but Bowdich's date of 1786 is closer to Kalous' date (Bowdich, 1824:165).

**Kalous discusses this reference as though the beads were called akori, although he does not indicate it in the paragraph directly attributed to Isert. In P. E. Isert, Reise nach Guinea (Copenhagen, 1788), p. 177, which to my knowledge is not available in English translation.

Isert is quoted directly by Cardinall:

> Those of the highest distinction wear on their arms and necks strings of beads which they call aigri (a kind of coral) made in mosaic. They attach to them the highest value; a necklace of these corals, of the thickness of a finger and of the length of an inch, will cost as much as the value of seven negroes, not because of the material, for similar ones will not exceed an ounce of gold, but because those to which they put so high a price will have been worn by some great chief of their army or even a king. (Isert, quoted in Cardinall, 1925:289)

Kalous also says Romer in 1769 described akori as:

> ... porcelain (!) products, but heavier than genuine china. They were oblong beads,... bored, as thick as a man's little finger and as long as a phalanx, and variegated--in contrast to china, which is white. The colours were added only subsequently. Romer found the akori beads to bear as many as four or five colours--red, green, Saxon blue, yellow and white; these were flame-like ... or striped. Such fancy akori were considered most precious, the others being of a single colour, of which the yellow ones were valued least of all. Romer emphasizes that as late as his time, namely about the mid-eighteenth century, these akori were found in the ground, and that the natives believed that noble people had been buried in such places. Sixty or more pieces of akori beads were usually found lying in a row or a circle, as the dead person had them around his neck. However, bones were not found, as they had probably decayed. (Kalous, 1966:61-62)*

Period after 1800.--Bowdich who was on the Gold Coast in 1817 (Jeffreys, 1961:97) says:

> The natives invariably declare that the aggry beads are found in the Dankara, Akim, Warsaw, Ahanta, and Fantee countries, the greater number in the former, being the richer in gold; they say they are directed

---

*See L. F. Romer, Nachrichten von der Kuste Guinea (Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1769), pp. 16-17, which to my knowledge is not available in English translation.

> to dig for them by a spiral vapour issuing from the ground, and they rarely lay near the surface; the finder is said to be sure of a series of good fortune. (Bowdich, 1966:267)

He quotes Dr. Leyden:

> The aigris is a stone of a greenish blue colour, supposed to be a species of jasper, small perforated pieces of which valued at their weight in gold, are used for money. (Leyden, quoted in Bowdich, 1966: 267)

Bowdich disagrees and adds that he has not heard of their being used as money and that instead of the aggrey, Dr. Leyden

> ... rather describes the popo bead; though that is semi-transparent, (of a bright blue), resembling carnealian, (which is frequently found in these countries) and said to be obtained in the same manner as the aggry bead. (Bowdich, 1966:267)

Bowdich adds his own descriptions of aggrey beads:

> The plain aggry beads are blue, yellow, green, or a dull red, the variegated consist of every colour and shade. The Fantees prefer the plain yellow bead, the Amanaheans the blue and yellow, for which they will give double the weight in gold; those of inferior beauty frequently fetch a large price, from having been worn by some royal or eminent character.
>
> The variegated strata of the aggry beads are so firmly united, and so imperceptibly blended, that the perfection seems superior to art: some resemble mosaic work, the surfaces of others are covered with flowers and regular patterns, so very minute, and the shades so delicately softened one into the other, and into the ground of the bead, that nothing but the finest touch of the pencil could equal them. The agatized parts disclose flowers and patterns, deep in the body of the bead, and thin shafts, of opaque colours, running from the centre to the surface. The natives pretend that imitations are made in the country, which they call boiled beads, alleging that they are broken aggry beads ground into powder, and boiled together, and that they know them because they are heavier; but

> this I find to be mere conjecture among themselves, unsupported by anything like observation or discovery. The natives believe that by burying the aggry beads in sand they not only grow but breed. (Bowdich, 1966: 267-68)

Selected references from later authors indicate great variety in descriptions and conjectured sources of aggry beads. No author of a journal article cites it, but there is one later reference to beads of blue stone from the Benin area. However, they are not called aggreys. Clapperton, when visiting the king of "Eyeo," the capital of "Youriba," in 1826, refers to the "three strings of large blue cut-glass beads" the king is wearing (Clapperton, 1966: 37). Later he says the king

> promised to give me some of the blue stone of which his beads are made. He says it comes from a country between this and Benin. They are not glass, as I at first supposed. (Clapperton, 1966:46)

Allen and Thomson write about an 1841 expedition to the Niger:

> We have referred to the Aggri bead as one species of the country money and a most valued ornament; it is a cylindrical, light coloured bead, exactly the same as some ... taken from the Egyptian sarcophagi. (Allen and Thomson, 1848:121)

Zimmerman, in his 1858 dictionary of the Akra or Ga language defines <u>koli</u> as "a kind of precious beads or coloured stones, worn as ornament by the natives of this coast" (Zimmerman, 1858:157).

Ellis says in his book describing the Ewe people of the west coast of Africa in 1890:

> Popo beads, the aggry-beads of the Gold Coast [are] curious mosaics whose origin is undetermined, and which are much valued by the Negroes. (Ellis, 1890: 49)

Bindloss, writing in 1898 of the Niger country, says he received once as

> a very special favour, a few Aggri beads. These are curious ornaments made out of a substance somewhat resembling jasper, dug from the earth in the Gold Coast, and worth more than thrice their weight in gold. No one yet understands where the 'Aggri' came from.... (Bindloss, 1968:230)

In 1906 Johnston commented about Liberian aggrey beads:

> The Agri beads are undoubtedly of Mediterranean origin. In appearance they are most diverse. Some are of the chevron pattern, in layers of blue, white, red glass; others are round, four-sided, or cylindrical beads of blue, red or amber glass, or are of a mixture of glass and porcelain (or clay), with spots or dashes of different colours. (Johnston, 1906:22)

He adds that Agri beads in the Putu country behind the Kru coast of Liberia "are of dull blue glass, long, and four-sided" (Johnston, 1906:22, footnote).

Dicke in 1937, describes an "Aggri bead" as "an elongated bead, blue with blue or green, slightly raised spots" (Dicke, 1937:408).

Problems of Scholarship

One popularly written book, The Universal Bead, which seemed to show promise by its title, was disappointing in its content. Documentation is almost totally lacking and the shortage of research was evident. The author includes

Periplus* in her list of travellers along with Marco Polo and Barbosa (Erikson, 1969:24). Although the author comments that aggreys cannot be described "with any accuracy" she says "beads of a similar nature" were excavated at Zimbabwe. She states: "The origin of the aggri bead is a mystery" (Erikson, 1969:51), but adds:

> It is quite inconceivable that these beads were made in western Africa. The refinement of skill in glass-making required to produce them suggests conclusively that they were imported from a country which had achieved a high degree of virtuosity in glass manufacture. (Erikson, 1969:52)

Unexpectedly, slipshod scholarship became obvious on the part of authors of articles in professional journals. The seriousness of these oversights or errors varied. Some were only nuisances. Fage refers the reader to page 129 in Kimble's translation of Pacheco, for a reference which is actually on page 128 (Fage, 1962:344, note 6). Jeffreys cites page 118 of Allen and Thomson for a reference on page 121 (Jeffreys, 1961:104); refers the reader to Vol. II of Talbot when he really means Vol. III (Jeffreys, 1961:98); and reverses the page numbers of two other references in the same volume (Jeffreys, 1961:101-02). Perhaps these are only typographical errors but both these articles contain additional mistakes.

---

*She evidently referred to the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, already mentioned in the introduction, a mariner's handbook to the northerly regions of the Indian Ocean, written by an unknown Greek Egyptian sea farer, around 60 A.D. (Davidson, 1967:20).

Fage refers to "what Bosman calls 'coctile' beads," without giving the page reference (Fage, 1962:344). The index of Bosman's book contains no entry for 'coctile' or 'beads.' The student is forced to make a page by page search for the reference (Bosman, 1967:437), actually in the section written by Nyendael, not Bosman. Fage does not document the source of his line of thought in this puzzling paragraph about 'ground beads,' leaving the student to guess at its origin and development. This will be elaborated upon later.

Other errors were serious enough to be actually misleading. Jeffreys presented a theory (to be discussed) partially based upon the previously mentioned mistranslation of bead in Kimble's version of Pacheco (Pacheco, 1947: 128). Fage's note of the mistake (Fage, 1962:344) did not appear until after the publication of Jeffreys' article, but it is hard to understand how Jeffreys overlooked Quiggin's reference to the mistranslation. It appeared on the page directly preceding the one from which Jeffreys quoted in his article (Quiggin, 1963:37).

Carelessness was evident in the attribution of quotations. Jeffreys includes a section from Bowdich's book which contains quotations from Leyden and Isert, duly noted (Jeffreys, 1961:102-03). However, he credits the next paragraph written by Bowdich (Bowdich, 1966:268) to Isert also. Perhaps the following paragraph, also from Jeffreys,

will illustrate the pitfalls for a student when an author is not scrupulously careful about quotations.

> Thus Talbot (1926, III, 932) writes: "Akori was sold to the Dutch at the Rio del Rey river, Barbot (1732) says that this was to be found 'nowhere but at Rio del Rey, and thence along the Cameroons river'.... Much akori was found at Caboe probably the Ika Ibo town of Abaw on the Niger, 'which the Dutch buy there and take to the Gold Coast.'" (Jeffreys, 1961:102)

Only the first half of the quotation is from page 932 of Talbot; the latter half is from page 922 in the same volume (Talbot, 1926:922,932). Barbot's book was published in 1732, but the material was probably written between 1683 and 1685 (Willis, 1967:xii). Only the first section quoted by Talbot is from Barbot, althouth it would be easy to assume he was responsible for all parts enclosed in quotation marks after his name is used.*

One quotation from Jeffreys (Jeffreys, 1961:101) was exceptionally misleading. He usually mentions the author and/or year of the quotation when it differs from the editor and year of publication. However, he identifies one quotation as deriving from Churchill (1732,V,464). The material is actually that which is attributed to Dierick Ruiters in

---

*Talbot does not identify the second quoted section either. Ryder says Talbot unfortunately does not cite many of his sources (Ryder, 1969:243, note 2). Northrup refers to Talbot's identification of Gaboe with Abaw and says that Dapper refers to Gaboe in his Descriptionde l'Afrique (Amsterdam, 1686), 312 (Northrup, 1972:221, note). Perhaps this indicates the latter part of the quotation is from Dapper.

the De Marees work, published in 1602 (Ryder, 1966:197). In addition, the stated source does not contain the material Jeffreys quotes, but instead is a section from Barbot. Unless the student accidentally discovers the work properly cited elsewhere, he does not know the actual author, nor realize there is a discrepancy of 130 years in the dates.

Such carelessness is exceptionally unfortunate in a field where accounts of explorations and travels appear in many collections and in many translations. It is not only the student who can be caught in this trap. A respected authority such as Mauny has included two translations of the same source as two separate references in his article, as previously mentioned. Lawrence has offered "a plea for subjecting the sources for African history to that kind of critical appraisal which has customarily been applied to Greek and Roman authors" (Lawrence, 1961:227). There is room for improvement in scholarship on a simpler level also. With the increasing interest in African history on the part of people from outside the discipline, it is especially important that the documenting of sources, dates, and ideas be meticulous.

Reorganization of Theories

Each author covers a different combination of the extremely interrelated and overlapping aspects of the subject. To facilitate discussion, this arbitrary division of the

authors' ideas is proposed: (1) the term aggrey--its changing meaning and its source; (2) the imitations; and (3) the beads--their composition and source.

(1) The term aggrey--its changing meaning and its source.--From the references it is hard to escape the conclusion that the "content of this notion [of aggrey beads] which perhaps was once uniform must have undergone a change" (Kalous, 1966:65). The term seems to have become almost meaningless by 1883 when Price presented a paper describing aggrey beads to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain:

> They appear to be of various earths.... Such as are blue like the sea, under certain conditions of tropical light, and with a white spotted pattern that resembles jelly-fish in the sea swimming at various depths, are much prized for their rarity and beauty; the prevalent colours are yellow, of a brimstone tint, chocolate, dark purple, white, green, and red, all separate in the pattern . . . some are square, with angles chamfered or slightly rounded, a few round or shaped like an orange, and occasionally met with in segments of a circle.... (Price, 1883:64-65)

Cardinall, upset at the confusion and the "exaggerated stories as to the origin and age of these beads," attempted to clear up the situation. He explained that the name aggrey was given to three different types of beads on the Gold Coast: (1) the early single-colored ones, chiefly blue of stone or coral; (2) the mosaic ones; and (3) the striped ones, including the chevron patterned ones, the last two

probably glass from Venice.* He particularly decried the tradition springing up that these beads were of Phoenician origin and even manufacture and declared that the aggreys are not of so great antiquity (Cardinall, 1925:287,290-92).

That this theory of Phoenician origin of the beads was popular is indicated. In 1925, when Cardinall wrote, James Aggrey, the Methodist-trained Fanti who became a college vice-principal (Del-Anang, 1964:20), claimed his family name as the source of the word.** He wrote to protest a journalistic reference to him as "semi-royal":

> No real Aggrey comes from a semi-royal line. The Aggreys as early as 1076, and before, gave their name to the Carthaginian, sometimes called Phoenician, beads now worth their weight in gold. (Roome, n.d., 19-20)

Most authorities relate their theories of origin of the word to its changing meaning. However, two men simply suggest place names as possible sources. Temple reports he was told they were named from a market now ruined, called Agra, near Cape Coast Castle on the West Coast (Temple, 1899: 120). Fage suggests "as an attractive fancy" that some beads have been imported from Ilorin via Akure which might account for the name (Fage, 1962:346).

---

*Quiggin interprets Cardinall as believing all three types came from Venice (Quiggin, 1963:39), but he definitely speaks of "the original ones of blue coral" (Cardinall, 1925:292).

**This source was researched after a discussion with Esther Warner Dendel, author, craftswoman, and former resident of Liberia.

Weiner feels that akori is "a generic name for 'bead,' made of a large variety of material" and identical with the 'cowrie' words which in some places have assumed the meaning of 'money'(Weiner, 1922:240). He suggests that the original beads were of stone, possibly from Cambay, and that the quality of these beads deteriorated at the same time European beads were becoming popular, so at first coral and then the glass ones introduced by the Portuguese became more important (Weiner, 1922:245-47).

Jeffreys also discussed the term aggrey in its relationship to currency. He says the word aggrey originated from the Indian Ocean cowry shell, called kauri or kaudi in India, which was an early currency in Africa, fostered, if not introduced, by the Arabs, and circulated under their Indian names. The Arabs also traded in blue beads which ousted the shells as currency in some places, but retained the name. "Later, other types of beads usurped the place of the blue bead" but kept the local name. Hence, akori or aggrey is applied to any bead used as currency (Jeffreys, 1961:97).

Jeffreys attempts to document with examples. He indicates that in areas in South Africa, when iron displaced cowrie shells as currency, iron was called by the name formerly used in that area for cowries, nzimbi. He states "an identical process ... occurred when beads displaced cowry shells" and cites as evidence the two references to

coris from the Kimble translation of Pacheco, including the mistranslation already referred to. He says this indicates "either the transition of shell into blue bead or a confusion of shell and blue bead, both being called by the early name cori, for the cowry shell" (Jeffreys, 1961:107). It is unfortunate that he capped a work of 16 pages which utilized 57 references with this reference to a mistranslated word.

Quiggin, an authority on early money, suggests:

> Philological guesses are seldom of any value, but the confusion between coral and aggries, together with the early spellings of coris and accory certainly suggest that the word 'aggry' is no more than 'a coral,' a name used for beads in general.... (Quiggin, 1963:38)

She concluded that the aggreys were substitutes for the red coral worn in Benin only by the King's sanction, and that "how, when and where blue beads were substituted" was not clear, but probably due simply to a change in preference. She felt that "'blue coral' may have been made from the long Venetian pipes which the natives cut up and ground down," and that much of the confusion surrounding aggreys as well as beads in general, is a result of the skillful imitation of those beads which proved to be popular in barter (Quiggin, 1963:36,38).

(2) Imitations.--Bovill agrees that the great division of opinion over what an aggrey bead really is, is partly due "to its having been much copied all through the centuries by enterprising Venetian glass-makers" (Bovill, 1970:26).

Because of the great value of these beads, imitations were rife. In 1899, Temple discussed the collection of aggrey and other beads which passed through the hands of the Levin firm in the 19th century. Included in it are beads which the firm "attempted to export as general, but not accurate, copies of old Aggry beads for use as money; quite unsuccessfully." In this Levin collection are two samples of aggreys cut by suspicious Africans to test their quality (Temple, 1899:119-20).

Local imitations were also made. In 1937 Wild reported a method of bead making on the Gold Coast utilizing powdered glass from bottles and European glass beads. The powder was poured in clay molds, baked, and then polished. "The resultant bead has a streaky appearance, which simulates the highly prized 'aggrey' beads ... and therefore a keen demand soon resulted" (Wild, 1937:96-97). Quiggin says these beads are used in trade in Nigeria and the Gold Coast and because they are intended to represent aggreys the makers can charge six or seven times more than for European trade beads. She relates these to the 'boiled bead' industry (Quiggin, 1963:60) reported in 1817 by Bowdich (Bowdich, 1966:268) which was quoted on pages 35 and 36.

In somewhat the same connection, Sordinas reported a modern 'cooked' bead in Ghana. The raw materials are cylindrical European glass beads, which the market women cook in a pot with charcoal and layers of fresh and dried

skins of palm nuts. The beads are then washed and ground carefully to proper shape. It is significant that the yellow variety is much less popular and only the blue ones are called 'koli.' Sordinas says, "the cooking transformed the 'sharp' blue of the imported beads into an aesthetically satisfying opaque blue--similar to the highly appreciated blue of the 'true' Koli" (Sordinas, 1964:75-76).

(3) The beads--their composition and source.--Other authors are primarily concerned with the composition and source of the beads. Mauny is mainly interested in the material of the early akori. He says too many people have written of these blue beads to think they did not exist. The "converging information" of so many, "all speaking of blue beads that did not melt with fire,"* led him to think they are not glass, but on the other hand geologists have not come across such blue stones which are greenish by transparence (Mauny, 1958:211-12). He withdrew his earlier suggestion that these beads were made of a rare coral-like marine growth Allapara subviolacea which grows on the Cameroon shores and on the adjoining islands of Fernando Po and Sao Thome; samples had proved to be reddish-blue rather than greenish-blue. However, he speculates on the possibility of a yet undiscovered marine growth or one already extinct. In his 1958 article he asked for help in solving

---

*It must be remembered, as previously stated there is only one reference to this quality of the beads, not the two which Mauny quoted.

"one of the most irritating problems that West African archaeologists and historians have to deal with" (Mauny, 1958:212-13).

In 1962, inspired by Mauny's article, Fage researched historical and contemporary evidence concerning aggrey beads. He concluded that when the Portuguese arrived in Lower Guinea in the late 1400s, there was already an established trade between the Benin region and the Gold Coast, which included akori beads. The early Portuguese became involved as middleman (Fage, 1962:344).

He summarized the characteristics of the beads around 1700:

> It was a stone; recovered from the water (the Niger delta or the Cameroons shores); blue ... in colour but greenish in translucence; impervious to fire; which was ground and polished on wetted stones to an oval or cylindrical shape; which was especially valued on the Gold Coast; and which European manufacturers had attempted with indifferent success to counterfeit in blue glass. (Fage, 1962:345)

He concluded that by the late 1700s to 1800, aggrey had become the generic term for a precious bead of stone of any color, that the blue variety was associated with Popo (Dahomey) as much or more than with the Gold Coast and that it was recovered from the ground rather than from water (Fage, 1962:345).

Fage, in this otherwise excellent article, included a totally confusing paragraph. After commenting that by 1602 many glass beads were being imported he says:

> It may also be noted that West Africans were not content with these imports in their original form (for the most part cylindrical?), because they would break the glass beads into shorter pieces and grind the rough edges on stones ... thus perhaps producing 'ground-beads.' Unfortunately this intriguing term has other possible meanings, notably 'beads found in the ground' and 'beads made of baked earth (i.e., clay)' (what Bosman calls 'coctile' beads). (Fage, 1962:344)

He footnotes the paragraph:

> In another passage (119), Bosman compares aggrey beads with another kind, 'a sort of Coral called Conte de Terra'. This, of course, is Portuguese for 'beads of earth'.* (Fage, 1962:344, note 8)

Fage cites no references although he probably refers to DeMarees who mentions 'ground Corals'** (DeMarees, 1905: 282). Fage does not adequately explain his thought: it is 'intriguing' that one word can have such a variety of meanings associated with beads, in English. However DeMarees wrote in Dutch, a language which has no word which means the past tense of grind as well as earth.*** Fage does not indicate who was to confuse these three types of beads; when; or in what language.

---

*It is interesting that Fage has written the notes for the 1967 edition of Bosman. He notes: "Conte de Terra--i.e., beads: presumably valuable, aggrey beads" (Bosman, 1967:532) even though Bosman has specified they are different: "Conte di Terra and Agrie, two sorts of Coral, which I have already frequently mentioned" (Bosman, 1967:374). Barbot also speaks of a necklace of Contas da Terra and Agri (Barbot, 1732:264).

**Barbot refers to natives who 'grind' beads (Barbot, 1732:361).

***Personal communication from Peter Maas, a native of the Netherlands.

Discussing the contemporary evidence Fage says attempts to find a bead meeting historical specifications have been inconclusive. In addition to the problem of color of Mauny's suggested Allopara subviolacea, it is opaque and too fragile to make good beads. True coral could not grow near the Niger delta because of the salinity and temperature of the water, nor would coral beads seem likely "to have been recovered from West African graves (and so have become 'ground beads'), since the acid content of West African soils is generally too high to allow for their preservation for any length of time" (Fage, 1962:345).

Fage reports no bead in modern Ghana corresponding to the historical specifications although there are valuable antique beads called koli (Ga), bota (Fante), or abuta (Ewe). A blue bota extremely rare and valuable, was reported, but not seen. Western Nigeria has the Ife segi beads, which are tubular, blue, and translucent, of local manufacture and old, but undoubtedly glass. In modern Benin, the most popular beads are red--coral or stone (Fage, 1962:345-46).

Fage has some interesting ideas about the possible composition of the early akori. He recalls that in 1668, Dapper mentioned that jasper was exported along with akori and that in 1819, Bowdich said that carnelian was common in Lower Guinea. Both of these semi-precious stones belong to a large family of stones which includes agate and chalcedony,

whose color varies widely. It has long been known how to enhance these colors by staining. "What would seem to be agate is still worked into beads along the Upper Benue," and traded to modern Ghana by Hausa who refer to the beads in English as 'corals.' The "nomenclature of these semi-precious stones ... does not seem to have been static." There was a leek-green chalcedony which resembles blue-green glass beads seen in today's Ghana. "It might not seem unreasonable to suppose that it may have been a blue-green stone of this kind which was the original akori exported from Benin to the Gold Coast" (Fage, 1962:346-47).

Fage continues:

> Little is said of such a trade after the end of the seventeenth century. The apparent disappearance of the trade (and of the stones) might be explained either by the swamping of the market by glass imitations, or by a hypothesis such as that the stone was not native to Southern Nigeria, but was originally imported from the north, and that later examples traded to the Gold Coast were recovered from graves until the supply was exhausted. A hypothesis of a northern origin for akori would open up vast vistas for further inquiry. There is not only the whole question of the trans-Saharan traffic in beads, but there is also the question of the winning of precious or semi-precious stones from the desert itself. The Arabic references alone to these matters would seem to be very extensive, and there is also the intriguing problem of the carbuncles of Carthaginian times. (Fage, 1962:347).

Kalous in 1966 attempts to add to Fage's contribution. He believes that both the 'water theory' and the 'ground theory' are supported enough that both must be admitted. While he concludes that the "content of the notion" changed and the one constant factor was the oval or cylindrical

shape, he seems to be looking for a constant composition. Because he believes that organic coral would be destroyed in the ground, he searches for an inorganic substance (Kalous, 1966:61). Kalous refers to the ships' records discussed by Ryder (Kalous, 1966:62,63). Ryder has suggested that the yellow beads and coris might have been agate from old Ile Ife (Ryder, 1959:305). Kalous also finds Ife a reasonable source of 'inorganic' beads (Kalous, 1966:63), and refers to a similar conclusion by Eve DeNegri (DeNegri, 1964:210). However, Kalous seems to think that the beads were actually glass ones from the glass making industry of old Ife (Kalous, 1966:66) long forgotten, but recently rediscovered,* which manufactured glass beads in several beautiful colors (Fagg, 1963:27), between the late 14th century and the 18th century (Fagg & Willett, 1960:33). There is a similarity between some beads found in Ife, "blue-green glass with a red centre" (Willett, 1970:314), and the beads described by Pacheco. The similarity between the late akori of Romer (porcelain and variegated with as many as four or five colors) and the description of the glass-making crucible, "pottery crucibles were made from a smooth white paste ... thickly encrusted inside, and more

---

*In fact, "The discovery of droplets of glass in the [Olokun] Grove led to the establishment of a new craft in Ife, that of drilling such pieces of glass to make beads" (Fagg & Willett, 1960:29).

thickly outside with glass in a great variety of colours" (Fagg and Willett, 1960:29) is commented upon by Kalous (Kalous, 1966:66). The glass-making industry would have been at its height during the time the ships' pilots were buying coris and yellow beads.

Kalous indicates that the akori recovered from water may have been jewels from corpses buried there. "Improbable as this assumption is, it is perhaps the only one that could define akori as jewels produced as inorganic material" without denying the accounts of akori found in water. The jewels may have been offerings to the sea-god Olokun* (Kalous, 1966:65-66), who is believed by the Yoruba and Bini to live in an underwater palace (Parrinder, 1967:83).

Other authorities besides Fage has considered the possibility of the northern origin of aggrey beads. Kalous mentions the conclusions of Probenius:

> ... who considered the Sahara proper as the original source of these (of course widely diversified) bored beads; they were sent as trade-goods to Carthage (chalcedony) and finally to Rome and Greece, as well as to other major commercial centres of the Mediterranean.** (Kalous, 1966:64)

---

*Interesting in this connection is Harding's comment that Burton wondered what happened to the tons of beads brought into the interior of Africa. He saw so few worn. She ways Stanley was told that white beads were thrown by natives and Arabs into Lake Tanganyika to appease the god of the lake and insure safe passage to the river. She suggests that various bodies of water must surely contain beads made as appeasement offerings over the years (Harding, 1962:105-06).

**Kalous cites Frobenius, Und Afrika sprach (Berlin, 1912), 338-39 (Kalous, 1966:64). According to the English

Bovill refers to Gautier's attempt to identify the mysterious aggrey with the equally mysterious carbuncle which the Carthaginians obtained from the Garamantes who lived in the Fezzan (Bovill, 1970:26). Little is known about the trade but "It is significant ... that after the fall of Carthage the Romans found it worth their while to carry it on" (Bovill, 1970:20). Bovill says:

> [The aggrey] appears ... often to have been made from chalcedony, a name derived from the Greek word for Carthage. In classical times ... the carbuncle was known as the Carthaginian stone. From this Gautier seemingly argues: aggrey beads were chalcedony, chalcedony was the Carthaginian stone, the Carthaginian stone was the carbuncle, therefore the ... carbuncle ... and the aggrey bead are the same thing. (Bovill, 1970:26-27)

Bovill points out the weakness of the argument but does not completely discredit it. He does call Gautier's argument that the Carthaginians made and distributed the beads "over-bold," and suggests the Garamantes themselves might have made the beads or sold the chalcedony to others besides the Carthaginians. He points out that while chalcedony has not been recorded in the Fezzan, it has been found in Algeria and in the Libyan Desert, so that it is probable that the Garamantes could obtain it in their own territory. Moreover, Pliny did mention a Mount Gyri in their own country, 'where precious stones were produced' (Bovill, 1970:27).

---

version, The Voice of Africa, Frobenius is speaking generally of West African stone beads (Frobenius, 1913:335). Kalous also says that Frobenius, in a less known work, Atlas Africanus, "explicitly stated that so called akori were a kind of glass beads from Ife" (Kalous, 1966:66).

Conclusion

Many authorities agree that bead research could further knowledge of early African history, if only by filling in details (Schofield, 1958:228). Ryder has been quoted previously as calling for a cooperative approach to study the medieval African bead trade. He adds, "The nature, provenance and distribution of coris is a case in point" (Ryder, 1969:60, note 3).

However, as Kalous has said, "Unfortunately, the sources known up to now do not allow of a definitive solution of the akori problem" (Kalous, 1966:66). Fage has suggested more work along these lines: (1) a re-examination of published sources; (2) local inquiries in Ghana and Nigeria, and (3) examination of actual beads particularly in Ghana and the British Museum (Fage, 1962:343). It would also seem that translation and study of earlier archival material such as the ships' books studied by Ryder (Ryder, 1959), and earlier Arabic references should prove profitable. It is to be hoped that desert archaeology will some day shed light on the theories of northern origin of the beads.

Because aggreys are so overlaid with legend, they are a particularly difficult bead subject, and would demand meticulous scholarship in their investigation. On the other hand, they should also be a particularly rewarding topic.

III. SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES

III. SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Two case studies will be presented on the significance of beads among two neighboring West African peoples, the Yoruba and the Bini. These kingdoms had certain characteristics in common:

1) Each had a divine king who claimed descent from a god or himself personified a god.
2) Towns were prevalent on a scale unusual in Africa.
3) There was extensive internal trade and markets grew, aided by the urbanization and the specialization in agriculture and crafts.
4) Great skill in plastic arts was achieved by these peoples, perhaps aided by the occupational specialization.

Smith cites material about these cultures which make them of particular interest to the person concerned with African textiles, clothing, and personal ornamentation. He characterizes the African Guinea Forest by quoting Oliver and Fage:

> It was this universality of trade in cloth and other luxuries [in beads, for example] which, together with the largely urban pattern of settlement, chiefly distinguished the Guinea region from all other parts of

> Africa south of the 'Sudanic' savanna belt, at least during late medieval and early modern times. (Oliver and Fage, 1970:110, insertion, Smith, 1969:8)

Smith also indicates these cultures were relatively uninfluenced from the outside during their early development by quoting Crowder's claim that the Yoruba and Bini kingdoms were "purely African states whose growth was stimulated neither by contact with Islam nor Europe."*

> They preserved their government, religion, and ways of life in this relative isolation until the Europeans who had been trading on the coast from the fifteenth century onwards changed their role in the nineteenth century and became proselytizers of ... their culture. (Crowder, 1966:64, in Smith, 1969:4)

Thus the development of the attitude toward beads would seem to be an indigenous one and therefore rewarding to study.

The Yoruba

Introduction

The Yoruba are one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. There has been much speculation about their origin. Linguistic evidence indicates a western origin but migration legends point in the opposite direction.

---

*This also means that "In the case of Benin and Oyo there is no documentary material earlier than the writings of the Portuguese historians, geographers, and officials, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century.... The only source apart from the artefacts, is oral tradition.... (Hodgkin, 1960:4)

Archaeology has not yet answered this question (Bascom, 1969:7,8). They have undoubtedly occupied their homeland for many centuries. The Portuguese, arriving in the fifteenth century, found their states already evolved, with tradition suggesting a past of several hundred years.

The Yoruba seem never to have constituted a single political entity (Smith, 1969:10). In fact, originally there was no inclusive name for them as a whole. People used only the names of their sub-groups (Bascom, 1969:5) whose characteristics varied greatly according to region (Bascom, 1969:xi).

Their language, even with its many dialects, is one major indicator of their common origin and cultural heritage. The other is a cycle of myths and legend existing over the whole country, which describes the creation of the world and all its people at the center of the world, Ile Ife. The details vary, but the traditions remain basically the same. Most royal houses trace descent to Ife (Smith, 1969:10,11).

Myth of Origin

Olorun,* the Sky God, gave to Orishila,** a five-toed chicken, a chain, and a snail shell containing some earth.

---

*Also Olodumare, Oludomare.

**Also Oshala, Obatala, Osishala, OrisaNla, Orishanla, Oris-nla.

He told him to go down and create the world. However, Orishila stopped at a party with other deities and became intoxicated. His younger brother, Oduduwa,* having heard the instructions, went to the edge of heaven with Chameleon, and let down the chain which they descended. Oduduwa threw the dirt on the water, and placed the chicken upon it. The chicken scratched the earth, spreading it in all directions to the end of the world (Bascom, 1969:10). On his newly created earth, Oduduwa planted a palm nut which grew into a tree with 16 branches (Smith, 1969:11).

When Orishila awoke and claimed the earth, the two brothers fought. Olorun gave to Oduduwa, Creator of the Earth, the right to own and rule over it. He became the first King of Ife. To Orishila he gave power to form human bodies and the latter became the Creator of Mankind** (Bascom, 1969:10).

After Oduduwa was accepted as the ruler of Ife, he sent his 16 sons, symbolized by the 16 branches on the palm tree, to found kingdoms for themselves. He gave each son a beaded crown with a fringe which partially concealed the wearer's face (Smith, 1969:109). This myth obviously does not settle the question of the origin of the Yoruba, but

---

*Also Odua, Odudua, Olofin.

**There are many versions of this legend.

it does validate many elements of their customs and beliefs (Bascom, 1969:10), including the importance placed on beads.

The Relationship of Beads to the Supernatural

Invention and First Use of Beads.-- Thompson says, "The values of the Yoruba appear in art and myth" (Thompson, 1971:Ch2/1). If this is true, the significance attached to beads is obvious. They were not only first used by the Creator of the Earth, they were divinely invented.

> Men like to be different. The deity Obalufon* therefore invented beads and strung them in different colors on bracelets and necklaces so that the gods, and the men who follow them, might stand in proud distinction. ... Beads thus became associated with the glory of gods. (Thompson, 1971:Ch8/1)

Special colors and types of beads are associated with particular Yoruba gods although the wearing of these beads varies according to locality (Frobenius, 1913:194).

Oduduwa.--Worshippers of Oduduwa, Creator of the Earth, wear no beads according to Bascom (Bascom, 1969:81). They are mentioned by no other source checked except Talbot who says priests of Oduduwa wear necklaces of white beads (Talbot, 1926:II,34).

---

*Research showed no other references to this myth and Thompson does not document. Farrow mentions Obalofon as the "god of the peace of the kingdom" (Farrow, 1926:59). According to Ryder, Obalufon, the son and successor of Oduduwa, sent Oranmiyan to Benin, a development which will be discussed in the section on Benin which follows (Ryder, 1965A:25). Idowu says that although Obalufon began by being an ancestor, he became a divinity worshiped all over Yoruba-land. (Idowu, 1962:69, footnote)

Orishila.--Beads and the color white are intimately connected with Orishila, the Creator of Mankind (Dennett, 1910:83) who, after practice on making pots, created human beings of white clay and "with a little wooden stick ... outlined each bead on every bracelet, anklet, necklace and close-fitting headdress" (Gleason, 1971:21).

Priests of Orishila are distinguished by necklaces of many strings of white (Beier, 1959:16), small (Bascom, 1969: 81) opaque beads. Worshippers also wear these beads (Johnson, 1924:27), although Bascom seems to limit the wearing to women worshippers (Bascom, 1969:81). Frobenius calls the necklace a Chetchefent* and says it is worn by celebrants at the shrine of the god on week days (Frobenius, 1913:194). The white beads are also placed in Orishila's white washed temples as his symbol (Parrinder, 1961:27). In fact, white beads are so symbolic of this god that their use at the neck of a sculptured figure establishes that sculpture as representing a follower of Orishila (Thompson, 1971:Ch16/1).

Orunmila**.--Beads are associated with Orunmila, the God of Divination, who transmits and interprets the wishes

---

*In another place he calls the chain of white beads worn around the necks of gods, a Che-che-fing (Frobenius, 1913:256).

**Sometimes confused with Ifa, the system of divination.

of Olorun* to mankind, by the Ifa system, which uses 16 palm nuts (Ojo, 1966:180). His priests called babalawo, consider him to be a universal king (Thompson, 1971:Ch5/2).

Colors associated with this god vary according to the authorities consulted.** Farrow says, "The marks of office of a Babalawo are a wristlet of palm fibre, or of variously coloured beads round the left wrist" (Farrow, 1926:104). Lucas says the beads would be white, blue, and red, if used (Lucas, 1948:180). Bascom reports some babalawo wear solidly beaded bracelets of many colors, but usually the bracelets, worn on the left wrist, are made of alternating opaque tan and light green beads (Bascom, 1969:80). According to Thompson, the colors of this special bracelet are green and yellow. He says, "the priests call this alternation tutu ati opon - lit. cool and red (orange)," and suggests, "The hot and the cool seem a metaphor of life's opposing forces," especially appropriate for the priests who divine for the god of fate (Thompson, 1971:Ch2/2).

---

*Prayers are addressed to Olorun, who has been syncretized with the Muslim Allah and the Christian God in later times, but he has no special worshippers or cult (Bascom, 1969:78,79). No particular type or color of bead appears to be associated with him.

**In a 1966 journal article, the priest of Ifa at the Orishna-Nla festival is pictured wearing an ornate beaded necklace, but no color is given (Stevens, 1966:188).

Eshu*.--Sacrifices prescribed by the babalawo are taken to Olorun by Eshu, the divine messenger; a trickster who can cause trouble for human beings who offend or neglect the deities. He has his own worshippers and priests who are identified by a string of small opaque maroon or black beads worn around the neck** (Bascom, 1969:79).

Shango***.--Another series of gods and goddesses exemplifies the relationship between deities and beads. Shango, the God of Thunder, the fourth king of the Yoruba, was a tyrant dethroned by his people and expelled from the country. Deserted by friends, and even by his wife Oyo, he committed suicide. His disloyal friends were ashamed. To atone for their action in deserting him and to avenge insults on his memory, they studied the art of charm-making and the process of attracting lightning upon their enemies' houses (Johnson, 1924:34).

Gleason says Shango wears a beaded necklace as a sign of power (Gleason, 1971:64). His priests, the Oni-Shango and the chief priests (Magbas) have a special badge; a

---

*Also Esu, Elegba, Elegbara, Edju.

**However, the four carvings of Eshu figures wearing beads, shown by Thompson, are wearing other colors: glass seed-beads of various colors; shell-disc beads strung with fibre; shell-disc beads and glass beads; and red glass beads strung with fibre (Thompson, 1971:Ch4/plates 13-16).

***Also Sango, Shongo.

necklace of black, red, and white beads (Ellis, 1894:96), or wristlets of the same colors (Lucas, 1948:181). However, a necklace called a Kelle-Shango of red and white may be worn by any of his worshippers.* Forde says the red and white beads may be worn around the wrists as well as the neck and locates the practice in the Ilorin area in the northern provinces (Forde, 1951:82).

Priests demand the Otutu beads and Opon beads as part of the fee to initiate people into the mysteries of Shango worship (Johnson, 1924:34).

Oyo.--Oyo killed herself when she heard of her husband's death, and was deified. Shango sends her ahead to fight with wind. Tornado and violent thunderstorms are attributed to her displeasure. Her followers are distinguished by a particular kind of red beads which are always tied round their necks (Johnson, 1924:36,37). Bascom says the beads are tubular and maroon (Bascom, 1969:88).

Oshun**.--Oshun, the goddess of a river of the same name is considered to be the second wife of Shango. She is worshipped in many parts of Yorubaland, especially among the Egba at Abeokuta. Worshippers and priests (Lucas, 1948:171, 181) wear her distinctive badge of transparent amber-colored beads (Farrow, 1926:65).

---

*Thompson pictures a worshipper of both Shango and Oyo wearing necklaces of red and white beads (yele) (Thompson, 1971:Ch12/pl.I).

**Also Osun.

Yemoja*.--Yemoja is the mother of Shango, the goddess of the Ogun River according to Bascom (Bascom, 1969:88). Ellis associates her with water more generally, calling her the goddess of brooks and streams (Ellis, 1894:44). Thompson says she blends with the god(dess) Olokun, sovereign of the sea (Thompson, 1971:P/4).

Blue, white and crystal are associated with her. Ellis says she is represented by a female figure, yellow in color, wearing blue beads and a white cloth (Ellis, 1894: 44). Gleason says she wears deep indigo outergarments and underskirts as white as seafoam, and that her pure crystal beads are occasionally interlaced with blue glass beads (Gleason, 1971:9). According to Bascom, her symbol is a string of small glass beads, as crystal clear as water, which is worn around the neck (Bascom, 1969:88). Worshippers wear this same type necklace of small beads of clear glass (Farrow, 1926:47).

Olokun and the Chameleon.--Olokun appears as both god and goddess in Yoruban mythology (Thompson, 1971:P/4). Fagg says that at Ife, Olokun is

> the goddess of wealth (especially of glass beads, of which Ife was a great manufacturing centre) and wife of Odudua. But this is perhaps a late assimilation into the Ife pantheon, for at Benin and among the southeast Yoruba, Itsekiri, etc., Olokun is the god of

---

*Also Yemaja.

> salt water, the sea, and of wealth imported from overseas especially in the form of Mediterranean coral beads.... (Fagg, 1963:13)

The Chameleon, Agemo (Forde, 1951:37) who was with Odudua when he made the earth, is prominent in many African myths (Parrinder, 1967:20). Parrinder recounts this myth of Olokun and the Chameleon:

> The Owner of the Sea, Ol-Okun, is believed by the Yoruba and Benin peoples ... to live in an underwater palace.... Stories say that he tried to rival the splendour of the Creator himself. Olokun challenged God to appear in his finest dress and he would do the same, and the winner would be declared by public acclaim.
>
> On the day chosen, God sent his messenger, the chameleon, to fetch Olokun. But when the latter emerged from his ocean palace he was astonished to find that the messenger of God was wearing a splendid dress similar to his own. He turned back quickly, and put on even finer robes and more coral beads, but when he came out the chameleon had also changed into the same dress. Seven times Olokun tried to outdo the divine messenger but each time he was matched by the same costume. Finally he gave up the struggle, thinking that if God's messenger was so glorious, God himself must be much greater. Ever since then Olokun has taken second place to the supreme Deity. (Parrinder, 1967: 83).

Sopono*.--Sopono, the smallpox, is believed to be a demon who infests the world (Johnson, 1924:28). His own insignia are cowry shell bracelets and necklaces of small black disc-beads made of shells of the palm nut (Bascom, 1969:92). Persons who die of this disease are buried only by Sopono's devotees who feel it is their privilege because

---

*Also Shopona, Shankpanna.

the corpses are victims of their god's vengeance. These priests demand of the relatives two kinds of beads, the green and yellow ones, called respectively Otutu and Opon (Johnson, 1924:28).

Abiku and Ibeji.--Beads play an important role in the relationship of parents to their children who die, abiku and ibeji.

Abiku refers both to the spirits of children who die before reaching the age of puberty and to the devil spirits who cause the death. These spirits are not worshipped, so have no temples and receive no sacrifices. Therefore they are cold and hungry and seek the body of a newborn child to enter for warmth and food (Ellis, 1894:112). The extreme demands of these spirits eventually cause the death of the child. Iron rings, wristlets of beads, and other charms are put on the children from a young age to guard against such a happening (Farrow, 1926:83).

"Twins (Ibeji) are not bad like abiku, but they are feared because they are powerful" (Bascom, 1969:74). If one or both of a pair of twins should die, the mother may be told by a diviner that she will not bear children who will live unless a carving is commissioned in remembrance of the dead child (Ojo, 1969:12). The parents have a small twin figure of the same sex fashioned of wood (Bascum, 1969: 74) showing the dead twin as if he had grown to maturity

(Ojo, 1969:12) but "nude, as an infant would be, with beads round the waist" (Ellis, 1894:80). The Yoruba attribute an indivisible soul to twins so the soul of a twin who dies must have a permanent home (Parrinder, 1967:50). This figure keeps the surviving child from pining away and gives the deceased child something to enter into (Ellis, 1894:80).

Twins must be treated equally, even if one is dead, and some parents give the figure the same kind of beads, bracelets, and earrings that they give the living one (Bascom, 1969:74). In northern Yoruba towns and in the south-west the beads are emblematic of the family deities, or of the rank of the parents. The cult is not found south and east of Ife (Ojo, 1969:12).

Yoruba Religion in Cuba.--Among the Yoruba in Cuba whose ancesters were taken there as slaves, African religion was still alive* although the Yoruba gods had been identified with the Catholic saints. Beads of the proper colors were worn by the worshippers.

St. Barbara, a woman, is Shango, with red and white beads as her symbol. St. Teresita, the Little Flower of Jesus, is Oyo, Shango's wife. Her insignia is made of long maroon beads. Our Lady of Mercy is Orishila whose beads are white. The Virgin of Regla, a suburb of Havana, is Yemaja, the owner of the salt water who lives in the sea with Olokun.

---

*As of 1951.

Her beads are crystal or blue. Yellow beads belong to Oshun who is the Virgin of Cobre, a town in the east. St. Comas and St. Damien, the twin saints, are the Ibeji (Bascom, 1951:14,15).

These African traditions were found strongest and purest in the larger urban centers of Cuba, where there were more worshippers and more money to carry on the ceremonies properly (Bascom, 1951:19).

The Relationship of Beads to Government

Myth of Creation.--The myth of creation with its account of the dispensation of beaded crowns is significant in relationship to the governments of the Yoruba.

1) "Most important, this myth provides the charter for the Yoruba people, providing them with a sense of unity through a common origin" (Bascom, 1969:11) even though each group was a sovereign entity (Smith, 1969:109), and relationships between them were constantly shifting (Krapf-Askari, 1969:2). This function continues to be of importance. In 1948, the Society of the Children of Odua was founded to unite the clans and was associated with the establishment of a political party three years later (Bascom, 1969:11).

2) It validates the authority of the kings to rule (Bascom, 1969:29) for "Yoruba society unquestionably rests on ... foundations that go back, as the people see it, to the origins of the world" (Willett, 1972:209). As of 1938,

in Ife, performers costumed like chickens, still ritually commemorated the creation of the earth by dancing as if scratching (Bascom, 1969:10).

3) The myth explains the primacy of Ife for "all Yoruba rulers draw the sanctions of their kingship from the Oni" (Fagg, 1963:26). As late as 1903 the Oni of Ife was invited by the Governor to settle the question of whether a particular ruler had the right to wear a beaded crown (Bascom, 1969:11).

4) It explains the distinction of rank between kings and the use of the beaded crown as a symbol of authority. There were three named ranks of the Yoruba rulers:

a) The Bale or town chiefs with no right to use beads.

b) The Oloja, who may wear beaded hats (orikogbobo) without fringes.

c) The Oba or Alade, all of whom, except for the Owa of Ilesha, may wear beaded crowns (ade) with fringes (Forde, 1951:19,20). These last allegedly all derive from the sons sent out by Oduduwa and are known as the original crowned kings (Willett, 1972:210).

A further elaboration of the legend explained the difference in the crown of the Owa. As Oduduwa grew old, and his eyesight dimmer, an Ifa priest advised sea water to bathe the eyes, but only the youngest son would attempt the hazardous journey to the coast. By the time he returned, the other princes had left Ife to found their own kingdoms,

taking with them their inheritances. The only reward left for Obokun was a sword (Smith, 1969:52).

> With this he angrily pursued his brothers, seized from them a share of the family treasure, and returned to Ife. As he entered the Court, he mistook his father, whose face was hidden by the beaded fringe of his crown, for one of his brothers and raised his sword against him. Slicing off the fringe of the crown, he realized, just in time, his dreadful error. (Smith, 1969:52)

When he left to found Ilesha, his father presented him with a crown like his brothers, except for the lack of fringe at the front (Smith, 1969:52), and the Owa is still not allowed to wear a crown which covers his face (Bascom, 1969: 11).

It is not possible now to determine how many crowned kings there were before the inter-tribal wars of the last century. Many kings assumed that status during those wars or were granted it during the British period. Recently, for payment or favors, even town chiefs have been given the privilege of wearing beaded crowns. Formerly, if a town chief had worn a beaded crown without permission from the Oba to whom he was subject, it would have been considered treason (Bascom, 1969:12). Restrictions had extended also to other beaded objects such as slippers and gowns (Forde, 1951:20). The point is that it is the ambition of each Oba to wear the fringed crown, a powerful sanction for his authority, and considered to be powerful in its own right (Willett, 1972:210).

Other Myths.--Other legends, regarding the early kings indicate the importance attached to beads. Upon the death of Oduduwa the property was unevenly inherited; Oranmiyan,* the youngest, who was perhaps absent, received no moveable properties. Wives, money (cowry shells), cattle, garments, crowns, and beads were all divided; Oranmiyan inherited only land. However he became richest of all by charging land rentals consisting of money, cattle, beads, etc. (Johnson, 1924:8,9).

A story is told of Onisile, an early ruler who was very artistic and is associated with stringing on expensive silk thread dyed red, costly precious beads: "Iyun (corals), Okun (stone beads, Benin), Erinla (striped yellow pipe beads), and Segi (blue pipe beads) all of native manufacture" (Johnson, 1924:176).

The Oba--Coronation.--Because the Yoruba Oba was considered to be a sacred or divine king, his coronation and installation were solemn and lengthy rites (Smith, 1969:110). Elaborate ceremonies preceded the actual accession to the throne of the Alafin of Oyo, the head of all the kings of the Yoruba, according to Johnson. Three months after the death of the former Alafin, the new Alafin in a gala ceremony, visited the royal mausoleum and invoked the blessings of his fathers and received the right to wear the royal

---

*Worshippers of Oranmiyan "wear no beads, or other insignia" (Bascom, 1969:84).

crown. For the actual crowning five days later, he proceeded to the shrine of Shango (Johnson, 1924:42-44) accompanied by officials.* There the royal robes were put on him, the beads of office (Ejigba) hung around his neck, and a special staff and sword were placed in his hands. After visits to other shrines, he proceeded to the palace.

The Alafin did not appear on public streets by day again, except on special occasions. At these times, he wore state dress which included the Ejigba, Opa Ileke, crown, and royal robes. The Ejigba was a knee length string of costly beads** which were used in place of precious stones. It represented the chain of office. "Chains - they say - are for captives, hence they use beads instead" (Johnson, 1924:45). The Opa Ileke was a staff covered with small multi-colored beads. Johnson described the crown as:

> ... made of costly beads such as coral, agra, and the like, which in this poor country stands to the people instead of precious stones. It is artistically done up by experts, with fringes of small multi-coloured beads depending from the rim, which serve to veil the face. (Johnson, 1924:51)

For the crowning of a new Oni of Ife, a new state crown was made, but some beads from his predecessor's crown

---

*These included the officials called the Isonas, who did the needle and embroidered work for royalty, including all of the ornamental bead work (Johnson, 1924:44-45).

**The prime minister (Osorun) has a string of beads around his neck, also like the Ejigba (Johnson, 1924:71).

are incorporated to preserve the link to Oduduwa. If the state crown was not worn, a beaded cap might be used so that the king's head might not be uncovered (Bascom, 1969: 30). Nowadays crowns are made of multi-colored beads of imported glass; formerly they were made of larger red beads of carnelian and jasper which came from Ilorin (Fagg, 1963:26).

The robe, crown, and the bracelets on the Oba's wrists and anklets are never buried with him. These become the perquisites of the Ona-ense-awa and his lieutenants, officials whose chief duty it was to carry the remains of the deceased monarch to his interment (Johnson, 1924:55).

The Oba--Dress.--Bronzes and terra cottas which survive provide evidence that the kings of Ife wore elaborate regalia.* The royal figures found at ancient Ife show that although dress was simpler than it is now, personal ornaments were more elaborate.

The figures wear many beads including bead bracelets and bead and metal anklets, and "a great variety of flounced headdresses which appear to have been made of beads," often with a fringe behind. The larger beads in the anklets, bracelets, and outer strings of chest beads are usually painted red, evidently to represent the larger stone beads probably imported from outside of Ife. The smaller beads

---

*Female figures are not commonly found (Fagg & Willett, 1960:28), but one queen was found with beads which have red paint surviving (Willett, 1958:31).

on the chest and crown are painted black on the bronzes, although the only known actual black beads are in puzzling holes in the faces of certain heads. These holes may have held an imitation beard and mustache. However, the fact that some held strings of small black beads suggests the possible use of a veil of beads which covered the lower part of the face or even the whole face, in much the manner Obas' crowns were until lately, fringed with beads to hide the face of the wearer from viewers (Fagg & Willett, 1960: 21,27,28,31).

Some figures wear on the chest, a paired badge which is assumed to have been made of beads. These badges were probably similar in function to the ones worn by chiefs in Ife today, although they are different in form (Fagg and Willett, 1960:28).

Descriptions of actual dress appear in the 1800s. Clapperton in 1826 says the king of Oyoe was wearing three strings of large blue beads and that he requested some large coral be brought from England as a gift for him (Clapperton, 1829:37,59). The king's trousers were ornamented with coral beads (Clapperton, 1829:322). Campbell in 1859 and 1869, describes the Alake of Abbeokuta as wearing a "costly necklace of coral and a double strand of the same ornament about his loins." He says the king of Oyo wears a crown of coral when he shows himself to the public (Campbell, 1861: 28,29,31) and describes Adelu, the king of Oyo at that time,

as wearing massive silver rings and a strand of large corals about his neck (Campbell, 1861:95).

A royal burial dated around the third quarter of the nineteenth century contained the body of an Oba wearing "a necklace of red stone (okun) beads, and one of mixed blue glass (segi) and okun." Of the nine people buried with him, several wore bronze bracelets and beads (Willett, 1960:10).

In the early 1900s, the headdress of a ruler of the Yoruba-related Ijebu is described as shaped like a tiara of great wealth and formed of coral beads mounted on a base of chamois leather and surmounted by a tassle of gold braid." Coral was so greatly prized that the king wore a number of long strings of coral beads, and even coral on his legs in what were called schaba similar to the greeves of former ages (Lloyd, 1960:62).

In 1904, the Alake of Abeokuta visited London. His footgear was "studded with beads" and his sceptre "covered in gaudy pattern with variegated beads. Light blue, white and gold are the predominant colours." His crown was covered with "thousands of multi-coloured beads" (Elgee, 1905:394-95).

Talbot writing in the 1920s, speaks of the traditional regalia of the Alafin of Oyo, "the chief items of which were the high conical crown formed mostly of blue beads,

some of which hung over and concealed the face, the Ejigba chain of office and the state umbrella" (Talbot, 1926:569).

Oba's Relationship to Town.--The two institutions which dominated the pre-colonial political life of the Yoruba, the Oba and the town, were closely related. Because the Oba's person was sacred, people wished to live in the shadow of his protection (Smith, 1969:107). In fact, usually the town radiated out from the palace of the Oba (Krapf-Askari, 1969:4). The status given a Yoruba town depended more upon the traditional prestige of the ruler than it did upon the size and population of the town. Differentiation was made between "crowned" or "capital towns" believed to have been founded directly from Ile Ife whose rulers wore fringed crowns and "subordinate" towns whose rulers could not (Krapt-Askari, 1969:26).

Beads in Relation to Age, Sex, and Status Roles

Beads are also significant in the age, sex, and status roles of Yoruba individuals. However, documenting this is more difficult since data is sparse and scattered.

Status.--Bascom says some of the visual arts such as beaded clothing were reserved for the king; others such as bodily decoration and clothing were available to all who could afford them (Bascom, 1969:99).

> The wearing of beads distinguished chiefs and Obas in an unmistakable manner from the non-titled person, just as badges and other insignia indicate rank. Significant too was the part of the body on which the

> beads were worn. Crowned Obas not only wore beaded crowns with fringes but also strings of the barrel-shaped and round beads around the neck, wrists and ankles. A village chief was not entitled to wear a beaded crown but might wear beads around the neck, wrists and ankles. Many ordinary chiefs wore beads around the neck and wrists only, the number of strings and the shape* reflecting their rank. (Ojo, 1966:259)

Clapperton says court etiquette allowed town chiefs to appear in front of the king of Yoruba (Oyo) dressed only in loose clothes; "no tobes [loose shirts], no beads, no coral, or grandeur of any kind, must appear but on the king alone" (Clapperton, 1829:47).

Lloyd says of the Ijebu that coral was one of their most prized ornaments. The quality and size of the beads was a sign of rank and wealth. Important men would wear necklaces of one to four strings which reached to their navels; the king had a great many (Lloyd, 1960:62).

Women wore coral necklaces which were valuable family heirlooms, and a profusion of imitation coral, segi, and okun, according to their wealth. Even in a small village a Yoruba woman will hire by the day, complete costume jewelry to wear on an important occasion such as a birth, a death, or a wedding (DeNegri, 1962A:9,10).

Fadipe says slaves wore no distinctive clothing or scars (Fadipe, 1970:183). However, by custom, when a slave was sold to a new master, beads and clothing had to be removed from his body and returned to the old master

---

*He does not elaborate further.

within 24 hours; otherwise the old master had a right to a part of the labor of that slave (Ajisafe, 1971:64).

Age and Sex.--Johnson has said that both boys and girls to age eight wore no clothes (Johnson, 1925:100). He does not mention ornament. However, a fairly recent photograph shows a newborn baby wearing light-colored beads around the waist, being weighed by a public health nurse (Anon., 1958:285). DeNegri says that before puberty, originally, girls would wear only waist beads, Lagidigba. At puberty, they would be presented with the small garment Tobi, or Yeri to be worn with the beads. At the present time waist beads are not so commonly worn, except by children (DeNegri, 1962A:10,12).

Beads played a significant role when a woman was old enough to marry. Along with cloth, sheep, goats and poultry, they formed a substantial part of her dowry and remained an important part of her property (Johnson, 1924:99). When she was married her parents would take her to the bridegroom's house. She would be dressed in costly clothes with "beautiful beads around her neck and waist" (Dennett, 1910: 166). If as a bride, she satisfied her husband, and his friends, next day presents were sent to her parents and she herself was covered with corals, other costly beads, and gold necklaces if obtainable (Johnson, 1924:115).

Beads in Relation to Economy

Bascom, in 1938, said that the Yoruba economy was based on hoe farming, craft specialization, and trade. Almost all Yoruba men farm but production of other goods is specialized, including bead working. These specializations were often protected as trade secrets by religious sanctions (Bascom, 1969:18,24).

Bead Production.--Limited information is available about local production of three types of beads and about the beadworkers.

1) Palm and Cocoa Nut Shell Beads.--For women there were long belts almost a meter in length, worn on the hip next to the body. They consisted of rounded beads called ileke lagidigba, made from the hard exteriors of oil-palm nuts (Hambly, 1935:432). Cocoa nut shells are also used but valued less. Their manufacture was an important female industry (Johnson, 1897:125) with some women devoting their whole time to the making of these beads* (Fadipe, 1970:152).

Each disk was flattened to a thin piece, then "rounded, perforated, and smoothed by rubbing on a stone covered with sand and water." Oyo and Lanlate were prominent specialist towns in the grinding of these beads. Other towns were Kishi, Sepeteri, Tede, and Ago-Are (Ojo, 1966:260; Hambly, 1935:432).

---

*My interpretation of the type of bead he is referring to is open to some question.

Johnson mentions beads made of palm nuts being involved in early worship, but he does not say if they were processed.

> Originally, the Kori was the only object of worship. It consists of the hard shells of the palm nuts strung into beads, and made to hang from the neck to the knees. In modern times, it is no longer regarded as an object of worship by adults, but little children go about with it to the market places begging for alms. The object of worship is then worn by one of their number, who goes before, his companions following behind him, shouting the praises of the ancient god Kori. (Johnson, 1924:26)

2) Stone Beads.--The bead crafts developed because of the demand by chiefs and Obas for the beaded objects which dominated their regalia. Information on red bead manufacture in ancient Ife is scanty (Ojo, 1966:259-60), but data about their more recent manufacture in Ilorin is known.

The beaded crown, now made of multicolored imported beads, was formerly of larger red beads of jasper and carnealian from Ilorin (Fagg, 1963:26). This stone is an impure form of quartz, compact, very hard, and resistant to splintering and fracturing so that it responds to polishing (Ojo, 1966:260). The quartz was brought by traders from French territory, carried down the Niger by canoe, and then brought by headload or railway to Ilorin (Daniel, 1937:7).

a) Process.--The stone is gripped between the first and great toes of the operator, held firmly against a cloth pad, and chipped roughly into shape with a small chisel and

hammer. It is drilled through with a palm oil lubricated drill first from one end and then the other until the two meet in the middle (Daniel, 1937:7,8). It takes longer than three hours to drill a one-inch long hole (Clarke, 1938:156). The roughly cut and drilled stone is then rubbed across the grinding stone, a slab of hard schist brought from Igbetti, about 30 miles north of Ilorin (Daniel, 1937:7,8). The stone's surface is worn into deep grooves from the constant rubbing (Hambly, 1935:432). "This process produces a powder which is mixed with water and serves as a lubricant for the final polishing on a smooth board.... Small holes and flaws are repaired with gum and if necessary, flakes are affixed" (Daniel, 1937:8).

b) Workers.--Clarke says stone bead making was carried on at Jebba Island, Onitsha, and other places, as well as Ilorin (Clarke, 1938:157), but Ojo says the beads were manufactured almost exclusively at Ilorin (Ojo, 1966:260).

The workers, all Yoruba, say their ancestors came from Old Oyo, the ancient Yoruba capital, which was sacked by the Fulani about 100 years ago (Daniel, 1947:8). Clarke says men produced the beads (Clarke, 1938:156), but Daniel says the beadworkers were of both sexes (Daniel, 1937:8). At one time the workers were organized in a guild or friendly society, but with the decline in properity all that was broken down (Clarke, 1938:157).

c) The Beads.--Clarke describes an unbored plug to be worn in holes in the ear lobes, a pendant, and four of the commonest types of beads: Potupotu, large oval beads to be worn singly; Oru, small oval beads to be strung in numbers; Elegun, a large bead with more angular shape; and Okun, a long cylindrically shaped bead (Clarke, 1938:156), which Hambly says is the best example of this craft. These are about 4 cm. in length and 1 cm. in diameter. The Hausa call these beads lentana; the Yoruba name is ileke (Hambly, 1935:432).

d) State of Industry.--Formerly the lentana beads were very popular for chiefs' regalia but their demand diminished. Clarke sees the decline as primarily due to a change in feminine fashion caused by the introduction of Christianity which fostered a contempt of things connected with the old days. Fashionable women now prefer "cheap imitation gold earrings or Japanese bead necklaces." Although the two authorities agree that the industry has declined drastically, they disagree as to numbers employed by the 1930s. At that time the finished article was of little value considering the extremely laborious process (Daniel, 1937:8; Clarke, 1938:156).

3) Glass Bead Industry.--Glass beads were made in ancient Ife (Fagg & Willett, 1960:27). Frobenius with the German Inner African Expedition in 1910-1912 was the first

European to report the possibility of this ancient glass working industry. He heard about an old town to the north of Ilife, which according to legend was founded before the Creation of the Earth, by Olokun, the Ruler of the Ocean. Olokun* had buried in large jars, a great gift to mankind: extremely precious beads, the so-called 'Illike' or 'Seggi,' which are called 'Akka,' by the Yorubans and 'Dukun-takun' by the Nupes. These beads were given to the people of Ilife** so they might grow rich and give greater sacrifices to the gods than did the rest of mankind. Although other gods tried to obtain them, no one could until Eshu, who gave the pearls to the Oni to furnish banquets to the gods. Since then, these beads are found in quantities every year (Frobenius, 1913:306-07).

Frobenius had heard in 1908 and 1910 of this legendary treasure spot where the real wealth of the Ilifians was hidden. With permission from the Oni to dig, he discovered bits of glaze and later entire jars glazed inside and out (Frobenius, 1913:93), possibly used as crucibles in which

---

*Others say the donors were Odudua and Obatalla (Frobenius, 1913:307).

**Frobenius says: "... the German Yorubans profess their descent from Ilife, or Ife. And in proof of it they exhibit the peculiar, beautiful, long-shaped glass beads said to be found only in the temple of Olokun, in Ebolokun, in English Yorubaland, but which can be dug up in a certain district of German Togoland as well" (Frobenius, 1913:275-76).

to melt glass. Inside were:

> glass beads, rings, irregular bits of glass tube, and always at the bottom a mass of fused bits of glass from one-eighth to one-quarter of an inch in depth. The colours of the beads and the glaze on the jars vary from light green, greenish white, dark red, brown and blue.... The great mass of potsherds, lumps of glass, heaps of slag, etc., we found proves at all events that the glass industry flourished in this locality in ages past. It is plain that the glass beads found to have been so common in Africa were not only not imported, but were actually manufactured in great quantities at home. (Frobenius, 1913: 309)

Glass bead manufacture seems to have been an important industry in Ife, for fragments of the crucibles are found all over town (Willett, 1967:106). The industry seems to have been discontinued a long time ago, the nature of the crucibles forgotten, and a supernatural significance attached to them (Fagg & Willett, 1960:29). A complete crucible had been used to store beads at the shrine excavated at Ita Yemoo and the Grove of Oduduwa contained one said to have been the drum of that Creator of the Earth. In 1830, in the market at Old Oyo (Willett, 1967:106-08), the Landers had purchased "a very curious and singular kind of stone" which they were told had been dug from the ground in Iffie, the country where traditionally the first ancestors of the Oyo people had been created, and from where the whole of Africa had been populated. They said it consisted "of a variety of little transparent stones, white, green, and every shade of blue, all embedded in a species of clayey

earth, resembling rough mosaic work" (Lander, 1965:88-89). Willett identifies this 'stone' as a lump of fused, incompletely remelted beads from one of the crucibles. This piece probably went to the bottom of the Niger when the Landers' boat later sank (Willett, 1967:106,108).

The discovery of these bits of glass led to the founding of a new industry in Ife. The pieces were drilled to make beads (Fagg and Willett, 1960:29).

Bead Embroidery.--Another kind of bead work, embroidery, will be mentioned only briefly. This work is still practiced (Forde, 1951:8). The manufacture of beaded crowns and coronets, the emblems of royalty and chieftaincy, is probably the only exclusively aristocratic art left in Ife (Willett, 1972:213).

The bead embroidering is done by men, often under royal patronage (Bascom, 1969:102). Women are not allowed to do it, perhaps because it might become introduced into the country of their husbands. Workers carefully guard their work, doing it either in the chief's palace, or in their own homes, more or less secretly. It is believed that unauthorized workers would become deaf and blind (Mellor, 1938:154).

These workers produce the crowns, caps, and other beaded articles used by the kings and the babalawo, although some babalawo produce their own beadwork. Now trade beads

imported from Europe are used most often. Earlier, coral, red stone beads, and the blue glass segi, probably of African origin were used (Bascom, 1969:102).

In Remo, the crowns are made by members of one family, descendants of the man considered the founder of the work there, who lived some eighty years ago. In 1938, there were about five craftsmen there. Beadworkers in Shagamu and Iken are said to be recent interlopers (Mellor, 1938: 154).

The Kingdom of Benin

Introduction

Benin is "one of the oldest and most stable of the larger political entities in the forest zone of West Africa" (Bradbury, 1965:145). It is in fact, one of the few which has not completely disappeared (Legum, 1960:157). The people call themselves, their capital and their language Edo. Linguistic evidence suggests they have occupied their present region for some thousands of years in relative isolation, but their origins are lost except for a tradition of migration from the east which is common to many West African peoples (Ryder, 1969:1,2). Besides the language, the groups have other cultural characteristics in common: the village is the basic political unit; the male population is divided into age-grades; lineage is patrilineal

(Bradbury, 1970:15); and unusual stress is placed on primogeniture in inheritance and succession (Bradbury, 1965:96). In most places, kingship, title systems and more complicated polities overlaid this simple pattern. One of these was Benin, which has won fame for the Edo people (Ryder, 1969:2).

During the peak of its splendor in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Great Benin's influence and prestige extended even to regions over which it could not enforce its control (Alagea, 1972:302). Ryder suggests that:

> The royal house of Benin did not rely solely upon armed force to extend its influence. It also turned to advantage its prestige in the mysteries of government and the associated magic arts of kingship.... A belief that the dynasty possessed supernatural powers--a belief enhanced by military achievement--therefore enabled it to establish its offshoots in a dependent relationship farther afield. Some times members of the royal lineage were installed as chiefs over conquered peoples, and surrounded by a court and ceremonial that borrowed many features of the parent court at Benin City.... Thus was created a complex network of dynastic and ritual ties which bound to Benin many chiefdoms that were otherwise virtually autonomous. (Ryder, 1969:12)

A large part of the court ceremony, ritual, and etiquette surrounding the Oba involved his costume and regalia, of which coral was a significant part. The importance of these beads to this polity is indicated in the collection of Bini legends* and documented in the available records of early

---

*Chief Egharevba's Short History of Benin, 1960, is the classic traditional history.

European travellers.*

Benin's power, with many ups and downs, lasted through the opening of the Atlantic trade and the arrival of the missionaries and traders, until it fell in 1897 to the British government. During this time Benin's principal institutions remained essentially the same (Stride & Ifeka, 1971:305).

Beads in Relationship to the Government

Dress of the Oba.--A description of the Oba's costume and regalia should help us to appreciate its development and relationship to the history and government of Benin. Roth describes the Oba as he surrendered to the British in 1897:

> The king was simply covered with masses of strings of coral, interspersed with larger pieces, supposed to be worth many pounds. His head dress, which was in the shape of a Leghorn straw hat, was composed wholly of coral of excellent quality, meshed closely together, and must have weighed very heavily on his head, for it was constantly being temporarily removed by an attendant. His wrists up to his elbow were closely covered with coral bangles, so were his ankles. He only wore the usual white cloth of a chief, and underneath, a pair of embroidered and brocaded trousers; he had nothing in the way of a coat, but his breast was completely hidden from view by the coral beads encircling his neck. (Roth, 1968:xiii)

The weight of the coral is commented upon again. Lendolphe describes a net shirt:

---

*H. Ling Roth's Great Benin, 1968, contains an excellent listing of these sources on pages 1-4.

> ... of which each knot was furnished with a coral bead; it weighed more than twenty pounds, for the king made me test it. (Landolphe, II:58-60, in Roth, 1968:99)

According to Talbot:

> The Obba's crown, collar, upper part of the dress and skirt are almost entirely composed of coral beads and are particularly cumbersome and heavy to wear; it is very difficult to endure their weight for more than a few hours at a time. The Obba never moves without having his arm borne by one of his personal attendants. (Talbot, 1926:586)

Another of the Oba's hats is described as consisting of

> ... a tight fitting cap made of coral beads, and having two wings, one on each side, something like the old Viking's headgear one sees in pictures. (Roth, 1968:xvii)

The employment of coral by Benin is so typical that its use in costume by another African people is considered evidence of Benin influence (Hodgkin, 1960:230). Dike comments that the Ibo-speaking populations living to the west of the Niger had societies patterned after the semi-divine kingship of Benin. This Benin origin was noticeable to Europeans even in the nineteenth century (Dike, 1966:26). In 1832, Laird had observed of the king of Abo, "From his fondness for coral ornaments, I should imagine him to be of Benin extraction" (Laird & Oldfield, 1971:101).

Mythology and History

Early Traditions.--The development of the Oba's costume*

---

*It is interesting that Legum says that very little of the great Benin art is left in the city, "except for the

and other customs and usages of coral are threaded through the traditional history and myths of the Edo. Egharevba in the standard collection of traditional history says that the Edo came from Egypt, and that about 900 A.D.,* in their present home, the Empire of the first dynasty was founded, with rulers known as "Ogisos." It was the second of these rulers, Ere** who introduced much of the ceremonial regalia, including a simple undecorated form of crown and the beaded anklets and collars (Egharevba, 1960:1).

When the Ogisos' rule ended in friction with the last, Owodo, being exiled, the Edo tried a short period of choosing a paramount chief from among the whole body of chiefs. They were unable to settle on one candidate, so they sent to the Oni of Ife, Oduduwa, for one of his sons to rule over

---

great wardrobes of costumes secluded in the chambers of the palace beyond the door of the reception rooms through which no stranger may venture without undergoing an elaborate purification ceremony"(Legum, 1960:159).

*There are of course questions about Egharevba's dating. Bradbury says, "The pre-Oranmiyan kings live in a timeless semi-mythical world, and it is impossible to construct any kind of a linear time scale, however relative, from the traditions about them" (Bradbury, 1959:265). However, for our purposes precise dating is unimportant.

**Tong, a teacher in a government college for boys from 1949 to 1953 reports that he was invited to the house of a chief whose family was said to be the oldest in the city. He saw the chief wearing "a long string of red coral beads, the traditional Bini emblem of chieftainship." The chief said he was a descendant of the Ogisos, the first rulers of Benin, whose family was much older than the Oba's (Tong, 1958:13,98,100,101).

them. Oduduwa's successor, Obalufon, sent his brother Prince Oranmiyan.* Oranmiyan married a local chief's daughter, by whom he had a son, but he found it impossible to rule over a foreign nation, and returned to Ife leaving his son to rule eventually as Oba Eweka I (Egharevba, 1960: 3,6,7).

DeNegri says the beads first used in the king's regalia are reputed to have been brought by Oranmiyan from Ile-Ife and were not the coral or agate beads now associated with Benin. Rather, "they were described as 'old coloured beads' and may have been like those excavated in and around Ife" (DeNegri, 1964:210). DeNegri does not document her supposition, but Kalous suggests she based it possibly on oral tradition from Benin (Kalous, 1966:63).

Early Obas.--These new rulers, the Obas, were much controlled by the Edo chiefs until the reign of the fourth Oba, Ewedo.** It was he who assumed supreme authority,

---

*There are other traditions. One suggests this was a conquering from the outside (Bradbury, 1965:151). Ryder proposes the possibility of a more northerly origin of the dynasty and comments: "Through four centuries of contact between Benin and various nations of Europe no hint of this relationship with Ife emerges in any record until ... 1897" (Ryder, 1965:25,35). On the other hand, "Both Benin and Yoruba traditions ... tell essentially the same story about Oranmiyan.... If such a story appears at first incredible, and perhaps a means of concealing a conquest, it must be remembered that instances are not unknown in African history when a people perplexed as those of Benin were, have turned to a foreign lineage, credited with supernatural powers in the arts of government" (Ryder, 1969:4-5).

**Dates of 1255 and 1327 are given by Egharevba and Talbot for the beginning of this reign (Bradbury, 1959:266).

symbolizing it by several changes in ceremony (Ryder, 1969:5), and a change in the name of the country to Ubini. He created the title Uwangue, the master of the Oba's wardrobe, including his regalia (Egharevba, 1960:11).

According to Talbot's collection of oral traditions, a century later the Oba, Awhen, originated the type of ceremonial dress the Oba and his courtiers still wear on great occasions (Talbot, 1926:154).

Ewuare the Great.--It was Ewuare the Great (1440-1473) who ushered the kingdom into its Golden Age. During his time, the town gained the name of city, roads were built, and the kingdom's influence and power were extended (Legum, 1960:160; Egharevba, 1960:145). Changes in the government were so sweeping that it is possible he represents a new wave of foreign influence. He is of particular interest because he is credited with introducing the coral beads and scarlet cloth which enhanced the magnificence surrounding the Oba (Ryder, 1969:8,11,12). DeNegri says the beads he introduced were 'stone' and they caused the 'old beads' to go out of use (DeNegri, 1964:210).

Talbot says that traditionally Ewuare is supposed to have found coral in the rivers (Talbot, 1926:155). Bradbury says the coral beads and red cloth could only have come from European sources (Bradbury, 1959:278). Although there is no suggestion that Europeans actually visited the city,

DeSequiera did visit the area at approximately this time (Egharevba, 1960:18).

> One of the best-known legends of Ewuare tells how he went to the palace of Olokun, the god of the sea, and stole some coral beads.
>
> It is tempting to suggest that the legend of Ewuare and Olokun's beads may refer to an early direct or indirect contact with the Portuguese. Ewuare's route to Olokun's palace is said to have been through Ughoton, the port of Benin to which the Portuguese first came. Ughoton was also the main centre of the Olokun cult and while it seems almost certain that Olokun was worshipped there before the Portuguese arrived, there are reasons for supposing that the emphasis on Olokun as the god of wealth may have been encouraged by the coming of new forms of wealth from overseas. (Bradbury, 1959:278)

Ewuare is also credited with founding the senior palace society, the House of Iwebo, whose members are makers and custodians of the Oba's regalia and wardrobe (Egharevba, 1960:79). Talbot says that previous to this time, lame men had guarded the treasury of beads and cloths. However they had allowed many of these to be burned, so Ewuare replaced them by a body of sons of nobles. (Talbot, 1926:545).

> Iwebo is divided into a number of 'apartments' for the specific purpose of looking after the newly acquired coral and red cloth. The working, stringing and control of the valuable red beads, both of coral and stone, has remained in the hands of Iwebo up to the present day. The word Iwebo itself is often construed as meaning "the apartment of the Europeans" but it is by no means certain that this was the original meaning. (Bradbury, 1959:278)

Egharevba does say that all Europeans are counted as members of this society (Egharevba, 1960:79).

The first notice appears of the use of coral beads to indicate status during the reign of Ewuare. He is noted as the Oba who gave the Ihama (leader of the Ihagbe who are worshippers of the Oba's ancestors and recorders of the departed Obas) the right to wear odigbokofo (a large collar made entirely of red beads). His wife was allowed to wear her hair in a style like the Oba's wife. These privileges elevated Ihama to a higher position than ever before. The odigbo-kofo has been worn by the Ihama at every Ugie-Ewere ceremony up to the present time (Egharevba, 1960:81,20).

In spite of the greatness of Ewuare's reign it ended in tragedy. In a fit of mourning over the death of his own two sons he passed strict laws forbidding his subjects to wash, dress up (Egharevba, 1960:16), clean house, drum, dance, eat cooked foods, or have carnal intercourse. These laws, to be in effect for three years (Okojie, 1960: 31), caused so much revolt and migration that they were revoked (Egharevba, 1960:160). A separate section covering Ishan is included later.

Later Obas--Ewuare's Sons.--The band of red beads (udahoe) worn on the forehead by some chiefs is related to the reign of Ewuare's son, Ezota, who is reported to have been so stingy that he badly starved a boy. This boy shot him in the forehead with a poisoned arrow. The bead band

commemorates the cap Ezoti used to prevent his forehead from bleeding (Egharevba, 1960:21).

The founding of the Itzekiri kingdom by a son of Ewuare's second son Olua, is related to coral beads. Olua was generous and helpful; he saved a lame man who was drowning, took him to the palace, and gave him food, clothing, and a coral bead. The ungrateful recipient said he had only been given a bead because they were so common in the palace. The upset Oba followed the harsh advice of his son in punishing this man. The same son also suggested that another man in need of punishment be sent a present of a coral necklace and anklet. When the receiver came to give thanks, the Oba sacrificed him. Because of this bad advice, the people refused to have the son as a future Oba so he was sent by his father to become the Olu of the Itsekiri (Egharevba, 1960:22).

Itsekiri myth agrees that their founder and first Olu, Gunuwa* was a son of Oluwa. Gunuwa, accompanied by seventy chiefs arrived clad in his regalia. Lloyd describes his royal dress on some occasions, as "a gown made of coral beads, together with a high coral collar and crown," and adds that the present Olu wears coral beads on his wrist and ankles. The chiefs also wear large necklaces of coral beads as a sign of office. This red coral, their principal personal ornament, was obtained from European traders.

---

*Also Iginua.

"Legends tell of a blue coral which 'grew on trees' ... below the water" but it is no longer found* (Lloyd, 1970: 176,179,192,193).

Esigie.--Esigie reigned from 1504 to 1550 and restored the kingdom's declining fortunes to great heights (Legum, 1960:160). He made Uwangue the leader of the reformed House of Iwebo. It is during his reign that d'Aveiro, the Portuguese explorer, came to Benin City for the second time, reportedly bringing coral beads as presents, and entreating the inhabitants to become Christians (Egharevba, 1960:28,30). DeNegri reports that it was at this time that

> agate or "Jasper", as it was afterwards called, was obtained and made into beads. The source of supply for this was said to have been found by Oba Esigie, possibly through his campaigns to the north or through contact with traders. (DeNegri, 1964:210)

Benin historical tradition blames the Idah War which occurred during Esigie's reign, on the unfaithfulness of a wife, influenced by beads. The Oliha, leader of the Uzana-Hihinron (The Seven Councillors of State or Kingmakers),

---

*"... the descendants of Gunuwa found and sometimes settled in villages inhabited by umale. According to the myths these creatures are said to have possessed the secret of immortality, often gained by rubbing their bodies with chalk, which enabled them to disappear into the creek and return later. The blue coral beads belonged to them, but rather than submit to the Olu and pay a tribute of the blue beads they are said to have thrown their chalk into the water, destroyed the "coral tree," entered their canoes and sunk into the creek never to return and leaving no descendants" (Lloyd, 1970:178).

one day told the Oba Esigie that he, the Oliha, had a beautiful wife who was the most faithful wife in the kingdom. The Oba, wishing to prove her untrustworthy asked one of his carriers to entice her with agate and coral beads. The carrier was successful and the relationship continued for several weeks. Finally the Oba called a meeting and asked the Oliha to repeat the statement about his wife. The porter related that he had been able to win her with only a few beads. The wife confirmed it. The Oliha was so annoyed that he ordered his wife to be strangled. To bring disaster on the Oba for this trick he sent a servant to tell the Attah (King) of Idah that the Oba of Benin was preparing to invade Idah. (The first Attah of Idah was a Bini Price.) The same servant reported to the Oba that troops were marching to Benin. However, the plan failed in having Esigie taken captive, as the Idahs were completely defeated (Egharevba, 1960:28,29).

Other Later Obas.--Stories of coral are related during the reign of other Obas. The origin of another traditional ornament is ascribed to the time of Ehengbuda, about 1578 A.D. A ruler of Ilesha (Owa Atakunmarha) banished by his subjects because of his tyranny, sought refuge with the Oba. After an investigation, the Oba successfully requested the elders to accept the Owa back. When the Owa left Benin City, Ehengbuda gave him a coral collar or neck beads (odigba) like ones worn by the chiefs of Benin.

Another story indicates the value of the beads. Ahenzae, who became the Oba about 1641, when he was only 16 years old, was taken advantage of because of his youthfulness. He gambled away the royal coral beads in dice games with Osuan. The long-stored treasures were wasted* (Egharevba, 1960:33,35).

Akankpaye, about 1675 A.D., tall, handsome, and majestic, but wicked and selfish, usurped the rights and privileges which traditionally belonged to his chiefs. Among other misdeeds, he was inclined to take the application fee and commission on the ceremony of the honor of the beads.** This was customarily assigned to the members of the House of Iwebo. He was dethroned and made priest of the goddess Igbabhon of Iguoso, and his heirs until the present have been the Enogie and priests of the goddess (Egharevba, 1960:36,37).

About 1816 A.D., two brothers claimed the throne. Ogbebo, with aid from his mother's powerful relatives and slaves, defeated Prince Eredia-uwa, the rightful heir,

---

*Tong reports a "War Game" played on a wooden board using 12 compartments and 100 cowrie shells which represent warriors. The compartments are named after some heroes of Bini legend. "The procedure of the game is based on actual battles in the history of Benin. It has always been popular, and some Obas have in the past gambled away whole stores of their precious coral beads whilst playing it." (Tong, 1958:107)

**This ceremony will be discussed later.

and proclaimed himself Oba without the usual ceremonies. Ogbebo sent messengers with two leather boxes full of coral beads to be distributed among the rulers (Enigie) of Ishan where Eredia-Uwa had taken refuge. In return for the beads, the Enigie were to cut off the head of Eredia-uwa and send it to Ogbebo in the leather box. However, the messengers were waylaid and the coral beads given to Eredia-uwa who used them to induce the Enigie to fight against Ogbebo. There was great loss of life on both sides, but Ogbebo was defeated. He set fire to the palace and destroyed the treasures whereupon he hanged himself. The prince returned, becoming Oba Osemwede (Egharevba, 1960:44-45).

It was during the reign of Osemwede that the Akure War (1818) broke out as a result of the murder of the Osague. The Osague had been sent as Ambassador to announce Osemwede's succession to Arakela, the ruler (Udezi) of Akure. Arakele was so jealous when he saw the Osague laden with coral beads and jewelry that he embroiled the Osague's wife in a fight. When Osague went to his wife's assistance, he was murdered. A punitive expedition was sent from Benin; Arakele was executed and his head sent to the Oba at Benin City. The campaign was carried further and many towns and villages were conquered and made to pay a yearly tribute to Benin (Egharevba, 1960:45,46).

Coral Indicating Other Ranks.--Coral also played a part in indicating other ranks in the government. It was Ewuare who organized an association of town chiefs, representing the indigenous population (Ryder, 1969:8) to participate in government along with the palace chiefs.

> Its titles, like those of the palace, were non-hereditary and in the gift of the ruler, who could also add to the number and regulate their order of precedence at will. An able ruler thus enjoyed control of a delicate mechanism, through which he could reward services, satisfy ambition, stimulate loyalty, neutralize conflict and counter hostility. Indeed, much of the political history of Benin turns upon the strivings of important men and families to win place or advancement in the hierarchies of town and palace, and upon the efforts of rulers and pretenders to the throne to consolidate a following in those associations. (Ryder, 1969:9)

While the number and ranks of these titles varied from time to time, the use of coral or what passed as such to indicate rank is well documented, as is the symbolic importance of it. Landolphe, in Benin in 1778 and after (Roth, 1968:2) describes officials:

> The council consisted of sixty 'big men'.... Every one of them wore on his neck, ankles and wrists two rows of very large coral, which is the distinctive mark of the highest office of the state.
>
> The fiadors and passadors (overseers and messengers) are only allowed to wear a single row on any part of their body, or rather a necklace, and they must besides have the king's authority to do so, as the dignity is not hereditary. (Landolphe in Roth, 1968:93)

Beauvais, Landolphe's contemporary, said the war captain wore a three row coral necklace plus others of agate and glass trinkets (Beauvais in Roth, 1968:80). Bradbury mentions that the senior war chief was the only one apart from

the Oba who was allowed to wear a coronet of coral beads (Bradbury, 1970:36).

To maintain control over this title system the Oba dispensed the coral himself. Lieutenant King, in Benin between 1815 and 1821 says:

> A coral necklace is the distinctive mark of royalty and nobility, and when the king confers a patent of nobility on anyone, he puts the necklace on him with his own hands. (King in Roth, 1968:95-96)

A very similar statement had occurred in an account of a mission to Benin in 1651-52:

> If the King makes anyone a chief, the ceremony consists of placing a string of corals round his neck, and thus he becomes a chief. But sons do not inherit this dignity even though they be the sons of great men, unless the King bestows it on each one personally. (Ryder, 1969:314)

Upon the death of the officer, the coral is returned to the king. His children are not patented until they are 20 years of age, have done something for the state, and a majority of the inhabitants of the "canton" of the father have asked for the honor* (Talbot, 1926:486).

---

*Bradbury describes title systems among other Edo-speaking peoples, the Urhobo and Isoko of the Niger Delta. The Ohovore association also uses coral beads as a symbol to distinguish members from the rest of the community (8:140-41). The Adju or Ade association is the chief title association among the Ewu, Uwheru and Ujevbe peoples (8: 142). According to legend it originated in the capture of some water spirits who wore strings of beads. Rich men later adopted this custom and founded the adje association. When people are admitted they are given chains of white beads (Bradbury, 1970:140-142).

Fawckner gives a graphic description of the significance of the honor. On one occasion he notices a messenger approaching him and

> performing the most extraordinary gesticulations. At first I thought him quite mad, for he danced and capered through the street, followed by a great many persons who seemed to partake in the same feeling of joy or madness. He exhibited first one leg and then the other alternately, extended his hands, and then pointed to a string of coral which encircled his ankles and wrists. The fact was, the king had made a 'gentleman' of him, having bestowed an honour similar to our knighthood, and placed the insignia of his order, the coral, round his legs and arms. He was anxious that everybody should see it, and displayed all the vanity and pride of a child when he is first breeched. (Fawckner in Roth, 1968:96)

Nyendael adds to our knowledge. He says the beads are "pale red coctile earth or stone and very well glazed," "like speckled red marble" (Roth, 1968:26). The corals were kept in the possession of the king. Counterfeiting them or owning them without his permission was punishable by death. Nobles were obliged to wear the beads continuously. If an owner lost the string or allowed it to be stolen he was condemned to death (Bosman, 1967:436-37).

Nyendael gives two incidents as confirmation:

> ... to one of which I was witness: viz. A Negroe, who thro' inadvertency had suffered this chain to be stolen from him, and without delay was executed, as was also the other who acknowledged himself guilty of the said robbery, besides three more which were privy to it, and did not timely discover it: Thus five men were put to death for a chain of coral, that was not intrinsically worth twopence. (Bosman, 1967:436)
>
> The second instance happened about the year 1700, and was somewhat more extraordinary. At that time there lay near ... [a Portuguese ship] obliged to stay a

> month or two after me, in order to get in his debts; which coming in very slowly, the Captain resolv'd to cause a Fiador, that was his greatest debtor, to be arrested in his ship; but when he attempted it, the other resisted, and endeavour'd to escape; and during the scuffle with the sailors, the pilot caught hold of his chain and coral, broke it in pieces and threw it over-board, which so dispirited the Fiador, that he let go his hold and surrendered himself immediately. But sometime after finding the pilot asleep, and having gotten a blunderbuss he shot him thro' the head, and thus oblig'd him to exchange his natural for a more lasting Sleep; with which the Negroe was not yet satisfied, but afterwards wounded the dead body in several places, and then threw away his knife, adding, That he had now taken his revenge, and that it was perfectly indifferent to him what they did with him: For continues he, When my coral was thrown over-board, I was a dead man; and at present I am in the same condition. (Bosman, 1967:437)

Beads in Relationship to the Supernatural

Ceremony of the Beads.--

> Truly coral played an important part at the court of Benin, and we cannot wonder that in time it got a juju of its own. (Roth, 1968:96)

The state ritual called by Egharevba "The Royal Coral Beads Ceremony" (Egharevba, 1960:50), was the Ugie-ivie. The Oba's beads and regalia were laid out by the Iwebo in the shrine of Oba Ewuare. A human being was sacrificed over them (Bradbury, 1970:59), and the beads and other regalia were "rededicated to the common purpose of maintaining the continuity and glory of the state" (Bradbury, 1967:573). Human and animal sacrifices were considered essential. The coral of the king, of his wives, and of his officers had to be immersed in the blood in order to induce the

fetish of the coral to never let them lack for this precious item (Beauvais in Roth, 1968:76). A prayer was considered to be sent by the messenger to the spirit of the beads (Roth, 1968:72).

Captain Roupell in 1898 made a collection of customs of the Bini from native officials. He said:

> Once a year at the end of the rainy season, all the king's beads were brought ... put in a heap, and a slave was brought in and made to kneel down; then the king ... struck his head so that the blood ran over the beads; ... [the Oba] said: 'Oh, beads, when I put you on give me wisdom and don't let any juju or bad thing come near me.' Then the slave was told: 'So you shall tell the bead juju when you see him.' The slave was then led out and beheaded, the head being brought in again, the beads and the men touched it, and it was finally left at the foot of ... the tree. (Roupell in Roth, 1968:71)

On one occasion visitors were allowed to inspect these corals. They noticed among them a ceremonial collar made of between fifteen and twenty strings of beads; this is similar to those found on many of the Benin brass heads (Roth, 1968:223-24).

Religion of Benin.--Burton said he recognized the Benin religion to be the "intricate and mysterious mythology of Yoruba," with modifications. Although among the Yoruba, the Ifa priests were a distinct body, Punch said he could never find traces of an initiated juju priesthood in Benin. The sacrificial killing was performed by the king's officer.

Shango, the god of thunder and lightning was worshipped (Roth, 1968:50,58), and Olokun occupied a prominent

place in the worship of Benin as god of wealth and water. He is often pictured with royal coral beads and headdress. The myths of Ewuare stealing coral beads from Olokun and of Chameleon and Olokun have already been told. Stories also connect Olokun with a king who had paralyzed legs and said he had become the Sea God (Parrinder, 1967:79,109).

Beads in Relationship to Age, Sex, and Status Roles

Scattered references show that beads play a part in age, sex, and status roles in Edo society.

Age and Sex.--Thomas says in Woreki "at the end of three months they dress the child with beads and take it to the head chief, who gives it a name" (Thomas, 1922:256). Nyendael reported in the same vein that almost all of the children went naked with only strings of coral twisted around their waists until the boys were ten or twelve years old and the girls had reached maturity (Bosman, 1967:440).

Fage says that in modern Benin ighbaghen, blue beads, are worn by women during their first pregnancy. These are said to be recovered from the river although one informant said they were brought to market by Itsekiri traders, and originally may have come from 'inside the ground' (Fage, 1962:346).

According to Talbot, after the birth of a child to one of the Oba's wives, she was allowed to wear two coral beads on both feet instead of brass anklets (Talbot, 1926:435).

Dapper commented on the men at the king's court who were naked except for a chain of jasper or corals around their necks. When the king gave them clothes, they were also presented with a wife, and thus made from boy into man. Afterwards the clothes were always worn (Roth, 1968: 24).

Class and Status.--The use of beads to indicate status* in government has already been discussed. They also served to indicate it in other ways. All the leopards killed in the territory were taken to the Oba. The man was given a bead necklace, anklets, and sometimes a wife in return (Talbot, 1926:736).

Burial customs varied with status although beads seemed to play a part in all burials. Customs differed, but in most places one individual representing 'father' sat dressed with beads and cloth. At Opepe after the burial all men of the town took guns and acted like men at war. A figure was made of cloth with a cap on the head and beads on the neck. This was carried by two men on their shoulders, and everybody marched and danced (Thomas, 1920:384,400).

Talbot commented on the difference of custom for chiefs. When a big chief died, his body was washed and

---

*Beads were such an indicator of status among the Edo that in Somarika, a town in the north, conquerors forbade the native population to wear beads (Bradbury, 1970:117).

dressed in white cloths and beads sent by the Oba. The body was set up in state on a stool. After animal sacrifices, feasts and dances, the Oba's beads were taken away and the death publicly announced. The chief's body was covered with cloths and strings of beads were fastened around his feet, hands, neck and forehead. If he had been an enemy of the Oba, he could not have been bathed or dressed (Talbot, 1926:483). For a 'smaller' man, white cowries would have been substituted for the beads (Thomas, 1920:380).

Beads in Relationship to the Economy

Trade.--Beads played an important part in the trade of Benin with European nations. By the 1440s when the Portuguese were exploring the African coast however, a long distance trade between the Sudan and Guinea was already established. Because of the high cost of transport it consisted mainly of luxuries. Beads were one of the items which travelled from north to south. However, some of the glass and stone beads traded in Guinea were of local origin, manufactured in Guinea itself, particularly in Yoribaland (Oliver & Fage, 1970:108,110).

By 1479, the Portuguese had developed trade with the gold-producing region of Mina. Many of the African merchants wanted slaves in exchange for their gold and the Portuguese turned to the Benin River area for them (Ryder, 1969:24,26). Fage theorizes that another reason for their

interest in the area, dominated by Benin, was its position as part of the Yoruba trading system (Fage, 1969:60). The Portuguese discovered that certain kinds of stone beads obtainable there were exchangeable in Mina for gold. They bought quantities of these blue stone beads called coris and other yellow and gray beads which were even more valuable as trade objects and treated as semi precious stones. These beads must have come from a source further into the interior, originally, perhaps one already known to Mina (Ryder, 1969:37).

In 1486, d'Aveiro was sent into the interior where by tradition he met Oba Ozolua. The following year a trading post was established (Ryder, 1969:29-30,32), but little information survives for the first 20 years. Records of one agent for a twenty month period are extant which indicate that along with manillas, cloth, and caps and horsetails:

> Coral and glass beads were imported in large quantities, amounting, for the twenty months in question, to 44 3/8 ounces of barrel-shaped coral beads (the most valuable variety), 33,844 pieces of small coral, 97 strings of glass beads, 28,069 loose glass beads, two strings of red beads fashioned from bone, and 84 large enameled ones. (Ryder, 1969:40)

Also occasional items were received to be presented to the Oba, such as a necklace of Indian beads, given in 1505. Other stray references exist. In 1519 the factor was told that although his primary function was slave-trading, he should not neglect other commodities useful for barter at

Mina, such as coris and gray beads. He was also told to keep Lisbon informed as to his requirements in beads. Ryder comments that the most striking thing about these goods is their function only for personal ornamentation (Ryder, 1969:41,54-55).

From ships' records a rather clear picture emerges of the part beads played in the trade between Benin and the Portuguese in the 1520s. In 1522, the commander of a ship is told that if slaves are unobtainable, he should barter his cargo which included coral and glass beads, for coris, yellow and gray beads, ivory and camwood. Among the customary presents at this time to give to the Oba, was 20 ounces of coral. A house was rented in Benin to serve as a storehouse for the glass beads and other merchandize taken there by headload. By this time a string of beads had become an accepted unit of value, although it played a minor role. Eight of the slaves were bought for strings of glass beads, the price varying from 46 to 50 strings. The pilot bought slaves and ivory and twelve lots of coris for a total of 1,427 beads (Ryder, 1969:55-62).

The pilot of another royal ship in 1526 bought 9,629 coris in addition to his slave cargo, but prices seem to have increased since 1522, perhaps because of a variation in quality of cori. Records of other ships at this time confirm that trade between Benin and Portugal had narrowed to two items: slaves and coris.

By the fifteen-thirties it is possible that the slave trade declined to relative insignificance; but on the other hand, trade in coris may have become brisker (Ryder, 1969: 64,67).

Beads also played a role in the tradings of other European countries with Benin. A 1582 document based on earlier experience of its author in Benin contains specific advice about beads to be included in the cargo of an English trader.

> ... at least fifteen pounds of artificial Flemish coral (these were tubular beads two-thirds of an inch long which were to be strung into bracelets and necklaces on green, red, and yellow thread, preferably with glass beads of the same colours between each coral--'The estimation of them is much in vallew there')! more artificial coral in nut-shaped beads to be interspersed with artificial pearls.... (Ryder, 1969:80)

For the first time utilitarian goods such as saws, knives, and hatchets appear on the list (Ryder, 1969:80).

By the end of the 16th century the Dutch had established trade with Benin and before 1620 they too were buying coris and beads for the Mina trade. By the mid 1600s a greater variety of merchandise had been offered Africans so trading had become more sophisticated with the Africans developing a taste for novelty which the Europeans had to satisfy. For example, in 1646, the English had done a good trade in Argo with a new kind of bead with spiral decorations in white and yellow. The Dutch factor sent home for beads of

that pattern and asked for other novelties. "Stimulated by these importations fashion and taste in Benin probably changed faster than in any previous age" (Ryder, 1969:84, 85,95,96).

Cloth and metal goods were in constant demand but

> The third major category of merchandise consisted of beads of many kinds. The commonest were small coloured glass beads manufactured in Venice and the Netherlands; for a time the Dutch had hopes that they might supplant cowries. As we have seen, novelty played an important part in the bead market, so it is not surprising to find a cargo formula or specification of 1646 listing fourteen different varieties.* The absence of coral in this and other lists of trade goods causes some surprises for the Dutch sold it elsewhere in West Africa. It may be that they had priced it beyond what the Oba was willing to pay; it is also possible that the absence of this essentially royal article is another reflection of the monarchy's weakness at this period. (Ryder, 1969:98)

We are poorly informed of European trade with Benin in the second half of the 17th century, but by 1715, records indicate stiff competition occurring among Europeans in the price and variety of beads they were selling. The Dutch found it difficult to compete with prices of others as their power continued to decline. Benin was also demanding round red pipe-coral and varieties of beads which the Dutch could

---

*Ryder quotes from A. R. Oude W.I.C.II, no. 93. I April 1646. (20:98) The main types of beads were the following: olivetten--glass beads of an olive shape, amber or red and white striped; rosados--large round beads, similar to those of a rosary; quisperlgrein--small glass beads in strings; madrigetten--the commonest type, small transparent glass beads in all colors from Venice and the northern Netherlands; margrieten--like madrigetten, but larger.

not furnish (Ryder, 1969:124,144,171,182).

It is interesting that at this time the words conte de terra appear in several references. In 1738, upon the arrival of a new Dutch factor, he is presented with an ounce of conte de terra (as well as a cow) by the Oba, a present which received a sarcastic comment on its 'generosity' by the factor. Ryder considers these to be country or local beads, and possibly the beads known as coris in earlier centuries. At his death this same factor was accused of having appropriated a large quantity of conte de terra from Dutchmen who had died (Ryder, 1969:187, 193). By 1741, Dutch trade had broken off, even though the Oba had sent messages asking that it be reopened. The factor reported:

> Enclosed herewith is a bead or conte de terre which the king sends to Your Honour as a sample; he says he has many like it and is ready to trade them. (Ryder, 1969:194)

Later developments in the trading of beads were: 1) Cloth became established as the basis for trade reckoning and beads were now evaluated in those terms (Ryder, 1969:208-09). 2) By this time slaves were paid for with an assortment of goods for each, so that if a trader lacked one item his trade might be ruined. The list included 'glass beads coloured of attractive designs, large and small' (Ryder, 1969:210,335). 3) In the 1790s trading practices seem little changed from centuries previous.

Masters of vessels still visited the Oba and made him presents which included cloths and strings of coral.
4) With the abolition of external slave trade, there was almost total cessation of trade as ivory was not enough to sustain it (Ryder, 1969:229,231). Little appears concerning coral or other beads relating to trade after that.

Treasury.--It was commonly believed that Benin was full of treasure of ivory and coral which each ruler was supposed to store. Bindloss says:

> ... I heard one or two Gold Coast officials speak of having seen hoards of gold-dust and Aggry beads in stockaded towns of the hinterland on which no negro dare lay a finger.... The value of such tabooed treasure had occasionally been estimated at an almost incredible sum, but when Benin was taken very little of value was found. (Bindloss, 1968:198)

Bacon agreed that when the city was taken the storehouse contained coral of little value (Bacon, 1897:92). However, the king said his coral had been stolen by his own "boys" so that when he offered a bribe to escape exile after his trial, it had to be of oil and ivory (Roth, 1968:xvii,xviii).

Nature of Coral.--The exact nature of the 'coral' which figures so prominently in the story of Benin is unfortunately unclear. Certainty of the composition might help to establish historical contact with other peoples and therefore their influence upon the Benin culture. The suppositions of Eve DeNegri have already been mentioned. She said the original king's beads, described as 'old coloured beads,'

were brought by Prince Oranmiyan and may have been like those excavated at Ile Ife. Then in the fifteenth century, Ewuare introduced 'stone' beads. Later agate or jasper was used, the supply discovered by Esigie. Eventually coral, first obtained from the Portuguese, became the most prized. Its scarcity and expense made it a symbol of wealth and status (DeNegri, 1964:210).

Dapper in 1668 described the chains around officials' necks as being made of corals or jasper (Roth, 1968:24). Nyendael in the 1700s described the beads as made of "pale red coctile earth or stone and very well glazed," and like "speckled red marble" (Bosman, 1967:437). Other Europeans simply refer to 'coral.' Roth reports that Landolphe in 1778 spoke of the large strings of coral on the king; Beauvais said the War Captain's wives had coral worked into their hair; and Adams in 1823 said coral was a favorite ornament of the royal wives. However, the trader Punch told Roth he did not think the above articles were made of coral, but of the Benin agate, with the exception of strings around the neck. Punch added that the King of Benin had few large coral beads, but rather 'insignificant pipe coral,' only striking when made into vests and hats, and that the Bini valued the agate more, especially the dull kind. Both concluded that the material varied but that all of the beads he had investigated were of red coral or agate (Roth, 1968:25,26).

Frobenius in 1910-1912 says he got some of the red beads considered by old historians to be of coral, and still considered in Benin to be valuable. He was told:

> ... they were a kind of red jasper. At all events, they are a precious stone. They are mostly wonderfully cut tubes, with an absolutely magnificent polish. No Benin man was able to say what their origin was. All that I could gather in South Yoruba was that they came from the North. But in Nupeland I first got more definite information. I was told that these stones, called Susi or Lantana, were mined in the North and cut in Ilorin.... [I] got the statement confirmed. Dealers come a good distance up the Niger, buy the pieces from the native miners close to the border of the Sahel region, take them down to Ilorin and there sell them to expert bead polishers. (Frobenius, 1968:334-35)

Ishan--a Province of Benin

Ishan (Esan) is a division of the Benin province to the northeast of Benin City. Dr. Okojie, a descendant of Ishan chiefs on both sides of his family, has collected material on history, tradition, and way of life of his people for a period of about 500 years (Okojie, 1960:7). To a remarkable extent, references to coral beads appear in this work.

Beads in Relationship to the Government

Some scattered peoples were in the jungle earlier, deserters from the Obas of Benin, but the real beginning of Ishan dates from the large exodus during the time of Ewuare, whom Okojie calls 'the Selfish' (Okojie, 1960:36). Coral beads are mentioned in the stories of founding of Ishan settlements at this time.

Migrating brothers are supposed to have stopped at a site called Aluotoegbele, to rest and divide their property of Ive (coral beads), slaves, etc., before they separated to found the villages of Uromi, Irrua, and Ubiaja (Okojie, 1960:210).

The villages of Ugboha, Equare and Emaudo, were founded by brothers who fled during the disintegration of the empire. The older brother, indisposed and unable to journey to Benin to be installed as ruler, sent his younger brother. This brother, loaded with bribes which included coral, received the right to be ruler instead. The older, refusing to submit, departed to found his own village (Okojie, 1960:232).

The village of Ekhu, a minor section of Eponi has this story told about its founding:

> This place was founded by ILOLO who was the son of the Oba then ruling in Benin. He was banished by his father for his cantankerous nature. He wandered with his family through the jungle until he got to a spot where the expensive necklace on his wife broke and got scattered in the bush. The whole party stopped at once and began searching for the beads. They searched high and low and by the evening they had cleared an area large enough to take two villages, Benin style! Still the main part of the necklace was nowhere to be found. In the evening they camped for the night--that camp let to EKHU! (Okojie, 1960:175)

Before the advent of the Europeans the Ishan territory consisted of loosely connected autonomous Chiefdoms, each group being built around a hereditary chief called an Onigie (Okojie, 1960:175), who must have had his title

confirmed by the Benin Oba to be fully recognized (Bradbury, 1970:71). Okojie tells this story to illustrate the point. Ekhimere was a great and wealthy ruler of Ogwa, who assumed the leadership about 1705, after a breakup in the settlement left the people free of their former ruler. "He became so rich that he was able to obtain a house OKANIVE (a coral bead carver)" (Okojie, 1960:316).

> One day one of the Benin traders trying to win the love of one of his daughters promised her one big coral bead, and disdainfully she retorted, "I am above the girl you can win with an offer of Ivie. My own father has Okanivie--so try another line!... Humiliated the Bini went to the Oba ... [who] dispatched an emissary at once to Ishan asking Ekhimere to remember that ... a commoner has no state sword let alone a coral bead carver!, and therefore he should dispatch the craftsman with all the beads he had already manufactured. Ekhimere said he had received the message and advised the messenger to go. After some time the Oba sent again, still with no result. So the Oba sent warriors to bring not the bead carver but Ekhimere's head. Ekhimere is remembered today as the great man who disappeared whereas what he did was to commit suicide by digging a deep ditch into which he, the Okanivie, and all the beads fell rather than the Oba reaping where he did not sow! Shounds silly but the act has carved his name on the record book of Ogwa after nearly 250 years. (Okojie, 1960:316)

Okojie comments that the point of the story is the crime this great leader was supposed to have committed, a non-royal person keeping a bead carver in his house! (Okojie, 1960:316).

Eve DeNegri has said that carved beads were considered special and could not be worn without permission from the king (DeNegri, 1964:210). Strangely, Egharevba does not

mention them. Nor does a reference appear elsewhere.

Coral played a part in the installation of a new onajie. In pure Ishan custom, accession occurred only after the burial of the last onajie. However, since the coming of the European the idea that "the throne is never vacant" has gradually taken over. Often now, as soon as the father dies, the first son is sent for. The old official paraphernalia including cap and beads formerly worn by the father is removed and placed on the son who is blessed at the ancestral shrine and installed. The succession and inheritance is not final until the three months long burial ceremony is complete. After the vital ceremonies which take seven days, the heir is now dressed in the traditional way with the wrists, ankles and neck resplendent with several coils or strings of coral beads (Okojie, 1960:68,69).

The Onagie is reported as having a variety of rights over women. At Ekpona, Uromi, and Ebele he could marry a woman simply by placing a string of coral beads around her neck (Bradbury, 1970:72).

> All he did was to send one of his CORAL BEAD necklaces. On reaching there the unsuspecting girl or woman was called and before she knew what was on, the bead was in her neck--she was then the Onojie's wife, a marriage as binding as if it was performed by the Chief Justice of Nigeria or Archbishop of West Africa! If the former husband in whose house this drama might have taken place looked at the woman or talked to her once the necklace had been placed round her neck, and she dared not remove it under the pain of death, he

> had committed adultery with the "King's wife" by look or spoken word; and as far as the Onojie was concerned--adultery was adultery, with no half-way measures, and the method, immaterial. The punishment was death. A wise man, therefore, deprived of his wife, and she might be the only one in his life, bore his agonizing sorrow in his heart. (Okojie, 1960:109)

Beads in Relationship to Age, Sex, and Status Roles

Status and Wealth.--The significance of these beads in indicating wealth and rank is shown in several legends related by Okojie. He tells of Oghomighon the Great, an Onohie of Ubiaja of 1463, who revelled in attempting the impossible.

> Men tie the expensive Coral Beads round their wrists and ankles as a mark of wealth and rank. If a few coils showed wealth, Oghomighon would show he was richer than any other monarch by tying coils round a palm tree from the ground to the top! He had not got half-way before death showed there was somebody mightier than the great Oghomighon! (Okojie, 1960:260)

He was deified by his people and is represented by a shrine in his town (Okojie, 1960:150).

Omi, a great blacksmith who introduced knives, hoes, and a matchet to Uromi, had become very rich and influential.

> One day he came to see the Onojie and at the Palace he saw some newly woven baskets which fascinated him just as much as his knives had made [others] marvel. ... He was bent on buying the baskets, but so fascinated was he that he removed the costly Coral Beads round his neck in exchange for these mere cane work, to the great astonishment of the courtiers. They wondered not at his wealth but at his stupidity: "Imagine exchangeing Coral Beads for mere OKHUALE! He must be a sheep." (Okojie, 1960:218)

A long necklace of coral beads worn around the neck indicated a well-to-do man, as well as representing the Onojie or Okhaemon (chief).

Hairstyles differed. Men above middle age would shave the scalp except a small section of hair which was plaited. An Ekan bead was tied to it (Okojie, 1960:43). This was a bead of valour. For instance, a man killing a leopard became by this act a hero in the district, publicly acknowledged by the Onojie, who blessed him and presented him the Ekan. He did not receive a title, but from then on he did rank with the elders and chiefs and had rights such as exemptions from forced labor and the privilege of staging the yearly war dance (Okojie, 1960:72).

Age and Sex.--Coral and other beads played a role in various aspects and stages of the woman's life. Up to the age of puberty young girls and boys wore nothing. However, around the waist, girls had many strings of Okpono, highly inflammable beads. The number indicated the wealth of the girls' parents. Touching her clothes or her waist beads was accepted by custom as constituting adultery unless immediately reported. In actual practice, this report to the husband exonerated only the woman (Okojie, 1960:43,78, 200).

Women had no place in the laws of inheritance, "in fact she was one of the inheritable properties." However, during the father's lifetime especially when he felt the

end was near, he might give her something "on the feminine line" like coral beads, clothing, or a goat (Okojie, 1960: 93).

Beads played a part in the acquiring of a wife by betrothal, in which a man could 'beg' for a girl's hand from time of conception to age five. If he were accepted no actual monetary bride price was demanded but, every so often he brought such things as yams, firewood and water and performed free labor. Once a year during the Community Festival special presents were made to the parents and beads and cloth were given to the girl (Okojie, 1960:101).

At about sixteen when the girl was mature, and within a week or so of going to her husband's place, she underwent clitoridectomy. If she was found to be a virgin, relatives, particularly of the intended husband, began to give presents to her. Later the husband gave gifts of money, beads and clothes. This ceremony was most pronounced among the Uzea. When the wound was healed the virtuous girl's hair was dressed by the special circumcision hairdresser in the traditional style for virtuous girls only, the Ojieto (The King of Hair) (Okojie, 1960:114,116), "a complicated affair of beauty making use of beads and old silver coins," and coral beads of all grades were placed around the neck and in the hair (Okojie, 1960:45,51).

During the next three months there was rejoicing for the girl and her family. The husband would spend much

money buying the Okpono waist beads and the coral beads for her neck. He used this waiting period to search for money to settle the bride price. In early days this was a small amount compared with what was spent on the girl's hair and beads, for by the time of the girl's maturity he should have paid the bride price in full by his services, but this has changed since the advent of the white man (Okojie, 1960: 116).

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Beads are such a common part of people's lives that they are usually considered (if at all) as interesting, but not of great significance. This study was undertaken to investigate the possible value of bead research. There were two main foci: 1) the location and study of literature on bead research in general, and 2) the location and study of material on the history, production, and functions of beads in African cultures, in particular. Concentration was on two peoples of West Africa, the Yoruba and the Bini. From this very introductory study, several conclusions can be drawn.

Bead Research in General

1) It was found that authoritative opinion varied as to the value of bead research with an apparent surge of interest having taken place in the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

2) Difficulties in definition, description, classification, and determination of composition, source, and date of manufacture complicate the analysis of beads found in archaeological investigations.

3) Interpretation of findings in bead research requires not only a wide knowledge of beads, but also of the cultures being investigated.

4) Historical bead research has its own set of problems, chief of which are the large gaps in the information available; the change in terminology over time; and the wide variety of languages of the literature, with the consequent confusion or unavailability of translations.

5) Progress was seen as occurring in methods of bead analysis such as microscopic, chemical, and spectroscopic techniques.

6) Interest in bead investigation, both popular and scientific, appears to be increasing.

7) A case study of the legendary aggrey beads of West Africa illustrated the difficulties, but also the possibilities and the great fascination in bead research.

Case Studies of the Yoruba and Bini

1) Beads can and do serve a variety of functions for the individual as a member of his society.

The use of beads may allow an individual to assert local aesthetic values. The Bini expressed his preference not only for coral; but for pipe coral of small size which made its splash in quantity; and for coral of dull finish.

The individual may communicate his social achievements as the Ishan man did when awarded an Ekan Bead of Valour for killing a leopard; or his religious beliefs as the Yoruba did so plainly with display of beads of proper color and type.

Beads allow the individual to establish his identity; whether permanently, as the council members in Benin who wore two rows of large coral around their necks; or temporarily, as the Yoruba bride who had a profusion of beautiful beads at her neck and waist.

2) Beads contribute to the functioning and maintenance of the societal system.

Beads may play a functional role in regulating the conduct of the society members as they did for the Ishan bride. She was rewarded with many coral beads around her neck and a special hair-do with beads and silver coins, if she remained a virgin until marriage as her society wished her to.

The Oba of Benin consciously manipulated the use of coral as a symbol in his title system which was created to control the two factions within his country. He also used the court ceremony and ritual involving coral to extend his influence to other areas.

Beads functioned in confirming the succession to the rule. An Ishan Onojie was not considered properly installed

until the beads formerly worn by the father were placed on the son.

3) It is the symbolism of the bead which is important. This may not be related to its monetary value.

The symbolic value of the 'coral' in representing status in Benin did not change although its composition apparently varied over time. Nyendael commented on the death of five men because of the theft of a chain of coral not worth twopence.

The symbolism of the beads in representing the Yoruba gods remained even though transferred to another country, Cuba, and identified with another religion, Roman Catholicism.

The study of beads can provide a source of knowledge of varying accuracy and amount for a variety of disciplines. The research may suggest new areas of study or provide added data for previous areas. The study is a complicated undertaking which, however, appears to have a fruitful future. The human ecologist has a contribution to make in studying social significance of beads, which will add to her own discipline as well as provide supplementary knowledge to others.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ajisafe, A. K., The Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People, London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1924, facsimilae, 1971.

Alagea, E. J., "The Niger Delta States and Their Neighbors, 1600-1800," In History of West Africa, Vol. I, edited by J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.

Allen, William, and Thomson, T. R. H., A Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841, Vol. I, London: Richard Bentley, 1848.

Anonymous, "Health Visitor in a Yoruba Town," Nigeria Magazine, No. 58 (1958), pp. 276-286.

Anonymous, "Masai Sell the Beads Back to the White Man," Safari, October/November, 1971, pp. 17-18.

Arkell, A. J., "Cambay and the Bead Trade," Antiquity, Vol. 10 (1936), pp. 292-305.

Bacon, R. H., Benin, the City of Blood, London: Edward Arnold, 1897.

Barbot, John, A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, Vol. V. of Churchill's Collection of Voyages and Travels, London, 1732.

Bascom, William, "The Yoruba in Cuba," Nigeria Magazine, No. 31 (1951), pp. 14,15,17,19,20.

Bascom, William, The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Basden, G. T., Niger Ibos, London: Seeley, Service and Co., Ltd., 1938.

Battell, Andrew, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell, London: Hakluyt Society, 1901.

Beck, Horace C., "Classification and Nomenclature of Beads and Pendants," Archaeologia, Vol. XXVII (1928), pp. 1-76.

Beck, Horace C., "Rhodesian Beads," in The Zimbabwe Culture, by Gertrude Caton-Thompson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931, pp. 229-242.

Beier, Ulli, A Year of Sacred Festivals, Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1959.

Bindloss, Harold, In the Niger Country, London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1968.

Bosman, William, A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967.

Botelho, Ayres, "Accounts of Ayres Botelho, Factor at Axim. 16 February 1508," in John William Blake (translator and editor), Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Vol. I, London: Hakluyt Society, 1942, pp. 97-98.

Bovill, E. W., The Golden Trade of the Moors, London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Bowdich, T. Edward, Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1966.

Bradbury, R. E., "Chronological Problems in the Study of Benin History," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. I, No. 4 (December, 1959), pp. 263-87.

Bradbury, R. E., "Father and Senior Son in Edo Mortuary Ritual," in African Systems of Thought, prefaced by M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, published for the International African Institute, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Bradbury, R. E., "The Historical Uses of Comparative Ethnography with Special Reference to Benin and the Yoruba," in Vansina, J., Mauny, R., and Thomas, L. V., The Historian in Tropical Africa, published for the International African Institute, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Bradbury, R. E., "Notes" in Bosman, William, A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967.

Bradbury, R. E., The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria, London: International African Institute, 1970.

Brottem, Bronwyn V., and Lang, Ann, "Zulu Beadwork," African Arts, Spring, 1973, pp. 8-13,64,83.

Campbell, Robert, A Pilgrimage to My Motherland, an Account of a Journey among the Egbas and Yorubas of Central Africa, in 1859-60, New York: Thomas Hamilton, 1861.

Cardinall, A. W., "Aggrey Beads of the Gold Coast," Journal of the African Society, Vol. 24 (July, 1925), pp. 287-98.

Carey, Margret, "Review of Sleen, W. G. N. van der, A Handbook on Beads," Man, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Association, New Series, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March, 1968), p. 141.

Caton-Thompson, G., The Zimbabwe Culture, Second Edition, London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1971.

Clapperton, Hugh, Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo, London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1966.

Clarke, J. D., "Ilorin Stone Bead Making," Nigeria, No. 14 (1938), pp. 156-57.

Cohn, J. C., "The Bead Collection of the Archaeological Survey," South African Archaeological Bulletin, Vol. 14, No. 54 (1959), pp. 75-78.

Crowder, Michael, A Short History of Nigeria, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966.

Curtin, Philip D., The Image of Africa, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.

Daniel, F., "Beadworkers of Ilorin, Nigeria," Man, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1937), pp. 7-8.

Davidson, Basil, The African Past, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967.

Davidson, Basil, Africa, History of a Continent, London: Spring Books, 1972.

Dei-Anang, Michael, Ghana Resurgent, Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1964.

DeMarees, P., "A Description and Historical Declaration of the Golden Kingdom of Guinea, Otherwise Called the Golden Coast of Myna...." (1602). Translated from the Dutch, in Samuel Purchas, Purchas His Pilgrimes, Vol. VI, Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905, pp. 247-366.

DeNegri, Eve, "Yoruba Women's Costume," Nigeria Magazine, No. 72 (March, 1962), pp. 4-12.

DeNegri, Eve, "Nigerian Jewellery," Nigeria Magazine, No. 74 (September, 1962), pp. 43-54.

DeNegri, Eve, "... the King's Beads," Nigeria Magazine, No. 82 (September, 1964), pp. 210-16.

Dennett, R. E., Nigerian Studies or the Religious and Political Systems of the Yoruba, London: Macmillan and Co., 1910.

Dicke, B. H., The Bush Speaks, Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1937.

Dike, Kenneth Onwuka, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

Dikshit, Moreshwar G., History of Indian Glass, Bombay: Bombay University Press, 1969.

DuToit, A. P., "Glass Beads as a Medium of Dating Archaeological Sites," South African Journal of Science, Vol. 60, No. 4 (April, 1964), pp. 98-99.

DuToit, A. P., "A Preliminary Survey of the Beads of Ingombe Ilede, Northern Rhodesia," Man, Vol. 65 (1965), pp. 11-15.

Eden, Richard, "Richard Eden's Account of Windham's Voyage to Guinea," in John William Blake (translator and editor), Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Vol. II, London: Hakluyt Society, 1942, pp. 314-46.

Egharevba, Jacob, A Short History of Benin, Ibadan: University Press, 1960.

Eicher, Joanne Bubolz, African Dress: A Select and Annotated Bibliography of Sub-Saharan African Countries, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970.

Eisen, Gustavus, "The Characteristics of Eye Beads from the Earliest Times to the Present," American Journal of Archaeology, Second Series, Vol. XX, No. 1 (1916), pp. 1-27. (A)

Eisen, Gustavus, "Button Beads--with Special Reference to Those of the Etruscan and Roman Periods," American Journal of Archaeology, Second Series, Vol. XX, No. 3 (1916), pp. 299-307. (B)

Elgee, C. H., "Ensigns of Royalty in West Africa," Journal of the African Society, Vol. 4, No. XVI (July, 1905), pp. 391-396.

Ellis, A. B., The Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, Oosterhout, N. B., The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966. Photomechanic Reprint of the edition of 1890.

Ellis, A. B., The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1894.

Erikson, Joan Mowat, The Universal Bead, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969.

Fadipe, N. A., The Sociology of the Yoruba, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970.

Fage, J. D., "Some Remarks on Beads and Trade in Lower Guinea in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," Journal of African History, Vol. III, No. 2 (1962), pp. 343-347.

Fage, J. D., A History of West Africa, Cambridge: University Press, 1969.

Fagg, William, Nigerian Images, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.

Fagg, William, and Willett, Frank, "Ancient Ife--an Ethnographical Summary," Odu, No. 8 (October, 1960), pp. 21-35.

Farrow, Stephen S., Faith, Fancies and Fetish or Yoruba Paganism, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1926.

Forde, Daryll, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria, London: International African Institute, 1951.

Fourneau, J., "Ancient Glass-Paste Beads from Zanaga (Middle French Congo)," South African Archaeological Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 37 (March, 1955), pp. 15-19.

Frobenius, Leo, The Voice of Africa, London: Paternoster Row, 1913.

Gardi, Rene, African Crafts and Craftsmen, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969.

Gleason, Judith, Orisha: The Gods of Yorubaland, New York: Atheneum, 1971.

Hambly, W. D., "Culture Areas of Nigeria," Field Museum of Natural History Anthropological Series, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (1935).

Harding, J. R., "Nineteenth-Century Trade Beads in Tanganyika," Man, Vol. 62 (July, 1962), pp. 104-06.

Hobley, C. W., Bantu Beliefs and Magic, London: H. F. & G. Witherby, Ltd., 1922.

Hodgkin, Thomas, Nigerian Perspectives, London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Ibn Battuta, Mohammed, Travels in Asia and Africa, translated by H. A. R. Gibb, London: 1929.

Idowu, E. Bolaji, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1962.

Jeffreys, M. D. W., "Some Beads from Awka," The Nigerian Field, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January, 1954), pp. 37-44.

Jeffreys, M. D. W., "Aggrey Beads," African Studies, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1961), pp. 97-113.

Johnson, Samuel, The History of the Yorubas, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1924.

Johnston, Harry, Liberia, Vol. I, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1906.

Junod, Henry A., The Life of a South African Tribe, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1927.

Kalous, Milan, "A Contribution to the Problem of Akori Beads," Journal of African History, Vol. VII, No. 1 (1966), pp. 61-66.

Karklins, Karlis, and Sprague, Roderick, "Glass Trade Beads in North America: An Annotated Bibliography," Historical Archaeology, Vol. VI (1972), pp. 87-101.

Kidd, Kenneth, and Kidd, Martha Ann, "A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists," Ottawa, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1970. Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 1.

Kraft-Askari, Eva, Yoruba Towns and Cities, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

Krige, J. D., and Krige, E. J., "The Lovedu of the Transvaal," in Daryll Forde (Editor), African Worlds, London: Oxford University Press, for the International African Institute, 1963, pp. 55-82.

Laird, MacGregor, and Oldfield, R. A. K., Narrative of an Expedition, London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1971.

Lamb, Alastair, "Some Glass Beads from the Malay Peninsula," Man, March-April, No. 30 (1965), pp. 36-38.

Lander, Richard and John, The Niger Journal, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

Lawrence, A. W., "Some Source Books for West African History," Journal of African History, Vol. II, No. 2 (1961), pp. 227-234.

Legum, Colin, "The Elusive City," Nigeria (1960), pp. 157-66.

Leuzinger, Elzy, Africa: The Art of the Negro Peoples, New York: McGraw Hill, 1960.

Lloyd, P. C., "Osifakerode of Ijebu," Odu, No. 8 (October, 1960), pp. 59-64.

Lloyd, P. C., "The Itsekiri," in Bradbury, R. E., The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria, London: International African Institute, 1970.

Lucas, J. Olumide, The Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos, C. M. S. Bookshop, 1948.

MacDonald, George, The Gold Coast, Past and Present, New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1898.

Mauny, R., "Akori Beads," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. I, No. 3 (December, 1958), pp. 210-14.

Mellor, Rev. W. F., "Bead Embroiderers of Remo," Nigeria Magazine, No. 14 (1938), pp. 154-55.

Newton, R. G., and Renfrew, Colin, "British Faience Beads Reconsidered," Antiquity, Vol. XLIV, No. 175 (September, 1970), pp. 199-206.

Northrup, David, "The Growth of Trade Among the Igbo Before 1800," Journal of African History, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (1972), pp. 217-36.

Ojo, G. J. Afolabi, Yoruba Culture A Geographical Analysis, London: University of Ife and University of London Press, 1966.

Ojo, J. R., and Morton-Williams, Peter, "Introduction and Notes," in Illustrated Guide, University of Ife Museum, University of Ife Press, 1969.

Okojie, Dr. Christopher G., Ishan Native Laws and Customs, Yoba: John Okwest & Co., 1960.

Oliver, Roland and Fage, J. D., A Short History of Africa, London: Penguin Books, 1970.

Pacheco Pereira, Duarte, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, Translated by George H. T. Kimble, London: Hakluyt Society, 1937.

Parrinder, Geoffrey, West African Religion A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples, London: The Epworth Press, 1961.

Parrinder, Geoffrey, African Mythology, London: Paul Hamlyn, 1967.

Price, John Edward, "On Aggri Beads," The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, Vol. XII (1883), pp. 64-68.

Quiggin, A. Hingston, A Survey of Primitive Money, Northampton: John Dickens & Co., Ltd., 1963.

Ramusio, G. B., Navigationi e Viaggi (1550, I, 125-29) in John William Blake (translator and editor), Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Vol. I, London: Hakluyt Society, 1942, pp. 145-66.

Read, C. H., "A Necklace of Glass Beads from West Africa," Man, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1905), pp. 1-2.

Roach, Mary Ellen, unpublished material on "Dress: Form and Function," 1974.

Roach, Mary Ellen, and Eicher, Joanne Bubolz, Dress, Adornment, and the Social Order, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965.

Roome, William J. W., Aggrey: The African Teacher, London and Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Ltd., n.d.

Roth, H. Ling, Great Benin, Its Customs, Art and Horrors, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1968.

Ryder, A. F. C., "An Early Portuguese Trading Voyage to the Forcados River," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. I, No. 4 (1959), pp. 294-321.

Ryder, A. F. C., "A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship," Journal of African History, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1965), pp. 25-37.

Ryder, A. F. C., "Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast During the Seventeenth Century," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. III, No. 3 (1966), pp. 195-210.

Ryder, A. F. C., Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897, New York: Humanities Press, 1969.

Schoeman, H. S., "A Preliminary Report on Traditional Beadwork in the Mkhwanazi Area of the Mtunzini District, Zululand, Part One," African Studies, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1968), pp. 57-81.

Schoeman, H. S., "A Preliminary Report on Traditional Beadwork in the Mkhwanazi Area of the Mtunzini District, Zululand, Part Two," African Studies, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1968), pp. 107-133.

Schofield, J. F., "Beads: Southern African Beads and Their Relation to the Beads of Inyanga," Chapter X in Summers, Roger, Inyanga, Prehistoric Settlements in Southern Rhodesia, Cambridge: University Press, 1958, pp. 180-229.

Shaw, Thurstan, "The Prehistory of West Africa," in Ajayi, J. F. A., and Crowder, Michael (editors), History of West Africa, Vol. I, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, pp. 33-77.

Sleen, W. G. N. van der, "Bead-Making in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam," Archaeology, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter, 1963), pp. 260-63.

Sleen, W. G. N. van der, A Handbook on Beads, Liege: Musee du Verre, 1967.

Smith, Robert, Kingdoms of the Yoruba, London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1969.

Sordinas, Augustus, "Modern Koli Beads in Ghana," Man, Vol. 64, No. 90 (1964), pp. 75-76.

Sorensen, Cloyd, "The Enduring Intrigue of Glass Trade Beads," Arizona Highways, Vol. XLVII, No. 7 (July, 1971), pp. 10-34, 36-37.

Stevens, Phillips, "Orishna-Nla Festival," Nigeria Magazine, No. 90 (September, 1966), pp. 184-99.

Stride, G. T., and Ifeka, Caroline, Peoples and Empires of West Africa, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1971.

Talbot, P. Amaury, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, London: Oxford University Press, 1926.

Temple, R. C., "Beginnings of Currency," Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. XXIX (1899), pp. 115-51.

Thomas, N. W., "Notes on Edo Burial Customs," The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. L (1920), pp. 377-411.

Thomas, N. W., "Birth Customs of the Edo-Speaking Peoples," The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. LII (1922), pp. 250-58.

Thompson, Robert Farris, Black Gods and Kings, Los Angeles: University of California, 1971.

Thompson, Robert Farris, "The Sign of the Divine King: Yoruba Bead-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations," in Fraser, Douglas, and Cole, Herbert M., Editors, African Art and Leadership, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972, pp. 227-60.

Tong, Raymond, Figures in Ebony, London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1958.

Twala, Regina G., "Beads as Regulating the Social LIfe of the Zulu and Swazi," in Alan Dundes, Every Man His Way: Readings in Cultural Anthropology, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, pp. 364-79.

Van Riet Lowe, Clarence, "The Glass Beads of Mapungubwe," Archaeological Series No. IX, Archaeological Survey, Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1955.

Weiner, Leo, Africa and the Discovery of America, Vol. II, Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1922.

Wild, R. P., "A Method of Bead-Making Practised in the Gold Coast," Man, Vol. 37 (1937), pp. 96-97.

Willett, Frank, "The Discovery of New Brass Figures at Ife," Odu, No. 6 (July, 1958), pp. 29-34.

Willett, Frank, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Ilesha," Odu, No. 8 (October, 1960), pp. 5-12.

Willett, Frank, Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967.

Willett, Frank, "Ife and Its Archaeology," in Papers in African Prehistory, edited by J. D. Fage and R. A. Oliver, Cambridge: University Press, 1970, pp. 303-26.

Willett, Frank, African Art, New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971.

Willett, Frank, "Ife, the Art of an Ancient Nigerian Aristocracy," in Fraser, Douglas, and Cole, Herbert M., Editors, African Art and Leadership, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972, pp. 209-26.

Willis, John Ralph, "Introduction," in Bosman, William, A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967.

Zimmerman, J. A., A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra- or Ga-Language, Stuttgart: Basel Missionary Society, 1858.