

enjoying its beauty. Many fine pieces of Transmontane beadwork in his collection illustrate this book.

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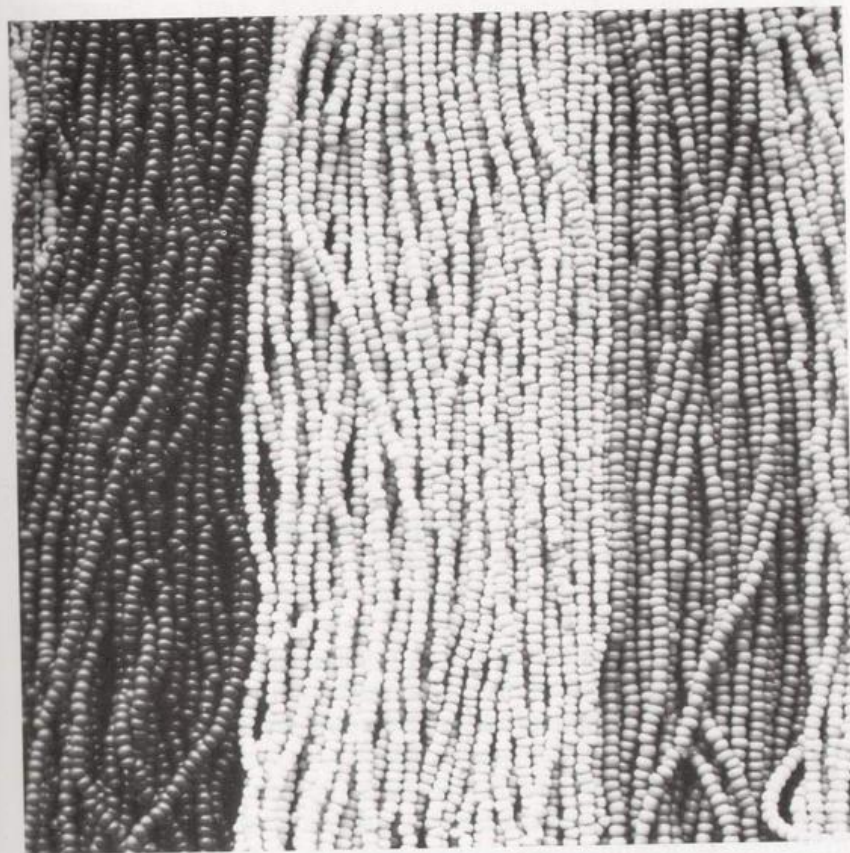
Peter Bolz (Berlin, Germany) was so kind to verify a special technique used in diagonal weaving; Ian M. West (Horsted Keynes, England) generously permitted me to photograph his collection and read several chapters; Rex Reddick, (Denison, Texas) read the chapter on Gourd-Stitch and provided useful comments; F. Dennis Lessard's (Santa Fe, New Mexico) comments on Woven Beadwork made me completely revise parts of this chapter.

Thanks to Alice Scherer, director of the Center for the Study of Beadwork in Portland/Oregon for her encouraging words. When I met her and many other bead(work) enthusiasts during the Bead Conference in Santa Fe in March 1992, I became aware of a widespread interest in beadwork of all kinds which has been unknown to me before.

My publisher, Richard Schneider, even went to the trouble to come over from the States to discuss details of the book. Not minding the jet-lag, he immediately plunged into the work of revising the many pages of my manuscript and discussing many details of layout and format. This visit was followed by a continuous and lively correspondence, and his numerous invaluable comments and criticisms on language and style tremendously helped to shape my text into good American English and added many subtleties to my vocabulary. Above all I have to thank him for his patience and faith in my work.

For her support and patience, I have to offer my deepest gratitude to my wife, Christa. Probably her most important advice was "Stop rewriting," and without her help and unflagging faith throughout the years, this book would never have been possible.

# 1 BEADS



**M**urano, a little island near Venice, Italy, has been for many centuries the major center of glass manufacture, and still today you can visit a few furnaces and watch the glass blowers at their work, although bead production has become less and less important. Over the centuries, thousands of tons of beads were exported to America and Africa, and as late as the early 1960's various trading posts still offered many beautiful Italian old-time bead colors for sale.

Throughout the centuries the Venetian bead manufacturers took any measure to keep the ingredients of their melts secret, and for some time glass workers trying to defect with the formulas had to face capital punishment; if they succeeded, their relatives were imprisoned to induce the emigrants' return. Although these severe regulations helped the doges of Venice to establish a powerful position in the market or almost monopolize it, they could not prevent the rise of bead manufacturing centers in other parts of Europe. With the old knowledge long gone, the few bead makers today are rarely successful in reproducing the original nuances found in museum pieces. Unlike the larger and more spectacular polychrome "trade beads," seed beads have never been given special attention, and they remain an important area still untapped by in-depth research.

To a lesser degree, beads were also imported from France and Holland, but in the late 19th century seed beads from Bohemia (then part of the Austrian Empire and now of Czechoslovakia) began to dominate the market. The Venetian beads have been known for their soft and subdued colors that blended perfectly with the tasteful designs found in the tribal styles. The brighter colors of the new Czech beads often tend toward a bluish tint, which, in most cases may not be noticeable, but will strike the

beholder immediately when seen on replicas of articles that originally used Italian colors.

The new colors and particularly the uniform shape of the Czech beads appealed to the Indian beadworkers, so sales of Italian beads dwindled more and more. Today it is not unusual to pay twenty or thirty dollars for one ounce of the old Italian seed bead colors, so you would take care not to spill any of them! As a matter of fact, "bead hunting" has become a hobby of its own for the connoisseur beadworker.

Craftworkers, who are primarily interested in creating authentic replicas of old-time Indian clothing and accoutrements, may deplore the present situation, while modern Indian beadworkers enjoy a wide selection of bright-colored Czech beads. So if you're in for modern style beadwork—which I have always admired for its excellent craftsmanship and colorful designs—you needn't pay strict attention to most of what I will have to say about shapes and colors used in old-time beadwork.

## BEAD SIZES

As with so many things in everyday life, bead sizes have been standardized, too: "10/o" up to "20/o" for *seed* beads, and "6/o" to "9/o" for *pony* beads (Fig. 1-1). In some books or articles you will see these sizes written as "10°" which means the same as "10/o." Some authors writing about Indian beadwork use Italian sizes, with the most common "4/o" and "5/o" equaling roughly 12/o and 13/o respectively. They are not exactly the same, however!

To most beadworkers these numbers have always been enigmatic, so we have put up with the fact that small beads are classified by large numbers, and larger ones, like the pony beads, by small numbers, or, in other words, the number is reciprocal to the size of the bead. The rationale behind this "mystery," though, is simple: the number before the slash denotes the number of bead *rows* of a given size there are to an inch; thus *thirteen* rows beaded in size "13/o" will roughly cover one inch (2.54 cm) (Fig. 1-2). Although this bit of information should not be taken as an absolute one, it is very helpful in judging the area size a design

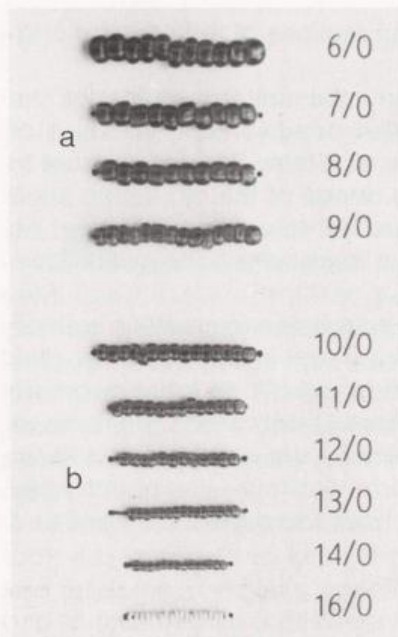


Fig. 1-1. Bead chart showing actual bead sizes. Among the pony bead sizes 6/o to 9/o shown here, size 8/o beads probably were those most commonly used size in old-time pony beadwork. Seed bead sizes 12/o to 14/o were the most favored bead sizes in old-time beadwork while it is not unusual to observe still smaller beads (size 16/o) on some pieces. The beadworkers of the Crow or Nez Perce often used 10/o beads for edging cloth-trims.

will cover as well as determining the bead size(s) used when researching old beadwork (BUGELSKI B 1989: 37).

Beads of the sizes 12/o or 13/o were most commonly used in old-time seed beadwork, and it is not unusual to find 14/o or 16/o beads on many old pieces; almost unbelievably, even tiny 18/o or 20/o beads were used to make the finest beadwork ever seen (CONN I 1985:76). In Oklahoma, 13/o or 14/o seem to be the preferred sizes for gourd-stitch or peyote beadwork, while Sioux men on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota have been known to buy completed fans for the feathers, only to discard the beadwork and replace it by the favored 16/o beads (LESSARD D 1984:24).

Pony beads of size 8/o or 9/o, most popular in the early era of Indian beadwork, were still used in the classic period for wide undulating lanes on Blackfeet or Plateau women's dresses. The Crow beadworkers favored these large beads for edging some of their cloth-bound articles, while in the Columbia Plateau region,

pony beadwork, combined with seed beads, was continued until the turn of the century.

It is true that many old-time craftswomen among the various tribes added variety to their beadwork by using different bead sizes in a single piece. Crow-style beadwork, again, is a classic example of this common practice, which in some cases, might have been dictated by a shortage of beads, but more often was done by choice. On a Transmontane-style blanket-strip panel you may often notice some of the design elements beaded with 13/o seed beads, while others are done with 8/o pony beads (Fig. 1-2). However, if you take another look, you will notice that each of these fields forms an individually worked unit; almost never will you find beads of different sizes between the two ends of a single row. Because overlaid floral designs usually are worked as individual units, they may be beaded with a size differing from that of the neighboring area.

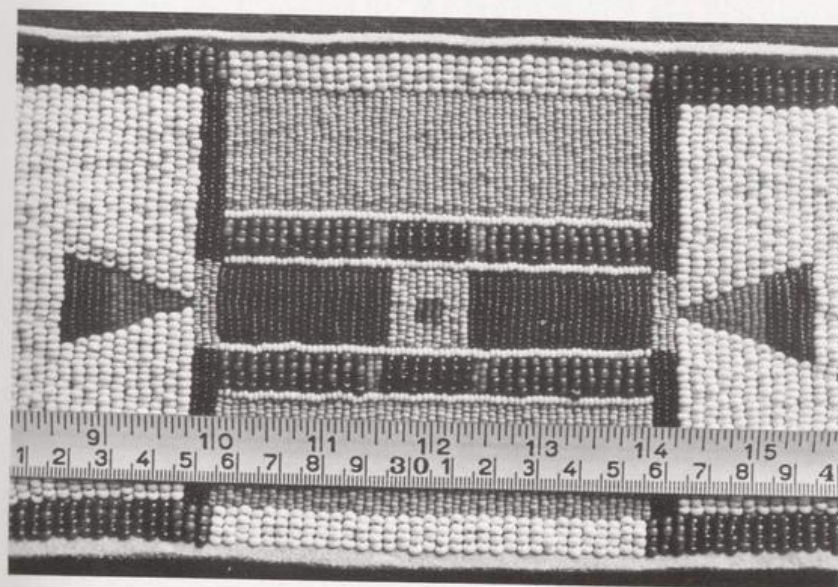


Fig. 1-2. 13 rows of 13/o seed beads cover a width of roughly one inch, while it takes 8 rows of 8/o pony beads to cover an inch (Beadwork by the author).