



Beads for the dead

The use of amber in the Dutch Funnelbeaker-period Preliminary results

Experiments

As a result of grinding of the flat sides experimentally produced amber ornaments display a sharp edge along the perforation and between the surface and the sides (fig. 1).

The experimental beads were worn for 75 days. After this period of use several showed polish and very slight rounding of the edges and higher parts of the surface (fig. 2). This polish and rounding would probably develop further with longer use, resulting in the characteristic worn out perforations ('*uitlubbering*') and rounded edges.



Figure 1: experimentally made bead, fresh state (magnification 10x).

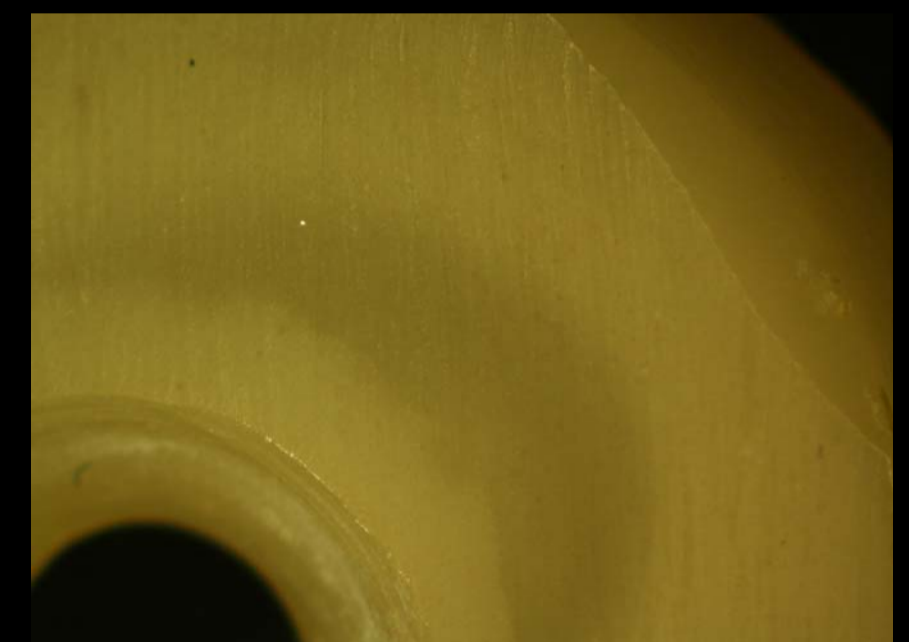


Figure 2: experimentally made bead, after use (magnification 10x).



Figure 3: bead from *hunebed G2*, lightly worn (magnification 15x).

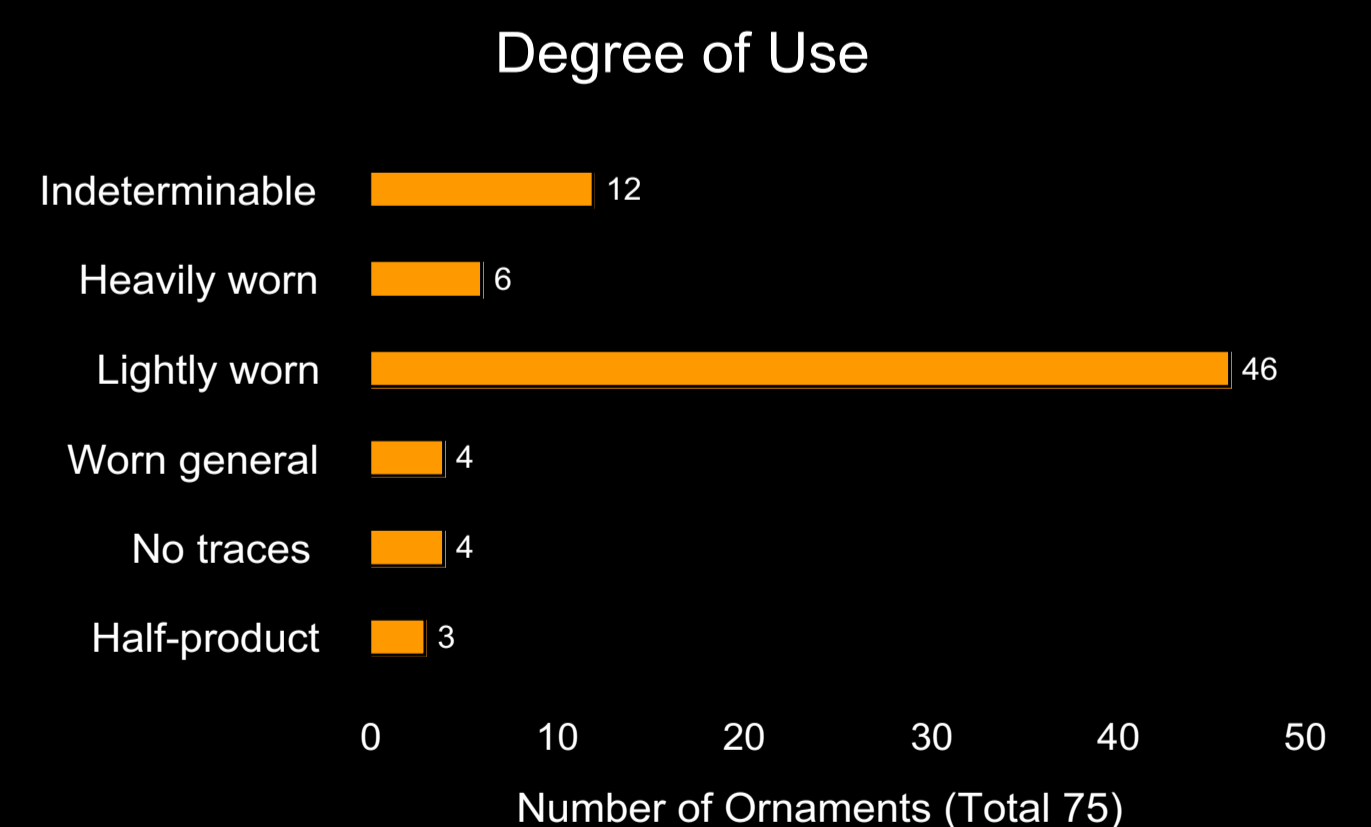


Figure 4: bead from *hunebed G2*, heavily worn (magnification 10x).

Archaeology

The results of the experiments were compared with the ornaments from *Hunebed G2*, Glimmen, province of Groningen. The 75 ornaments were examined with the naked eye and by stereomicroscope. Although these objects were severely damaged due to oxidation, some information about the degree of use could be gained from the rounding of the edges. Most of these ornaments appeared to have no traces or were lightly worn (compare fig. 1 with fig. 3; graph 1). A few of the ornaments were heavily worn (fig. 4 and graph 1).

It is possible that the heavily worn objects were personal ornaments used for a lifetime, and eventually interred with the dead. The 'fresh' beads could have belonged to children, or perhaps these ornaments were specially made to be used in rituals surrounding the '*hunebed*'.



Graph 1: Degree of use of the 75 ornaments from *hunebed G2*. Indeterminable: not interpretable due to damage or conservation; Heavily worn: considerable wear on perforation and/or surface; Lightly worn: sharp edges, but some minor wear; Worn general: objects shows signs of wear but it is not possible to determine how much the object was used; No Traces: objects shows no signs of wear; Half-product: objects without perforation.

Further reading

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