

# IDENTIFYING BEADS USED IN THE 19TH-CENTURY CENTRAL EAST AFRICA TRADE

Karlis Karklins

*A wide variety of glass beads poured into Central East Africa during the second half of the 19th century as explorers, missionaries and others made their way into the uncharted interior. Each kind had a name and value that, much to the chagrin of the travelers and present-day researchers, varied from one region to another. This article synthesizes what historical documentation reveals about some of the more significant beads in the trade with an eye to identifying the actual beads that are represented.*

## INTRODUCTION

Europeans intent on exploring Central East Africa (Fig. 1) during the second half of the 19th century quickly came to realize that beads would be an indispensable part of the goods they carried inland. Second only to cloth in importance, beads were the “small change” used to purchase provisions along the way. Unfortunately, the variety available was bewildering to the neophyte explorer; Richard F. Burton (1860: 390) noted that “there are about 400 current varieties, of which each has its peculiar name, value, and place of preference.” Just over a decade later, Henry M. Stanley (1913: 24-5) confessed:

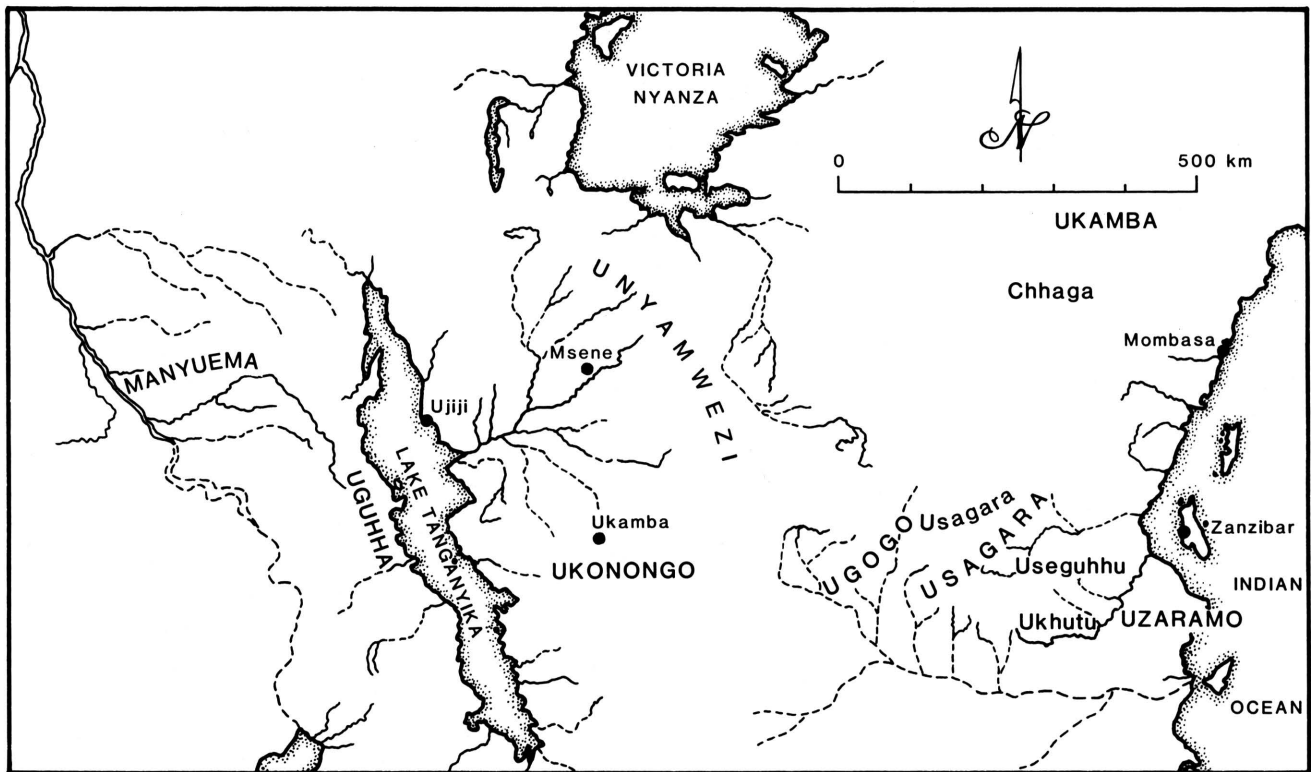
My anxiety on this point was most excruciating. Over and over I studied the hard names and measures, conned again and again the polysyllables, hoping to be able to arrive some time at an intelligible definition of the terms. I revolved in my mind the words Mukunguru, Ghulabio, Sungomazzi, Kadunduguru, Mutunda, Sami-sami, Bubu, Merikani, Hafde, Lunghio-Rega, and Lakhio, until I was fairly beside myself.

One can appreciate his consternation when faced with the above terms, especially in light of Burton's (1860: 390) warning that the bead merchants would “seize the opportunity of palming off the waste and refuse of their warehouses,” causing all manner of grief once the expedition was far inland. Fortunately for us, Richard F. Burton, Henry M. Stanley, Horace Waller, C.W. Hobley and J.R. Harding have recorded the local names, descriptions and values of the more important beads available in Central East Africa during the second half of the 19th century. In addition, the History Section of the Royal Museum of Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren, Belgium, possesses two wooden trays of beads (cat. nos. 54.72.134 [Pl. VIB; Appendix A] and 135) that form part of the H.M. Stanley collection. Several of the varieties have accompanying paper tags that provide their native names and values. It is not known who provided the identifications or when, and at least one tag was obviously in the wrong compartment, but the identifications generally seem plausible and are set forth here for verification or refutation by other researchers.

## BEADS SIGNIFICANT IN THE EAST AFRICA TRADE

Called *kharaz* by the Arabs and *ushanga* by the Swahili, beads were sold in Zanzibar by various weight standards (Burton 1860: 390-1). However, the standard used by our sources to value the different varieties is the *frasilah* (pl. *farasilah*) which was equivalent to about 36 lbs.

Once purchased, the beads (which were bought loose) had to be formed into strands of specific



**Figure 1.** Map of Central East Africa ca. 1872 showing places mentioned by Burton, Stanley and Hopley. Capitalized names designate what Stanley generally terms “countries,” while names in upper and lower case letters are smaller “territories” (after Stanley [1913: end map]; drawing by D. Kappler).

lengths for use inland. The strands were “generally made of palm-fibre, and much depends for successful selling, especially in the larger kinds of beads, upon the regularity and attractiveness of the line” (Burton 1860: 391).

The beads discussed below include those that Richard F. Burton took with him on the East African Expedition of 1857-59, and that Henry M. Stanley utilized during his search for Livingstone (1871-72) and on subsequent journeys in 1874-78. Information regarding “the more valuable beads” also comes from Livingstone’s faithful servants, Susi and Chuma, who visited London shortly after their master’s death in 1873 (Waller 1875: 150-1). C.W. Hopley’s (1970: 245-9) observations on primitive currencies in East Africa during the late 19th century and J.R. Harding’s (1962) notes on beads employed in German East Africa in the 1890s provide additional details.

### Beads Utilized By Burton And Stanley

Although several hundred bead varieties were available to them in Zanzibar, Burton found only 18 to be worth mentioning, while Stanley carried just 11 varieties during his early travels. The varieties are listed in alphabetical order for ease of reference.

**Asmani.** Burton (1860: 394) states that these beads are made of “sky-coloured glass” while (Harding 1962: 104) describes them as “seed” and “pound” beads of dark blue glass.

**Bubu.** Called *bubu* in Swahili (also spelled *ububu* and *bububu*), this bead is also known as *ukumwi*, *khuni* and *ushanga ya vipande* (Burton 1860: 394; Stanley 1913: 24; Waller 1875: 150-1). Stanley (1913: 24) explains that these beads, “though currency in Ugo, were positively worthless with all other tribes.” Burton (1860: 394) adds the following comments:

[These] are black Venetians, dull dark porcelain [i.e., opaque glass], ranging, at Zanzibar, from 5 to 7 dollars. They are of fourteen sizes, large, medium, and small; the latter are the most valued. These beads are taken by the Wazaramo. In East Usagara and Unyamwezi they are called khuni or firewood, nor will they be received in barter except when they excite a temporary caprice.

This bead equates with drawn Kidd (1970) varieties IIa6 (round [globular]) and IIa7 (circular [short barrel]), opaque black (Pl. VIB, R.2, #6).

**Choroko.** Also called *mágiyo* or *magio*, these are “dull green porcelains” (Burton 1860: 394); i.e., “seed” and “pound” beads of opaque green glass (Harding 1962: 104).

**Ghubari.** Known as *ghubari* (“dust-coloured”) or *nya kifu*(?), this “is a small dove-coloured bead, costing, in Zanzibar, from 7 to 8 dollars. It is used in Uzaramo, but its dulness [sic] of aspect prevents it being a favourite” (Burton 1860: 394).

**Gulabi.** Various spelled *gulabi* (“the rosy” in Swahili), *gulabio*, *ghulabio* and *golabio*, and also known as *máguru lá nzige* (“locust’s feet”), these beads are “pink porcelain” (i.e., opaque pink glass) (Burton 1860: 392; Harding 1962: 104; Hobley 1970: 246; Stanley 1913: 25). Burton (1860: 392) states that these were “next in demand to the sámesáme, throughout the country, except at Ujiji, where they lose half their value.... The price in Zanzibar varies from 12 to 15 dollars per *frasilah*.” Hobley (1970: 246-7) notes that they are “pound” (*ushanga*) beads ca. 1/8 in. (3 mm) in diameter.

In the RMCA collection, this bead is identified as a round to circular drawn bead (Kidd type IVa) with an opaque pink outer layer and a translucent light gray core (Pl. VIB, R.2, #2 and 3a). Its diameter is 3.2-3.8 mm. It was valued at \$8.50 per *frasilah*.

**Háfizi.** Burton (1860: 393) asserts that “the staple of commerce is a coarse porcelain [opaque glass] bead, of various colours, known in Zanzibar by the generic name of háfizi. There are three [sic] principal kinds:”

**Khanyera** or **kanyera.** Also called *ushanga waupa* (“white beads”), these were “common throughout the country” (Burton 1860: 393-4; Stanley 1878: 114). Six dollars per *frasilah* was the average

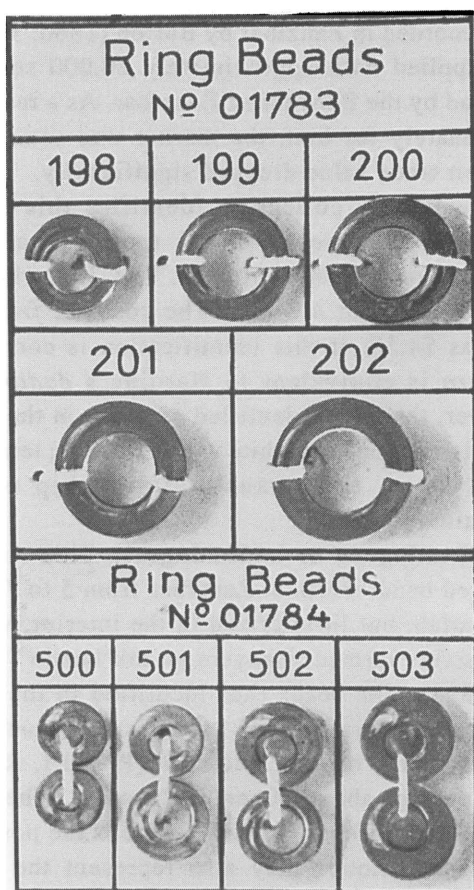
price recorded in Zanzibar by Burton (1860: 394) who was supplied with approximately 20,000 strands of this bead by the Banyans of Zanzibar. As a result, and unfortunately for him, the market was soon glutted and their trade value dropped significantly.

The RMCA collection identifies this bead as drawn Kidd varieties IIa11 (round) and IIa12 (circular), translucent white (Pl. VIB, R.2, #1). Their diameter is about 4.2 mm. The cost per *frasilah* is given as \$4.50. If this identification is correct, the *khanyera* is equivalent to Harding’s *dudio* (q.v.). However, the beads identified as *dudio* in the RMCA collection are opaque white which Harding terms *hafti* (q.v.). Thus, their exact relationship remains uncertain.

**Kidunduguru** or **kadunduguru.** This “is a dull brick-red bead, worth at Zanzibar from 5 to 7 dollars per *frasilah*, but little prized in the interior, where it is derisively termed *khanyera ya mk’hundu*” (Burton 1860: 394). The beads thus identified in the RMCA collection are drawn Kidd varieties IIa1 (round) and IIa2 (circular), opaque brick red (Pl. VIB, R.1, #1), which average about 4.0 mm in diameter. Their value is given as \$4.50 per *frasilah*. There is the possibility that these varieties may also represent the *lak’hio* beads described below.

**Merkani** or **merikani.** According to Burton (1860: 394), this is “another red variety” which “is finely made to resemble the sámesáme, and costs from 7 to 11 per *frasilah*. Of this bead there are four several subdivisions.” Stanley (1913: 24, 400, 553), on the other hand, uniformly refers to these as “white beads,” which, “though good in Ufipa, and some parts of Usagara and Ugogo, would certainly be despised in Useguhhu, and Ukonongo.” The white *merikani* beads were commonly thrown into the waters of Lake Tanganyika near the caverns of Kabogo by Arabs and natives alike to appease the god or *malungu* of the lake (Stanley 1913: 400, 553). According to Stanley’s guide, Asmani: “Those who throw beads generally get past without trouble, but those who do not throw beads into the lake get lost, and are drowned.”

**Uzanzawirá.** Known also as *samuli* (“ghee-coloured”), this “is a bright yellow porcelain worth, at Zanzibar, from 7 to 9 dollars per *frasilah*. It is in demand throughout Chhaga and the Masai country, but is rarely seen on the central line” (Burton 1860: 394).



**Figure 2.** *Mtunda*, *mzizima*, *balghami* or *jelabi* beads: wound annular or "ring" beads of transparent blue and green glass (detail from a catalogue published by J.F. Sick and Co. of Hamburg in the early 1930s).

**Lak'hio** or **lakhio**. Burton (1860: 394) writes that this bead, also called *lungenya*, "is a coarse red porcelain [i.e., opaque glass], valued at 5 to 6 dollars in Zanzibar, and now principally exported to Uruwua and the innermost regions of Central Africa." Stanley (1913: 721) describes it as "a pink-colored species of bead," while Harding (1962: 104) spells its name *lakio* and notes that it is a brown "seed" or "pound" bead.

According to the RMCA collection, this bead may equate with Kidd varieties IIa1 and IIa2 (see *kidunduguru* above). It is certainly impossible to tell any difference between the two on the basis of the descriptions provided by Burton. Based on Stanley's description, this bead may be equivalent to drawn Kidd type IIa circular beads of opaque pink glass.

**Langiyo** or **lunghio**. This bead of "blue porcelain" is called *ajerino* in Venice, and *langiyo* and *murtutu* ("blue vitriol") in East Africa (Burton 1860: 392). Burton (1860: 392-3) goes on to say that:

[It] is of three several sizes, and the best is of the lightest colour. The larger variety, called *langiyo mkuba*, fetches, at Zanzibar, from 6 to 12 dollars per *frasilah*, and the *p'heke*, or smaller, from 7 to 9 dollars. In Usagara and Unyamwezi... it is used for minor purchases, where the *sámesáme* would be too valuable. It is little prized in other parts, and between Unyamwezi and Ujiji it falls to the low level of the white porcelain.

Stanley (1913: 721) describes *lunghio* as "blue beads," adding that *lunghio mbamba* are "small blue beads" and *lunghio rega* are "large." Specimens identified as *lunghio rega* in the RMCA collection are drawn Kidd type IIa circular beads of translucent/opaque bright blue glass (Pl. VIB, R.1, #2), and 2.8 mm in diameter. The value per *frasilah* is \$6.25.

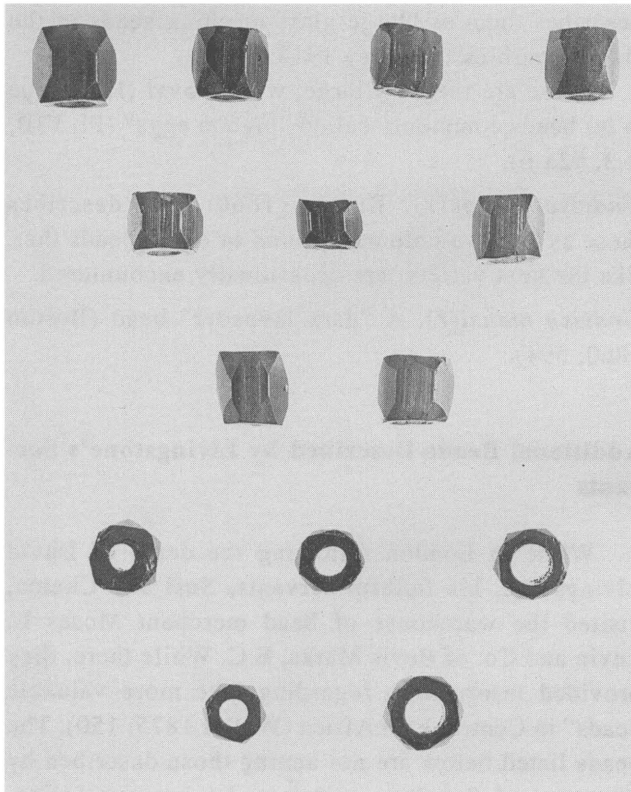
**Mtunda**. Known also as *mzizima*, *jelabi* and *balghami*, Burton (1860: 393) describes this as "the ringel perle of Germany.... a large flat bead of glass.... of two varieties; the more common is a dark blue, the other is of a whitish and opaline tint" (Fig. 2). Burton (1860: 393) goes on to say that this is "a local variety, current from Msene to the Tanganyika Lake, where, in the heavier dealings, as the purchase of slaves and ivory, a few strings are always required to cap the bargain.... At Zanzibar the *frasilah* costs from 7 to 9 dollars." Harding (1962: 105) adds that these beads, called *boelgum* by the Swahili, had fallen out of fashion by 1897.

These are identified as wound annular beads (Kidd class WI\*) of transparent bright navy blue glass in the RMCA collection (Pl. VIB, R.1, #5). They measure about 13.5 mm in diameter and 5.0 mm in length, with a value of \$3.25 per *frasilah*.

Stanley (1878, I: 169, II: 4) also mentions *mutunda* or *mutanda* beads but describes them as "small blue, brown, and white," which does not mesh with Burton's or the RMCA description and appears to be in error.

**Nili**. Burton (1860: 394) relates the following about this bead:





**Figure 3.** Blue cornerless hexagonal beads believed to be those called *pusage* by Burton (photo by G. Vandervlugt).

The *nílí* (green), or *ukutí wa mnazi* (coco-leaves), are little beads of transparent green glass; they are of three sizes, the smallest of which is called *kíkítí*. The Zanzibar price is from 6 to 11 dollars. In Ujiji they are highly valued, and are readily taken in small quantities throughout the central line.

***Pusage.*** These “blue Bohemian glass beads, cut into facets” (Burton 1860: 394) are probably Kidd type If or IIIIf which consist of hexagonal to octagonal-sectioned tube segments with their corners ground off (Fig. 3). However, there is also the possibility that they are the multi-faceted mold-pressed beads (Karklins type MPIIa) called “mand-rel pressed” by Ross (Karklins 1985: 101).

***Sami-sami.*** Most commonly referred to by its Swahili name, *sami-sami*, *sámesáme* or *simsim*, this “red bead, of various sizes, which has a white centre, [and] is always valuable in every part of Africa,” was called *samsam* by the Arabs, *chitakaraka* by the Waiyau,

*mangazi* (“blood”) by the Nyassa, and *masokantussi* (“bird’s eyes”) by the Manyúema (Burton 1860: 392; Harding 1962: 104; Hobley 1970: 246; Waller 1875: 151). According to Burton (1860: 392), this variety was also termed *kimara-p’hamba* (“food-finishers”), *joho* (“scarlet cloth”), and *kifungá-mgi* (“town-breakers”), so-called “because the women are mad for them.” Burton (1860: 392) also commented:

They are known at Zanzibar as *kharaz-kar-tasi* — paper beads — because they are sent into the country ready strung, and packed in paper parcels, which ought to weigh 4 pounds each, but are generally found to vary.... Of this bead there are 15 several sizes, and the value of the *frasilah* is from 13 to 16 dollars at Zanzibar.

Their value was such that, in Unyamwezi, these “beads would readily be taken, where all other kinds would be refused” (Stanley 1913: 24). Stanley (1878,II: 380), having had over 5 lbs. of these beads temporarily stolen from him, noted that this quantity was “sufficient for nearly two days’ provisions for the whole Expedition!”

This variety definitely equates with Kidd varieties IVa9 (round) and IVa\* (circular) which have a transparent scarlet or ruby outer layer and an opaque white core. This identification is verified in the RMCA collection which contains two sizes: one around 3.0 mm in diameter (Pl. VIB, R.2, #3b); the other ca. 3.8 mm (Pl. VIB, R.1, #4). The value is given as \$10.50 per *frasilah*.

***Sereketi.*** According to Burton (1860: 394), this is a white or garnet-red oval bead prized in Khutu.

***Sofi.*** Known as *cannettone* in Italian, these are tubular or cylindrical beads of drawn manufacture between 1/2 in. (13 mm) and 1/3 in. (8 mm) in length which come in brick red (Kidd variety Ia1), black (Ia2), and white (Ia4 or Ia5) (Burton 1860: 393; Stanley 1878,II: 4, 1913: 473). According to Stanley (1878,II: 4), at Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika:

One piece is called a *Masaro*, and is the lowest piece of currency that will purchase anything. The *Sofi* beads are strung in strings of twenty *Masaro*, which is then called a *Kheté*, and is sufficient to purchase rations for two days for a slave, but suffices the freeman or *Mgwana* but

one day. The... established and universal currency with all classes of natives attending the market is the Sofi.

Burton (1860: 393) provides additional details:

The price varies, at Zanzibar, from 2 to 3 dollars per frasilah; in the interior, however, the value greatly increases, on account of insufficient importation. This bead, in 1858, was in great demand throughout Usagara, Unyamwezi, and the western regions, where it was as valuable as the *sámesáme*. Having neglected to lay in a store at Zanzibar, the East African Expedition was compelled to exchange cloth for it at Msene and Ujiji.... In Ujiji, however, many of the purchases were rejected because the bits had become small by wear, or had been chipped off by use.

A contemporary of Burton, John Speke, describes a "white porcelain bead resembling a little piece of tobacco pipe" which he calls *infi* (Harding 1962: 105). It is clearly the white *sofi* described above.

**Sukoli.** These beads "are orange-coloured or rhubarb-tinted porcelain [opaque glass], which average, at Zanzibar, from 7 to 9 dollars. They are prized in Usagara and Ugogo, but are little worn in other places" (Burton 1860: 394).

**Sungomaji.** Another local bead variety described by Burton (1860: 393) is the *balghami mkuba*, popularly known by its Swahili name *sungomaji*, *sungomazzi* or *sugumaji* (Harding 1962: 105), which he thought might have been made in Nürnberg:

It is a porcelain [i.e., opaque glass] about the size of a pigeon's egg, and of two colours, white and light blue. The *sungomaji*, attached to a thin cord or twine, is worn singly or in numbers as an ornament round the neck, and the people complain that the polish soon wears off. At Zanzibar the price per 1000 is from 15 to 20 dollars, but it is expected to decline to 10 dollars. This bead is useful in purchasing ivory in Ugogo and Unyamwezi, and in hiring boats at Ujiji....

Stanley (1913: 24) adds that "the egg (*sungomazzi*) beads, though valuable in Ujiji and Uguhha, would be refused in all other countries." He

describes them as "large glass or china beads of the size of marbles" (Stanley 1913: 722).

These are the very large, wound oval (Kidd type W1c) beads commonly called "pigeon eggs" (Pl. VIB, R.3, #2a-b).

**Undriyo maupe(?).** Burton (1860: 394) describes these as "mauve-coloured, round or oval" beads that, like the next variety, are occasionally encountered.

**Undriyo mausi(?).** A "dark lavender" bead (Burton 1860: 394).

#### Additional Beads Described by Livingstone's Servants

While in London following the death of David Livingstone, his faithful servants, Susi and Chuma, visited the warehouse of bead merchant Moses L. Levin and Co. of Bevis Marks, E.C. While there, they provided information regarding "the more valuable beads" in Central East Africa (Waller 1875: 150). The beads listed below are not among those described by Burton and Stanley, and may be new varieties. However, it is possible that some of the names are simply regional designations for some of those described above.

**Catchokolo.** According to Susi and Chuma, "the Waiyau prefer exceedingly small beads, the size of mustard-seed, and of various colors, but they must be opaque: among them dull white chalk varieties, called 'catchokolo,' are valuable..." (Waller 1875: 150). These equate with Kidd varieties I1a13 (round) and I1a14 (circular), opaque white, and may be equivalent to Harding's *hafti* (q.v.) beads.

**Machua kanga.** Waller (1875: 151) does not describe these but simply says that they are "another popular variety," and that their name means "guinea-fowl's eyes."

**Moiompio.** This is "a large pale blue bead, [which] is a favorite among the Wabisa." Its name means "new heart" (Waller 1875: 151).

**Salani.** Of this bead Waller (1875: 151) writes:

...but by far the most valuable of all [beads] is a small white oblong bead, which, when strung, looks like the joints of the cane root, from which it takes its name, "salani," = "cane." Susi says that one pound weight of these beads

would buy a tusk of ivory, at the south end of Tanganyika, so big that a strong man could not carry it more than two hours.

This description is reminiscent of the white *sofi* beads described above and *salani* may simply be a regional name for these beads.

**Sekundereché.** Of the same size as the *catchokolo* beads, these are opaque pink. Their name translates as the “dregs of pombe” (Waller 1875: 151).

### Beads Traded Into British East Africa

In an account of his experiences in pre-1929 British East Africa, Hobley (1970) provides descriptions of a number of glass beads used in what is now southern and western Kenya during the second half of the 19th century and very early 20th century. As this is to the north of the areas visited by Burton, Livingstone and Stanley, it is quite possible that some of the names listed below are simply regional designations for beads described previously.

**Bora.** Decorated oval beads approximately 3/4 in. (19 mm) long which were expensive and rarely traded (Hobley 1970: 247). These would be the large wound beads ornamented with various designs (Kidd class WIII) that Venice is so famous for (e.g., Pl. VIB, R.3, #2c).

**Kikete.** A turquoise-blue bead around 1/4 in. (6 mm) in diameter that was much prized in the Ukamba region of southern Kenya (Hobley 1970: 247).

**Maji bahari.** A small “pound” bead (*ushanga*) of dark blue glass whose name translates as “sea-water” (Hobley 1970: 246).

They were done up in bundles of about a pound each, called a “*shadda*.” Each complete string of these beads was called a “*koja*,” and its length, according to convention, must be such that it would comfortably encircle a man’s neck. Each bead was about an eighth of an inch in diameter (Hobley 1970: 246-7).

**Maziwa.** A small white (the name means “milk”) “pound” bead of the same size as the former variety (Hobley 1970: 246). It may be equivalent to Burton’s *khanyera* (q.v.) and Harding’s *dudio* (q.v.).

**Mtinorok.** “A small ring of blue or green transparent glass, often used in Ukamba and Kavirondo [western Kenya], the unit of trade being a string long enough to encircle a man’s waist” (Hobley 1970: 247).

**Nsambia.** Oval white beads that never became very popular (Hobley 1970: 247).

**Punda milia.** Translating as “zebra,” these are striped beads, usually of alternating blue or red and white stripes. Colorful but not much sought after (Hobley 1970: 247).

**Ukuta.** These were relatively expensive beads made in Austria and Italy that ranged in hue from blue to straw. They served as presents and to purchase sheep (Hobley 1970: 247).

### Beads Traded Into German East Africa


















































J.R. Harding (1962) provides information concerning the kinds of glass beads that were imported into German East Africa (this was the region traversed by Burton and Stanley, and later became Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) during the 1890s. The material was apparently extracted from the *Deutschen Kolonialblatt* for 1896. Only beads not discussed above are included here. All the names are in Swahili.

**Dudio.** These are “seed” (*ushanga wa cartassi*) and “pound” (*ushanga wa pipa*) beads of “milk white” glass. Originating in Venice, they were worth 9-10 Indian rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 104). On the basis of their description, they are equivalent to Kidd varieties IIa11 (round) and IIa12 (circular), translucent white. However, in the RMCA collection, the name *dudio* is applied to opaque white specimens leaving their exact identity in doubt. See also Burton’s *khanyera* and Hobley’s *maziwa*.

**Felfel.** Oblong or oval Venetian beads which were “blue and white striped.” They were valued at 13-14 rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 105).

**Hafti.** Harding (1962: 104) describes these as Venetian seed and pound beads of “chalk white” glass which are worth 9-10 rupees per *frasilah*. They are equivalent to the *catchokolo* (q.v.) beads described by Waller.

**Noekshi.** “Large red beads with a white core and large multi-coloured beads” were grouped together as *noekshi*. They were relatively expensive, costing 15-16

Oriental Beads № 01779					
Sizes		Colours			
4/0		W			WI
3/0		A			Bf
2/0		S			Bb
0		Oc			B
1		Of			H
2		Od			Ac
3		R			Ad
4		Lm			Sl
5		La			Oa
		Lb			Ob
		J			O
		Y			Jl
		Yb			C
		Yc			Cd
		Ua			Cf
		U			Cg
		P			Rk
		V			Rd
		Ul			Rv
		Pl			F

**Figure 4.** *Ushanga maka* or "Oriental beads:" globular Prosser-Molded beads of various colors (detail from a catalogue published by J.F. Sick and Co. of Rotterdam in the early 1930s).

rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 105). Of wound manufacture, the former are of the so-called "coral-line d'Aleppo" style (Kidd type WIIIIa), while the latter encompass various "fancy" varieties (Kidd class WIIII).

**Sineguse.** These are "hollow" beads obtained from Bohemia which were diamond-shaped, "underlaid in gold" and approximately the size of "a grain of millet." Only a single variety in "gold and silver colours"

was valued following the turn of the century, costing 1-1.5 rupees for a package of about 1000 beads (Harding 1962: 105). They are mold-blown beads (Karklins class BI) colored internally with a gilt wash.

**Tinde.** Oblong or oval beads of "blue underlain with white" that came from Venice and were worth 13-14 rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 105).

**Ushanga maka.** Made in Austria, Germany and France, *ushanga maka* ("Oriental" beads) came in white, blue-black, red and golden yellow. They were "solid" with a "strong shine" (Harding 1962: 105). An illustrated catalogue published in the 1930s by J.F. Sick and Co. of Rotterdam reveals that "Oriental" beads are globular Prosser-Molded beads distinguished by a broad equatorial mold mark, a compact ceramic body and a clear or colored glaze (Fig. 4).

**Wadrio.** Cheap "light blue" seed and pound beads (Kidd type IIa) of Venetian origin worth only 2-3 rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 104).

## DISCUSSION

Of the 400 or so bead varieties that were available in Central East Africa during the second half of the 19th century, the local names and brief descriptions of approximately 43 are presented above. Unfortunately, the bulk of the beads are so poorly described that it is impossible to even determine what manufacturing group some of them fall into, much less what Kidd variety is represented. The problem is compounded by the fact that there are not only regional names for the beads, but also names for different sizes of a specific variety. Coupled with the different spellings provided by the various sources (the recorded names and their various spellings are listed in Table 1), it does not help that the descriptions of certain beads (e.g., *mtunda* and *dudio*) presented in the various sources do not correspond. Thus, only a few beads — such as the *mtunda*, *sami-sami*, *sungomaji* and *sofi* — can be identified with any certainty.

From the writings of explorers like Stanley and Burton, it becomes obvious that preferences in beads varied not just across vast areas but from village to village; this much to the consternation of travelers when they discovered that the bags of beads they had marched inland for several weeks turned out to be absolutely worthless (both Burton and John Speke had

**Table 1. Index of Recorded East African Bead Names.**


---

Asmani [B]	Masokantussi [W] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )
Balghami [B] ( <i>see mtunda</i> )	Maziwa [H]
Balghami mkuba [B] ( <i>see sungomaji</i> )	Merkani, merikani [B,S] ( <i>see háfizi</i> )
Boelgum [HA] ( <i>see mtunda</i> )	Moiompio [W]
Bora [H]	Mtinorok [H]
Bubu, bububu [B,S,W]	Mtunda, mutanda, mutunda [B,S]
Catchokolo [W]	Murtutu [B] ( <i>see langiyo</i> )
Chitakaraka [W]	Mzizima [B] ( <i>see mtunda</i> )
Choroko [B]	Nílí [B]
Dudio [HA]	Noekshi [HA]
Felfel [HA]	Nya kifu(?) [B] ( <i>see ghubari</i> )
Ghubari [B]	Nsambia [H]
Gulabi, gulabio, ghulabio, golabio [B,HA,H,S]	Punda milia [H]
Háfizi [B]	Pusange [B]
Hafti [HA]	Salani [W] ( <i>see also sofi</i> )
Infi [SP] ( <i>see sofi</i> )	Sami-sami, sámesáme, samsam, simsim [B,H,S,W]
Jelabi [B] ( <i>see mtunda</i> )	Samuli [B] ( <i>see uzanzawírá</i> )
Joho [B] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )	Sekundereché [W]
Khanyera, kanyera [B] ( <i>see hafizi</i> )	Sereketi [B]
Khanyera ya mk'hundu [B] ( <i>see kidunduguru</i> )	Sineguse [HA]
Kharaz-kartasi [B] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )	Sofi [B,S]
Khuni [B] ( <i>see bubu</i> )	Sukoli [B]
Kidunduguru, kadunduguru [B] ( <i>see háfizi</i> )	Sungomaji [B], sungomazzi [S], sugumadji [HA]
Kifungá-mgi [B] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )	Tinde [HA]
Kikete [H]	Ububu(?) [B] ( <i>see bubu</i> )
Kíkítí [B] ( <i>see Nílí</i> )	Ukumwi [B] ( <i>see bubu</i> )
Kimara-p'hamba [B] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )	Ukuta [H]
Lak'hio, lakhio, lakio [B,HA]	Ukutí wa mnazi [B] ( <i>see nílí</i> )
Langiyo (mkuba, p'heke) [B]	Undriyo maupe(?) [B]
Lungenya [B] ( <i>see Lak'hio</i> )	Undriyo mausi(?) [B]
Lunghio (mbamba, rega) [S] ( <i>see langiyo</i> )	Ushanga maka [HA]
Machua kanga [W]	Ushanga waupa [B] ( <i>see khanyera</i> )
Mágiyo, magio [B,HA] ( <i>see choroko</i> )	Ushanga ya vipande [B] ( <i>see bubu</i> )
Máguru lá nzige [B] ( <i>see gulabi</i> )	Uzanzawírá [B] ( <i>see hafizi</i> )
Maji bahari [H]	Wadrio [HA]
Mangazi [W] ( <i>see sami-sami</i> )	

---

B=Burton, HA=Harding, H=Hobley, SP=Speke, S=Stanley, W=Waller



to discard many pounds of beads for this reason [Stanley 1913: 24]).

Based on Burton's (1860: 392-4) valuations, the most valuable beads in the late 1850s were the red-on-white *sami-sami* (\$13-\$16 per *frasilah*) and pink *gulabi* (\$12-\$15), followed closely by the large blue *langiyo* (\$6-\$12). The annular *mtunda* (\$7-\$9), pigeon-egg *sungomaji* (\$15-20/1000) and tubular *sofi* (\$2-3) were cheap on the coast but valuable in the interior. The rest of the beads mentioned by Burton "are the more ordinary sorts," and of about the same value: \$5-11 per *frasilah*. In this latter group, the red *merikani* and green *nili* were at the higher end of the scale (\$6-11), while the brick-red *kidunduguru*, white *khanyera*, red *lakhio* and black *bubu* were the cheapest at \$5-7.

By the end of the century, red-on-white *sami-sami* and green *mágiyo* (*choroko*) beads were among the costliest at 18-20 Indian rupees per *frasilah*. The wound *noekshi* were also expensive (15-16 rupees), as were blue-on-white *tinde* and striped *felfel* beads (13-14 rupees). Most seed and pound beads cost between 7 and 12 rupees, with pink *gulabio* being among the priciest (11-12 rupees) and black *bubu* among the least expensive (7-8 rupees). However, the cheapest appears to have been the light blue *wadrio* at 2-3 rupees per *frasilah* (Harding 1962: 104-5).

The information provided by Burton, Stanley, Waller, Hobley and Harding helps us to better understand how the various tribes of Central East Africa perceived the beads that were made available to them by traders, explorers and missionaries. When supplemented by that gleaned from different sources by other researchers, it will enable archaeologists, ethnologists and collectors to identify historic bead types in their collections, as well as to better understand the socio-economic value of the beads that flowed into East Africa by the ton. Comments on the above and supplements to the list of bead names and descriptions are welcomed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to the History Section of the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, for allowing me to examine the two trays of beads (cat. nos. 54.72.134 and 135) in the Stanley Collection, and for providing a photograph of some of the specimens.

Gratitude is expressed to Christopher DeCorse and, especially, Margret Carey for their useful comments regarding the content and format of this report. I am also indebted to the Bead Society of Los Angeles for their generous grant which allowed me to study beads in various European centers in 1987.

## APPENDIX A: INVENTORY OF BEADS IN TRAY 54.72.134 OF THE H.M. STANLEY COLLECTION, ROYAL MUSEUM OF CENTRAL AFRICA

The Henry M. Stanley collection contains two wooden trays (nos. 54.72.134 and 135) which contain similar assemblages of glass beads. Little is known about them beyond that they apparently belonged to Stanley and were donated to the Royal Museum of Central Africa in 1954 by Stanley's adopted son Denzil M. Stanley. They were part of the exhibition at the museum that year which marked the 50th anniversary of the death of Henry M. Stanley.

The wooden trays measure 54 cm by 28 cm by 5 cm, and contain 18 square compartments which are 8.3 cm wide. As the contents of the two trays are so similar, only the contents of tray no. 54.72.134 will be itemized here [see Pl. VIB]. Several compartments contain paper tags which identify the native name and value of the contents.

In the following text, R. = row in tray (Pl. VIB) and # = position (compartment) in row. Letters are appended to the position number when a compartment contains more than one bead variety.

R.1, #1: IIa1/2; circular/round; op. Indian red; 4.0 mm diameter; hank; "Kdunduguru or Lakyo \$4..50 per Frasilah."

R.1, #2: IIa\*; circular; tsl./op. bright blue; 2.8 mm diameter; hank; "Lungio Rega blue small \$6..25 per Frasilah."

R.1, #3: IIa14; circular; op. white; 2.5 mm diameter; hank; "Dudyo small white \$6..00 per Frasilah."

R.1, #4: IVa9; circular/round; tsp. scarlet on op. white; 3.8 mm diameter; hank; "Sami Sami \$10..50 per Frasilah."

R.1, #5: WI\*\*; annular; tsp. bright navy blue; 13.5 mm diameter; 5.0 mm length; on string; "Mutonda blue \$3..25 per Frasilah."

R.1, #6: WI\*\*; annular; tsp. yellowish green; 13.1 mm diameter; 4.3 mm length; on string.

R.2, #1: IIa11/12; circular/round; tsl. grayish white; 4.2 mm diameter; hank; "Kanyera large white \$4..50 per Frasilah."

R.2, #2: IVa\*; circular/round; op. strong pink on tsl. light gray; 3.8 mm diameter; hank; "Gulabio pink \$8..50 per Frasilah."

R.2, #3a: IVa\*; circular/round; op. strong pink on tsl. light gray; 3.2 mm diameter; on string.

#3b: IVa9; circular/round; tsp. scarlet on op. white; 3.0 mm diameter; on raffia fiber.

R.2, #4a: Prosser Molded; PM\*\*; globular with equatorial bulge; golden glaze (tsl. light gray core); pitted at one end; 6.6 mm diameter; on string.

#4b: Prosser Molded; PM\*\*; globular with equatorial bulge; clear glaze (tsl. light gray core); pitted at one end; 6.6 mm diameter; on string.

R.2, #5: IIa14; circular; op. white; 3.2 mm diameter; on string.

R.2, #6: IIa7; circular; op. black; 3.5 mm diameter; strung on fiber.

R.3, #1: Cowries.

R.3, #2a: WIc1; oval; op. white; loose; many shattered; 18.8 mm diameter.

#2b: WIc\*; oval; op. strong purplish blue (color intensity varies); 20.0 mm diameter; on string.

#2c: WIIb\*; oval; tsl. light gray body decorated with a spiral floral spray composed of tsp. scarlet, op. turquoise, op. light gold and tsl. bright blue components, and a spiral of diagonal dashes in a turquoise/white/bright navy blue/white/scarlet/white sequence; 11.3 mm diameter; on fiber cord.

R.3, #3a: As R.2, #3b.

#3b: WIc\*; oval; op. bright yellow; 4.0 mm diameter; on string.

R.3, #4a: Ia\*; tubular; tsp. ruby; 3.2 mm diameter; loose.

#4b: IIa18 ; circular/round; op. amber; 3.8 mm diameter; hank.

#4c: WIc\*; oval; op. royal blue; 8.4 mm diameter (irregular shape).

R.3, #5: IIa\*; circular/round; op. copen blue; 4.1 mm diameter; several hanks.

R.3, #6: IIa56; circular; tsp. bright navy blue; 3.8 mm diameter; on fiber.

## REFERENCES CITED

**Burton, Richard F.**

1860 *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*. Vol. 2. Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London.

**Harding, J.R.**

1962 Nineteenth-Century Trade Beads in Tanganyika. *Man* 62(July):104-105.

**Hobley, C.W.**

1970 *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*. Frank Cass, London. Originally published in 1929.

**Karklins, Karlis**

1985 Guide to the Description and Classification of Glass Beads. In *Glass Beads*, 2nd ed., pp. 85-118. Parks Canada, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture and History, Ottawa.

**Kidd, Kenneth E. and Martha A. Kidd**

1970 A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists. *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History* 1:45-89.

**Stanley, Henry M.**

1878 *Through the Dark Continent*. 2 vols. John B. Magurn, Toronto.

1913 *How I Found Livingstone*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

**Waller, Horace**

1875 *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa*. Jansen, McClurg, Chicago.

Karlis Karklins  
Parks Canada  
1600 Liverpool Court  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3  
Canada