

GLASS BEAD MAKING BY THE ARIKARA

Among the interesting objects recently obtained during a field of study of the material culture of the tribes of the Missouri River region is a stone mortar which is known to have been in possession of an Arikara family "since before the time of the trouble with the American army," that is, in 1823, when the Arikara villages on Grand river were attacked and destroyed by Gen. Henry Atkinson.

The interesting fact in connection with this mortar is that it was one used in pulverizing glass beads for their reworking, an art long known to have been practiced by the Arikara, for it is best described by Lewis and Clark (*Original Journals*, vol. I, p. 272). From the former owner of the mortar, and also from another old woman of the tribe, the manner in which the work was done and the reason for doing it were learned. When asked why the people of their tribe in former time went to the trouble to destroy the beads which the traders brought them, and to make the glass over again into beads, the old woman said: "The traders of that time brought our people very large beads, as large as plums, and our people did not like them. For that reason they pulverized them, and worked them over into beads no larger than chokecherries, and also into pendants and other decorative objects."

These informants said that the traders' beads were first pulverized, the different colored beads separately. Then they prepare a firing pan from the brass rim or binding of the butt of an old musket on which was laid a bed of sand. The powdered glass was moistened with water; then, with a fine wooden tool, this glass paste was shaped into the forms desired on the prepared bed of sand. The firing-pan was carefully placed in a hot fire of dry elm wood, this wood being used because it would burn quietly without snapping or crackling. When heated to the proper temperature the glass paste became fused. Perforations were kept open by insertion of sand. When quite cooled after fusing, the beads or other objects were taken from the sand bed, and the sand was shaken out of the perforations.