



A Comparative Analysis of the Glass Beads from the Bryan Site (8LE6256)



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Abstract

Throughout the second half of the 16th century, the Kingdom of Spain began to colonize the New World. During that time they established a number of Spanish missions in La Florida. Through these colonization efforts there was a diffusion of ideas and material culture. The relationship between native people and missionaries was not always peaceful and led to the abandonment of the Spanish missions in the early 18th century. One of these mission sites which has been thought to be lost is Mission San Antonio de Bacuqua. A site in Tallahassee was recently identified and thought to be the lost mission site of San Antonio de Bacuqua. Dr. Tanya Peres' 2022 field school excavated the site and recovered several glass beads that help in identify and date the site. One of these artifacts is a number of glass beads recovered. Glass beads were an important trade good for Spanish colonists. They were often produced in Venice, Italy in mass quantities and brought by the colonists as trade goods. These beads follow a predictable chronology and are often used to date Spanish mission sites. Through comparison of other bead assemblages recovered in excavations of Mission San Luis de Tamiali and Mission Santa Catalina de Guale, which are confirmed Spanish mission sites. We can confirm that this site not only contains trade goods found at Spanish mission sites of that period, but we can also further justify the claim that this is the lost site of Mission San Antonio Bacuqua.

Methods

In June 2022 the FSU field school excavated the Bryan Site. The resulting material from this excavation was then rough sorted, cataloged, and data entered. Beads found from the site were separated, photographed, and measured. To begin the comparative analysis two other excavations from mission sites of similar periods were selected, Mission San Luis de Tamiali and Mission Santa Catalina e Guale. Beads found in those excavations were separated for the analysis. I then compared the similarities and differences in bead types and bead amounts between the three mission sites.



Figure 2. A light blue bead found in-situ at the Bryan Site

Type	Amount
Seed Bead, Dark Blue (IIA4)	9
Ichtucknee Bead (IIA52)	4
Bead, Dark Blue (IIA55)	2
Seed Bead, Black (IIA6)	1
Seed Bead, Light Blue (LLa53)	1
Compound Bead (IVa11)	1
Bead, Light Blue (IIA33)	1
Bead, Black (IIA6)	1
Seed Bead, Brown (IVa11)	1
Bead, Light Brown (IVa11)	1
Bead Green (IIA24)	1
Chevron (LVK4)	1
Grand Total	24

Table 1. Preliminary results of bead assemblage.



Figure 1. A chevron bead from 2022 excavations of the Bryan Site.

Results

At the Bryan site (8LE6256) based on our preliminary findings thus far about 24 beads have been recovered from the excavation. Of these beads, we can see two distinct shapes and four distinct color types. There is an abundance of seed beads (under 2mm), about 9 recovered and the rest of the beads can be classified as large beads (6-10mm). From these two distinct sizes of beads, we see a range of blues from the ichtucknee blue bead to the light blue seed beads. Within that, we have a small number of green, black, and brown. The complex bead that has been found from the assemblage thus far is a chevron bead with a blue outer layer and red interior.

Discussion/Conclusion

All of these beads are characteristic of mission periods during the 17th century and can be found in other Spanish mission sites that date to this period. In an excavation of Mission San Luis de Tamiali by Dr. Tanya Peres in the summer of 2021 we can see a similar assemblage of beads found during the excavation. Specifically, an abundance of blue seed beads can be found in the Bryan site assemblage. Mission San Luis de Tamiali is a site that dates from about 1656 AD to 1704 and the beads there reflect what bead makers in Europe were making at that time. Seeing similar bead types as well as the amount of bead color can point to the beads found at the Bryan site being of the same source as the beads found at Mission San Luis de Tamiali

A second mission site which is known for its large assemblage of beads is also brought into consideration for this analysis. This is Mission Santa Catalina De Guale which dates from about 1587 AD to 1680 AD. In excavations of this site, there has been an accumulation of over 70,000 beads recovered from various contexts. Almost all the beads found at the Bryan site correspond to beads found at Mission Santa Catalina De Guale. The more complex beads like the chevron bead and the compound bead have been found in numerous quantities in Mission Santa Catalina De Guale.

Combined with other diagnostic Spanish artifacts like wattle and daub and ceramics we can see how beads that were made in predictable styles throughout time can help identify this site as Mission San Antonio Bacuqua. Through comparison of other sites like Mission San Luis de Tamiali and Mission Santa Catalina De Guale, we can get a better picture of how trade goods like beads moved throughout La Florida and the mission system.

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