

BOOK REVIEWS

Trade Beads and the Conquest of Mexico.

Isabel Kelly. Rolston-Bain, Sandwich P.O. Box 7092, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. 1992. i-vi + 292 pp., 13 b&w figs., 1 color fig. \$64.95 U.S. (paper cover).

I was glad to hear that this book had been published. In the 1980s, when I first began cultivating an interest in beads from Spanish-colonial sites, I came across a letter written to Charles Fairbanks by Isabel Kelly in 1976. Dr. Fairbanks, one of the pioneers of Spanish-colonial archaeology and a professor at the University of Florida, had died in 1985, and the letter was contained in some of his files archived at the Florida Museum of Natural History. In the letter, Kelly described an interesting collection of glass beads from Xochipala, Guerrero, Mexico, that she had been loaned for study by a collector. Due to the presence of several Nueva Cadiz and faceted chevron beads, she believed that the collection probably dated to the 16th century, and had written Fairbanks to inform him of them and to ask questions about some other beads in the collection. There was no reply in the file, but I was intrigued by her description of the assemblage.

The color plate in this book depicts the three necklaces that were the subject of her letter, and she describes the entire assemblage. Unfortunately, the beads are from more than one time period, evidently mixed by the people who dug them up or by the collector. But this book is much more than just a description of this modest collection.

Part I is an exhaustive chronological overview of Spanish and Native American documentary and secondary sources dealing with expeditions to Mexico and the Caribbean in the 15th and 16th centuries. From published accounts and primary documents, Kelly cites every instance where beads are mentioned as exchange or cargo carried to the New World, and puts

each of these instances into context. She then examines the documentary descriptions with a critical eye, pointing out which sources appear to be the most reliable and which are inconsistent or unreliable.

This text is followed by 10 tables which summarize the sources and pertinent page numbers where beads are mentioned or discussed. Each table refers to a different expedition, from Columbus through Cortés. A diagram reveals which documentary sources drew on earlier sources for information. The amount of information in Part I is truly impressive, and Kelly's critical treatment of the sources helps the reader separate the wheat from the chaff in terms of reliable accounts.

Part II goes into greater detail about specific bead types, and provides a chronological list of bead shipments to the New World and archaeological data from Mexico. Much of the information on bead shipments was gleaned from documents in the *Archivo General de Indias*, originally compiled by John Goggin and Charles Fairbanks, but never before published. These data are presented in both text and tabular form, describing the beads and other trade items, their value at the time of purchase and their destination in the New World. In most cases, the descriptions are provided in both English and the original Spanish wording so that the reader can judge what the shipping lists describe. By combining information on shipping with the documentary accounts, Kelly also provides insight regarding the sources of some of the beads and other objects. She also makes a strong case for the identification of two specific beads mentioned in Spanish documents—*margaritas* and *diamantes*—as chevron and Nueva Cadiz beads, respectively.

The archaeological descriptions include Kelly's study of the Xochipala collection, coupled with the rather meager data available from other archaeological sites in Mexico, listed by state. In

addition to the color plate of the Xochipala beads, there are close-up black-and-white photographs as well, but these are, unfortunately, of a poor quality.

This book is truly a tour de force of scholarship, and will be an essential reference for anyone interested in beads from Spanish-colonial sites in Mesoamerica or South America. Its thorough and critical examination of documentary sources and shipping lists also makes it a valuable reference tool for archaeologists studying Spanish-colonial sites in North America and the Caribbean.

I only have three complaints. First, the photographs are of poor quality, failing to depict crucial details that are necessary for proper identification. Second, the book is perfect bound, and the binding cracked within the first few minutes of use. Considering the high cost, the publishers could have done a better job of binding so that it would last. And third, there is no information about Isabel Kelly herself (other than a studio photograph of her circa 1964, and an undated shot of her in the field). She died a number of years ago, and it would have been interesting to know how the book came to be published and whether it was complete at the time of her death.

But these minor factors aside, this book is an exemplary piece of scholarship, and the reader interested in learning about the Spanish-colonial bead trade in the New World will be well-rewarded by perusing it.

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The PANTONE Book of Color.

Leatrice Eiseman and Lawrence Herbert.
Harry N. Abrams, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York,
NY 10011. 1990. 160 pp., 1,024 color swatches,
index. \$29.95 (hard bound).

PANTONE Textile Color Guide - Paper Edition.

Pantone, Inc. 590 Commerce Boulevard,
Carlstadt, NJ 07072-3098. 1992. 1,701 color
swatches, index. \$99.00 (paper fan deck).

Color is a bead's most significant cultural attribute. Consequently, it is also one of the principal physical attributes used by researchers to classify these objects. While some individuals have espoused the use of general color names with simple modifiers (e.g., "light green" and "deep blue") without reference to a particular color scheme, the fact that 30 shades have been recorded for blue and purplish blue beads alone so far (Karklins 1989:10-11) make this unpractical. As the reason for describing beads in the first place is to pass information on to other researchers, we must ensure that color (and other) data are recorded as accurately as possible so that there will be no misunderstandings regarding what is being described. This is especially important to those preparing and refining chronological sequences for specific bead varieties and tracing their distribution around the world.

Several color systems have been used by bead researchers over the years in an attempt to standardize color identification and allow for accurate inter-site comparisons of bead assemblages. The *Munsell Book of Color* (Munsell Color 1976) is the accepted scientific standard but its high cost (currently \$525.00) keeps it out of the hands of all but the most dedicated bead researchers. Kenneth Kidd employed the *Color Harmony Manual* (Container Corporation of America 1958) in his widely accepted classification scheme but the *Manual* is rather obscure and has been out of print for at least a decade. The Centroid Color Charts published by the Inter-Society Color Council - National Bureau of Standards seemed like a likely candidate but, despite their usefulness, they were discontinued several years ago.

Casting about for an inexpensive and generally available color scheme that might suit the needs of the growing number of bead researchers around the world, I stumbled across a copy of *The PANTONE Book of Color* at The Bead Museum in Prescott, Arizona. This rather slim volume contains 25 pages of text and 128 pages of color swatches. The introduction explains the Pantone system and points out that the book "was developed in response to requests for a standard color