SHELL AND GLASS BEADS FROM THE TOMBS OF KINDOKI, MBANZA NSUNDI, LOWER CONGO

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The ancient Kingdom of Kongo originated in Central Africa in the 14th century. In the 15th century, the Portuguese organized tight contacts with the Bakongo. From then on European goods gained new significance in the local culture and even found their way into funerary rites. Among the most important grave goods in the Kingdom of Kongo were shell and glass beads. They occur in many tombs and symbolize wealth, status, or femininity. At the burial site of Kindoki, linked with the former capital of Kongo's Nsundi province, a great number of shell and glass beads were found together with symbols of power in tombs attributed primarily to the first half of the 19th century. Determining the origin of these beads and their use in the Kongo Kingdom leads to interesting insights into the social and economic organization of the old Bakongo society, their beliefs, and the symbolic meaning of the beads.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Kongo occupied the region that is now Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Central Africa (Figure 1). On the basis of oral tradition from the 16th century, Thornton (2001) states it was established by at least the 14th century. Determining the exact date, however, is difficult, given the lack of written sources dating to before first contact with Europeans. From 1483 onwards, the kingdom was in contact with the Portuguese, eventually leading to strong ties with Portugal. Principal activities involved trade, including slave traffic. Furthermore, the Bakongo gradually Christianized. Contact between the Bakongo and Europeans was characterized by an extensive exchange of goods and cultural ideas (Bontinck et al. 1972:66-67; Hilton 1985:55; Thornton 2013:55).

Testimonies of missionaries from the 16th and 17th centuries reveal that the ancient Kingdom of Kongo was bounded on the north by the Loango Kingdom and Stanley Pool, near present-day Kinshasa. This northern limit ran through the Kwilu-Niari Valley. To the east, the Kwango River functioned as a natural boundary while to the south, the Kwanza River marked the southernmost extent. The Atlantic Ocean formed the western border (Cuvelier 1946:339-341; Hilton 1985:1).

The Kingdom of Kongo consisted of six provinces: Mpemba, Soyo, Mbamba, Nsundi, Mpangu, and Mbata (Thornton 2001:102), which were independent chiefdoms before European contact (Randles 1968:19). The kingdom was ruled by a king or *ntinu*, its capital was Mbanza Kongo, and its inhabitants were the Bakong, speaking Kikongo (Heywood 2002:41-55).

SHELL AND GLASS BEADS IN THE KINGDOM OF KONGO

In many places, shells were often used to adorn necklaces or clothing. Moreover, they symbolized femininity and fertility. Cowries (*kaori*), especially, were used as such in the Kingdom of Kongo (Dartevelle 1953:50-55). Shell necklaces have been used in rituals by various cultures over time to this very day (Dartevelle 1953:35). Another common use of shells was that of currency. In the Kingdom of Kongo, both the *kaori* shells (*Cypraea moneta*), originally from the Far East, and the *nzimbu* shells (*Olivancillaria nana*), collected in the Luanda region to the southwest of the Kongo Kingdom, were used as a means of payment (Mahieu 1924:47).

Glass beads were used not only for adornment but also for magical purposes; e.g., as a talisman to protect a person from evil spirits. Social status was often displayed by the beads a person wore. Thus, a person could distinguish himself/herself within a group by his/her beads (Figure 2). In some African societies, girls wore beads for protection during their menstrual period (Fourneau 1955:15). Moreover, femininity was expressed by beads as well (Figure 3) (Nyambura 2012:4, 43). As Europeans gradually

Figure 1. The Kongo Kingdom and its provinces, 16-17th centuries (Randles 1968:22).

Figure 2. The governor of Mbanza Soyo wearing beads, 17th century (Randles 1968:29).

introduced glass trade beads into West Africa, the Kingdom of Kongo adopted glass beads as its currency. Beads were used as a main form of currency from 1858 onwards (Farcy 1987:553, 557-558).

In general, the types of glass beads used in the Kingdom of Kongo are of European manufacture and similar to those found throughout West and Central Africa. In addition, a vast range of European beads was put into circulation until the early 20th century. These beads originated from various European production centers including Venice, Amsterdam, Bohemia, France, and Bavaria (Karklins 2012:81-83; Vierke 2004; Wood 2000:90). These beads purchased valuable products such as gold, copper, ivory, palm wine, and slaves (Farcy 1987:555). The European beads that circulated in West Africa and the Kingdom of Kongo varied greatly. The more unusual a bead was, the more valuable it was to the African people; thus, more valuable African products were only obtainable by means of more unusual beads (Jurriaans-Helle 1994).

THE KINDOKI SITE AND ITS BEADS

The KongoKing project, which is a collaboration of Ghent University, the Université Libre de Bruxelle, and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, was responsible for the 2012-2013 excavations of the Kindoki tombs (Clist et al. 2013a:22-24; Clist et al. 2013b:63-66). This is an interdisciplinary project that addresses both historical linguistics and archaeology to reconstruct the history of the Kingdom of Kongo (for more information *see* www.kongoking.org).

The Kindoki burial site lies close to the top of Kindoki Hill near the village of Mbanza Nsundi in the Lower Congo (05°04'069 S, 15°01'403 E). Eleven tombs, some with very rich grave goods, were found there (Plate V). All the tombs were covered with a layer of stone. Tomb 9 differed from the basic plan by having two additional layers of stone between the burial and the upper stone layer.

Figure 3. A princess of Malembe with beads, late 18th century (Grandpré 1801:74).

The burials were all orientated southwest-northeast with the head to the southwest. The tombs were constructed close to each other, but did not overlap. This suggests that the cemetery was created in a relatively short time and with people who were related either socially or through kinship. The cemetery is believed to have been used during the 18th and 19th centuries. The skeletal remains were analyzed by Caroline Polet, physical anthropologist at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. The distinction of the age and sex of those interred in the Kindoki tombs and specific female pathologies are the subject of a paper by Clist et al. (2015).

Only tombs 8, 9, 11, and 12 contained beads (Figure 4). Furthermore, the number of beads found per tomb differed: female tombs 8 and 11 contained numerous beads (1,853 and 540, respectively), while male tombs 9 and 12 merely contained only 16 and 18 beads, respectively.

The beads will be discussed by tomb. The glass beads were initially assigned arbitrary type numbers (e.g., type 1) which have been supplemented by the appropriate type codes in the bead taxonomic system developed by Kenneth and Martha Kidd (2012) and expanded by Karklins (2012). Colors are designated using the Munsell Color (2012) system.

Tomb 8

Tomb 8, probably constructed between 1825 and 1845, contained the burial of a woman 40-60 years old (Plate VIA) which was in association with the remains of a person 20-40 years old (Clist et al. 2015). The woman was wrapped in textiles and wore a metal anklet on the right leg. Other grave goods included a copper chain, a gold chain, an iron necklace, 32 copper hawk bells, two types of marine-shell beads, a copper bead, and necklaces of glass beads. The latter were of five types.

Tympanotonus fuscatus Shell Bead

A single *Tympanotonus fuscatus* shell bead was found in tomb 8 (Plate VIB, top). It was 34 mm long and 17 mm wide. These shells were used in rituals related to *Bakhimba*, a local religion that venerated *Mbumba*, its creator deity. This type of shell served the faithful. The shells were buried in a cruciform trench in front of *Mbumba*'s altar, and were often called *zinga*, which symbolized eternal life (Dartevelle 1953:23-24). Those who had lived a proper life enjoyed the privilege of living twice. According to the Bakongo, they reincarnated as a similar shell (Thompson and Cornet 1981:37).

There has been no previous mention of *Tympanotonus fuscatus* shells as grave goods. The shell in tomb 8 may have been placed there because the deceased believed that it embodied eternal life after death in the ancestral village. Another line of reasoning suggests the deceased had a spiritual function in society (Thompson et al. 1981:37), and that the deceased was believed to return as a shell. It is also possible that the shell functioned as a protective talisman for the deceased's journey into the afterlife.

Pusula depauperata Shell Beads

Tomb 8 contained 660 *Pusula depauperata* shells (false cowries) of different sizes. Based on several specimens, the

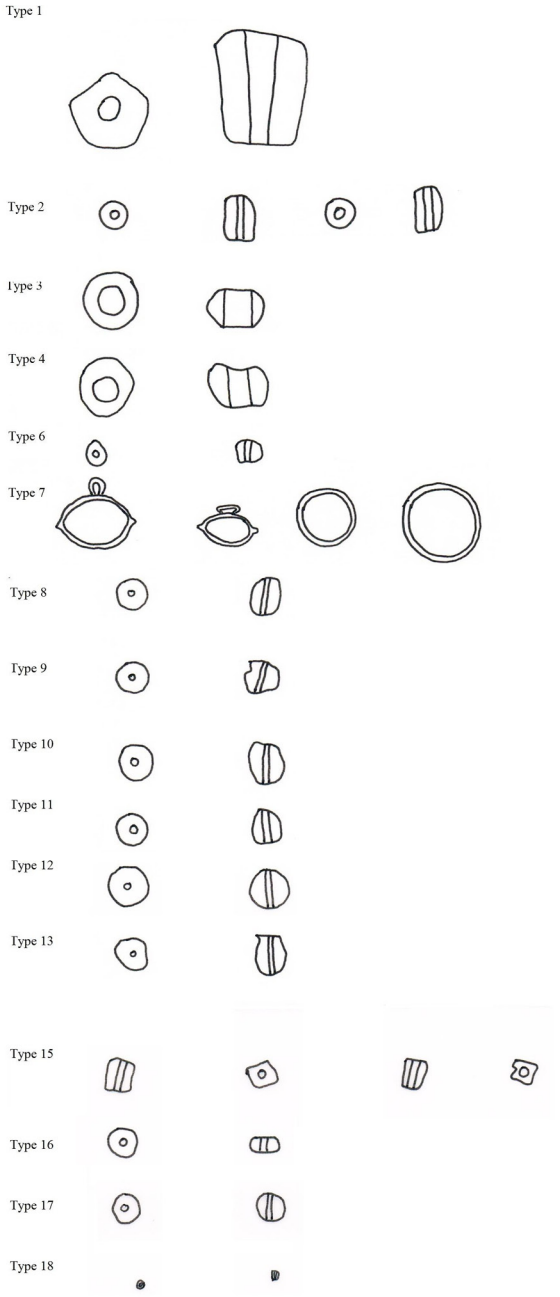

Figure 4. Forms of the beads and bells from the Kindoki tombs (Verhaeghe 2014).

shells are ca. 13 mm long and 7.8-11 mm wide. Each shell exhibits two holes that have been ground into it to permit their being threaded or sewn onto clothing (Plate VIB). The shells lay under the deceased's chin, indicating that they had formed part of one or more necklaces.

These shells are occasionally found near the Congo River estuary. Dirk Fehse, a German mollusc expert, states that this species occurs along the sea coast from Angola to Cameroon (D. Fehse 2014: pers. comm.). Jan Haspeslagh, librarian of the Flanders Marine Institute, confirms this species is commonly found on the coasts of Congo (C. Verhaeghe 2014: pers. comm.). Finding and collecting these shells must therefore have been fairly easy. Consequently, the shells found in the Kindoki tombs probably had a decorative or symbolic function rather than financial value. By the time the tombs were constructed, *kaori* shells had lost their value almost completely in the Kingdom of Kongo and were only used for ornamental purposes (Nwani 1975:189). The fact that an inhabitant of Landana, in the province of Cabinda, Angola, was seen wearing a *Pusula depauperata* shell as a talisman (Schilder 1955:71-72), and that this type of shell can be found in high numbers in funerary deposits, suggests it had replaced the almost valueless *kaori*.

Wound, Ridged Tube, Dark Blue Beads

Fourteen ridged-tube beads (Kindoki type 1; Kidd type WIIf) of translucent dark blue (Munsell 7.5PB 2/5) glass were found in tomb 8. These consist of a cylindrical bead likely of furnace-wound construction that was pressed while the glass was still viscid to impart five longitudinal facets (Plate VIC). The beads are 22-29 mm long and 17-18 mm in diameter. The surfaces exhibit various patterns of white corrosion products. The glass colorant is cobalt (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

These distinctively shaped beads have a wide temporal and geographical distribution, having been found on various archaeological sites in Africa, North America, and the Caribbean, as well as in Holland (e.g., Karklins and Barka 1989:71-73; Opper and Opper 1989) where they were believed to have been produced (Jurriaans-Helle 1994:25). There is, however, no evidence for the production of wound beads in Holland. In fact, recent research suggests that they may actually have been produced in the Fichtelgebirge region of Bavaria in southeastern Germany, and that they were simply exported through Amsterdam and other Dutch ports (Jargstorf and Zeh 2003). These beads appear on sites dating to the period 1700-1845 with the optimal period of utilization being 1715-1830 (Karklins and Barka 1989:74).

Wound, Cylindrical, Red-on-White Beads

Wound cylindrical beads with a transparent ruby (Munsell 2.5R 3/10) outer layer and an opaque white (Munsell N 9) core were numerous, 1,140 specimens being recovered (Kindoki type 2; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIa). They are 7.5-11.0 mm long and 6.0-7.7 mm in diameter. Some specimens are fused end to end (Plate VID), apparently due

to carelessness during production. Others have broken ends indicating instances where the joined beads broke or were snapped apart. The degree of corrosion varies.

Commonly called Cornaline d'Aleppos, the beads are composed of mixed-alkali glass. Arsenic, lead, and calcium are present and likely served as opacifiers or pigments in the form of lead arsenic. Arsenic has been used as an opacifier since the 18th century (Tournié 2010:42).

Wound, cylindrical, red-on-white beads appear on several Venetian sample cards (Davis 1972:219-220) and sample books (Karklins 1985:31, 2002:31), and were likely produced in Venice. Generally, in North American archaeological contexts, these beads do not appear before about 1830 but extend into the 20th century (Karklins 2014).

Wound, Oblate, Yellowish White Bead

A wound oblate bead of translucent pale yellowish white (Munsell N 9) glass is 7.2 mm long and 12.0 mm in diameter (Plate VIB) (Kindoki type 3; Kidd type WIb). It is composed of potash-lime glass. Arsenic is also present and probably served as an opacifier or pigment (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

The van der Sleen bead collection at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam contains similar beads collected at Matadi, the major coastal town of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have long been believed to be the products of Amsterdam. This, however, is unlikely. The bead has the characteristics of a furnace-wound bead produced in the Fichtelgebirge region of Bavaria.

Wound, Oblate, Dark Blue Bead

Another wound oblate bead is composed of a translucent dark blue (Munsell 7.5PB 2/5) glass (Plate VIB) (Kindoki type 4; Kidd type WIb). It is 8.2 mm long and 11.0 mm in diameter. Composed of potash-lime glass with the presence of lead, it is colored with cobalt (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

A similar bead is in the Allard Pierson Museum and has also long been considered a Dutch product. Again, this is unlikely and it is postulated that the bead originated in the Fichtelgebirge.

Blown, Round, Silvered Beads

At least three round blown beads were found in tomb 8 (Kindoki type 5; Karklins BIa). All were fragmentary but one could be reconstructed (Plate VIIA). It is 13 mm long and 11 mm in diameter. Likely blown in a mold, the beads are composed of clear glass coated on the interior with a silver-colored layer of bismuth and lead (Fontaine 2014).

Blown beads have been produced in a number of centers over the centuries including Venice, France, Bohemia, and Germany. Unfortunately, round blown beads have been made for a long time and continue to be made. Consequently, it is difficult to assign a tight date to these specimens.

Copper Bead

The single copper bead (Kindoki type 6) is heavily corroded so it is not possible to determine if the form is tubular or slightly rounded (Plate VIB). It is 4.9 mm long and 4.5 mm in diameter. The corrosion also makes it impossible to determine the method of manufacture.

The bead may have been made locally. The Nsundi province of the Kongo Kingdom had access to the copper from the Mindouli mines in the north of the kingdom, in current Congo-Brazzaville, since the early 16th century (Hilton 1985:32-33, 40; Nikis et al. 2013).

Copper-Alloy Hawk Bells

Thirty-two copper-alloy hawk bells (Kindoki type 7) are included here as they likely served as pendants. The form found at Kindoki is called "flushloop" in North American archaeological contexts, and consist of two hemispheres formed from sheet metal generally soldered together (Plate VIIA). The joint is clearly visible. A narrow suspension loop of brass protrudes from the upper half. The Kindoki specimens are of two sizes: 16.7 mm in diameter and 9.9 mm in height, and 12.5 mm in diameter and 7.8 mm in height. Their weight varies between 1.22 g and 1.70 g. One of the bells contains a lump of oxidized iron. It is believed that flushloop bells were made in France or England. They first appear in the 17th century but are most common during the 18th and 19th centuries (Brown 1979:201). Metal bells were also manufactured in Africa, but these were generally larger and heavier (Balandier 1965:104).

Africans frequently used bells of various forms. Similar items were made of natural materials, such as nuts, which were often used as rattles, and sometimes hung in the hair, or around the waist, wrists, or ankles to produce rhythmic sounds during ritual dances. During mass or funerals, bells were also used to arouse a supernatural atmosphere. In all probability, the bells from tomb 8 had a supernatural significance, given that such items were often associated with ancestors. They may also be indicative of the importance of the deceased. Yet another possibility is that the bells were

used during the funeral ceremony and were then put in the tomb.

Tomb 11

Tomb 11, the burial of a woman 40-60 years of age (Clist et al. 2015), contained 268 red-on-white glass beads (Kindoki type 2; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIa) on and around the neck (Plate VIIB, bottom). As in tomb 8, many of the beads were joined end to end, suggesting that such manufacturing errors were neither rejected by the traders nor the inhabitants of Kindoki. There were also 272 *Pusula depauperata* shell beads. The glass beads suggest that tomb 11 is similar in date to tomb 8.

The head of the deceased was adorned with a thick layer of brown textile with copper-alloy buttons attached and presumably functioned as a headdress (Plate VIIB, top). She also had three heavy iron anklets, each weighing about 500 g, on each leg.

Tomb 9

Tomb 9 contained the burial of a man between the ages of 40 and 60, with evidence of another person 20-40 years of age in association (Clist et al. 2015). The man wore a necklace composed of 17 glass beads, mostly white and blue with a floral wreath around the middle. He also had two iron bracelets on the right arm and a musket by his left side.

The tomb was covered with three layers of stone which probably explains the skeleton's better preservation. As this is the only tomb in the cemetery to have such a feature, the interred individual may have had high social status in Kongo society.

Wound, Round, White with Blue Floral Inlay

Five wound round beads of opaque white (Munsell N 9.5 and 5.0Y 9/2) glass are decorated with an inlaid stylized wreath of blue glass around the middle (Plate VIIC) (Kindoki types 8-9; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIb). Only remnants of the inlay are present in two of the specimens. The beads are 6.1-7.2 mm long and 5.7-7.1 mm in diameter. They are likely of Venetian origin.

The raw materials of the glass were difficult to determine with Raman spectroscopy due to high photoluminescence. In several of the beads the concentration of arsenic and lead was very high, but the calcium content was low. The former likely served as opacifiers. The blue glass was colored with cobalt (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

Wound, Round, Blue with White Floral Inlay

Two wound round beads of translucent moonstone blue (Munsell 5.0 PB 3/4) glass are decorated with a floral wreath of what appears to have been opaque white glass around the middle (Plate VIIC, bottom) (Kindoki type 10; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIb). The specimens are 6.4-6.8 mm long and 6.8-7.4 mm in diameter. Their chemical composition is very similar to that of the previous type.

Wound, Round, Dark Blue with Floral Inlay

This is a wound round bead of translucent dark shadow blue (Munsell 7.5B 3/3) glass (Plate VIIC, row 2, right). It is 8.0 mm long and 7.7 mm in diameter. Although the floral spray around the equator is missing, the indentation in which it lay remains (Kindoki type 11; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIb). Based on other blue beads with such decoration, the likelihood is that the inlay was opaque white. The bead is composed of mixed-alkali silicate glass.

Wound, Round, Dark Blue Beads

Two wound round beads are coated with a thick white patina (Plate VIIC, upper right) (Kindoki type 12; possibly Kidd/Karklins type WIIIb). When moistened, however, it is clear that the original color was dark blue. Although no decoration is visible, it is possible that these beads were also decorated with white floral sprays around the middle originally but which are now obscured by the patina. The beads are 7.8-8.1 mm long and 8.3-9.6 mm in diameter. They are composed of soda-lime glass, and contain lead. Cobalt, iron, and manganese are also present with the former being the likely colorant (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

Wound, Drop-Shaped, White with Floral Inlay

Tomb 9 contained five drop-shaped wound beads of opaque white (Munsell N 9.5) glass (Plate VIIC, left) (Kindoki type 13; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIb). While none of the inlay remains, the indentations of a floral wreath are present in the surface. Based on the other white beads with intact inlays, it is likely that the wreaths were blue. The beads are 6.3-6.8 mm long and 6.3-7.0 mm in diameter. They are composed of mixed-alkali glass with lead (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

Rose-on-Gray Beads

Two severely degraded beads have a rose-colored exterior and a gray core (Kindoki type 14). While the shape was not discernable, it is likely that these two specimens belong to the cylindrical red-on-white (Kindoki type 2; Kidd/Karklins type WIIIa) group.

Tomb 12

Tomb 12 contained the burial of a 6-year-old boy (Clist et al. 2015). Burial goods included 16 glass beads of three types, two minute beads made of shell or coral, a copper crucifix, a copper cross, a religious medallion, a copper chain 52 cm in length, a sword, and two iron fragments.

Wound, Pentagonal-Faceted, Black Beads

Fourteen pentagonal-faceted beads of black (Munsell N 1) glass (Plate VIID) (Kindoki type 15; Kidd variety WIIc1) were found in tomb 12. While the glass appears black, when held up to a strong light it is actually a deep burgundy color. Of wound construction, the beads exhibit eight pentagonal facets applied with a paddle while the glass was viscid. The beads are 5.9-6.1 mm long and 4.9-5.1 mm in diameter. Chemical analysis revealed that the glass contained manganese and iron which likely served as colorants.

The faceted black beads were associated with a copper cross, apparently at the deceased's right wrist. As there are not enough beads for a chaplet, it is possible that the cross and beads formed a Christian bracelet. It is, however, also possible that the objects may have been used as *nkisi* (fetish), with the cross decorated with beads. As such, the Christian element has an indigenous significance.

Wound, Oblate, Black Bead

Tomb 12 contained a single, wound, oblate, black (Munsell N 1) glass bead (Kindoki type 16; Kidd type WIb) with flattened ends (Plate VIID, upper center). As with the previous type, the glass is actually a deep burgundy color when held up to the light. The bead is 3.5 mm long and 5.9 mm in diameter. It is composed of a calcium-rich glass with manganese and iron (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

Drawn, Round, Navy Blue, White Stripes

This round bead of translucent navy blue (Munsell 10B 2/4) glass with three, broad, opaque white (N 9) stripes (Plate VIID, upper right) (Kindoki type 17; Kidd type IIb) is the only one of drawn manufacture in the Kindoki collection. It is 5.1 mm long and 5.9 mm in diameter. The glass consists of calcium silicate with cobalt as the colorant (Coccato and Rousaki 2014).

Beads of Shell or Coral

Two minute tubular beads (Kindoki type 18) appear to be made of shell or coral (Plate VIID) based on the presence of calcite and aragonite (Coccato and Rousaki 2014). They are 2.2 mm long and 1.7 mm in diameter. It is possible that the beads were manufactured locally.

DATING AND SOURCING THE KINDOKI BEADS

Tomb 8 is easy to date due to the presence of the cylindrical red-on-white beads and the pentagonal ridged-tube beads. Based on their temporal ranges, it is likely the tomb was created during the 1825-1845 period. The beads found in the tomb originated from a number of sources.

The red-on-white specimens were likely made in Venice, while the ridged tubes and at least some of the monochrome wound beads exhibit characteristics of the furnace-wound beads created in the Fichtelgebirge region of Bavaria. The blown beads could have been produced in several European centers. The copper-alloy hawk bells likely originated in France or England, while the copper bead may be of local origin. The shell beads are also natural resources of the kingdom and only indicate trade relationships between Mbanza Nsundi and the Atlantic coast during the late 18th-early 19th centuries.

Tomb 11, dominated by the cylindrical red-on-white beads, likely dates to about the same time period as tomb 8.

The diagnostic varieties in Tomb 9 are the wound beads decorated with an applied wreath about the middle (white with a blue wreath, blue with a possible white wreath, and white drop-shaped with a wreath inlay). Two exact matches for the white bead with a blue wreath are from contexts dating 1830-1870. Based on Brain (1979:113), the maximum date range for this general style is 1725-1850. In the case of Tomb 9, the likelihood is that its probable temporal position is between 1800 and 1835. It is likely that all the beads are of Venetian origin.

Tomb 12 contains the earliest of the four burials. Based on a survey of over 10 sites in eastern North America, Brain (1979:110) finds the maximum temporal range for the pentagonal-faceted beads is ca. 1650-1833. The blue bead with three broad white stripes is distinctive and while no

direct correlative could be found for it, a visually identical bead with the addition of two internal layers (Kidd variety IVb30) is present on Mohawk sites in New York state that are attributed to the 1615-1630 period (Rumrill 1991:13-14). That the tomb also contained a religious medal and crucifix attributed to the 17th and 17th-18th centuries, respectively (Clist et al. 2015), suggests that tomb 12 likely dates to the 1650-1750 period.

The pentagonal-faceted beads that predominate in tomb 12 were probably produced in the Fichtelgebirge region of Bavaria. There, large numbers of beads were manufactured for chaplets, and the shape of the beads is typical of Fichtelgebirge production (Dillon 1907:278). The single drawn bead may have been manufactured in Venice or Holland, while the shell or coral beads may be local products.

CONCLUSION

The Bakongo displayed their social status, affluence, descent, and social position by means of the various types and quantities of the shell, metal, and glass beads they wore. Thus, the beads expressed one's identity. For example, large quantities of glass and shell beads were a mark of femininity. On the other hand, the power and importance of men were demonstrated by specific and apparently more valuable beads associated with known male status symbols such as swords, muskets, and chief bracelets. Some shell and glass beads had symbolical value and were used as protective amulets. The Bakongo buried their dead with their most important personal belongings. Thus, shell and glass beads, which displayed the deceased's identity and social status, were included.

Anthropological analysis of the bones found in tomb 8 revealed that the principal burial was that of a mature woman. This identification is supported by the large number of glass and shell beads found in association; large quantities of glass beads have a female connotation in Bakongo culture. *Kaori* shells also symbolize femininity and fertility. That the *Pusula depauperata* beads found in the tomb are similar in appearance to *kaori* shells suggests that the beads had a similar meaning. The hawk bells may also be a female trait, given that they often expressed femininity and intimacy. The presence of the *Tympanotonus fuscatus* bead suggests the woman was spiritually important.

The woman was wrapped in a large quantity of textiles, clearly indicating her social importance. Examination of the skeletal material revealed evidence of diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis, indicating that the deceased was obese and diabetic (Clist et al. 2015). This suggests the woman lived in affluence. Moreover, the tomb also contained the remains of another person, possibly a slave. Burying slaves with their owners was a Kongo custom until the start of the 20th century. It is, however, possible that the remains are those of an older burial. The second individual was not as well preserved as the woman.

Tomb 11 also contained a mature woman and the finds are very similar to those of tomb 8. Both the Venetian red-on-white beads and the perforated *Pusula depauperata* shells were also found in this tomb. This leads to the question: why do tombs 8 and 11 contain *Pusula depauperata* shells instead of *kaori* or *nzimbu*? One line of reasoning suggests that the Kingdom of Kongo was in decay at the time the tombs were constructed. Having been attacked by the Portuguese, the kingdom was tremendously weakened and the king lost power (Hilton 1985:164-165; Thornton 1992:59). So perhaps the Bakongo elite were not as rich as before and displayed their power by means of personal belongings rather than by *kaori* or *nzimbu*. It is also known that *kaori* had lost their value by the 19th century (Nwani 1975:189). Consequently, the *Pusula depauperata* were of equal value as the *kaori* of older days at the time the tombs were constructed. The shell beads found in tombs 8 and 11 were used as ornaments, particularly in necklaces. Thus, at the time, it was probably unimportant which shells were used. The headwear and abundance of shell and glass beads suggest the woman buried in tomb 11 held a high position in society. An affluent lifestyle is also suggested by the fact that, like the woman in tomb 8, the deceased was obese and/or diabetic (Clist et al. 2015).

The man buried in tomb 9 was accompanied by far fewer beads than the two previous burials, with no shell beads at all. The deceased wore iron bracelets on his right arm and a musket lay at his side. His tomb was strikingly more refined, being covered with three layers of stones rather than just one. Consequently, the skeleton was very well preserved. The remains of a second person, possibly a slave, were found in association. These were less well preserved and may represent an earlier burial.

A six-year-old boy was interred in tomb 12. Relatively few beads were found in association and most of these were found with a metal cross, possibly forming a bracelet. This and the presence of yet another cross and a religious medallion strongly suggest that the child had a relationship with Christianity, though it is possible that the Bakongo put the religious objects in the tomb as *nkisi*. A sword was also present and is a symbol of masculine power (Sengelov 2014). Possibly, the child underwent an initiation rite, after which he was considered an adult. It may also be that he

inherited his status from his mother, after which he did not need to prove himself before being considered an adult. Initially, social status was inherited from the mother's side in Bakongo culture (Balandier 1965:30, 181). After the arrival of Europeans and Christianity, however, this tradition gradually shifted to a patrilineal heritage system (Hilton 1983:189).

Shell and glass beads have long been undervalued as sources of information in the examination of various cultures. Nonetheless, they do provide much information about societies, given their symbolical and religious function. Beads also often have a very personal significance. Furthermore, large quantities of shell and glass beads have been used in trade. In each place, the beads gained a new meaning in the local environment. Thus, beads also offer information about trading networks and how the value and meaning of objects shift. Though small, beads are of great value to archaeologists, especially if found in carefully excavated archaeological contexts, as at Kindoki.

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