

while Chapter 6 describes the *umhlanga* or Reed Dance which brings Zulus together dressed in traditional finery to watch the young women of the Zulu nation dance. As the authors point out, this annual festival has also become an important political forum for the king.

Speaking with Beads will be valued especially for its wonderful photographs. Serious researchers will also benefit a great deal from the detail, such as the place and date, supplied with the field photos. However, the reader searching for accurate, detailed information could be misled by the captions in Chapter 1, and will certainly be confused by the misuse of terms describing "styles" in Msinga beadwork. It is a great pity that Jean Morris passed away shortly before the release of this book, but it will stand as a testimony to her skill and artistry as a photographer and observer of the Zulu people.

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Collectible Beads: A Universal Aesthetic.

Robert K. Liu. Ornament, Inc., P.O. Box 2349, San Marcos, CA 92079-9806. 1995. 256 pp., 309 color figs., glossary, list of bead organizations, index. \$49.95 (cloth) + \$6.55 domestic and \$9.50 foreign postage.

Spurred by the ever-increasing interest in bead collecting worldwide, Robert Liu set out to provide the bead aficionado with reliable information on collectible beads. He thus chose "to include only beads and some pendants that were available on the marketplace within the past two decades." Also, as this book is aimed at the collector, the less interesting and more inexpensive beads produced primarily during the past two decades were not considered either. While these restrictions definitely limit the subject matter, the diversity of the beads that are covered is quite impressive, nonetheless. Surprisingly, there is no price guide, seemingly *de rigueur* for a book aimed at collectors. However, Liu rightly points out that such would essentially be a waste of time as prices vary so greatly from one dealer and one place to another.

Rather than be pedantic, the author has kept the text succinct, letting the more than 300 color photographs and their captions convey much of the information. And the illustrations are superb, as one would expect of a photographer the caliber of Robert Liu. All of us who publish on beads have much to learn from his work.

To put beads in their proper perspective — as items long sought and used by peoples all around the world—Robert chose to approach the subject largely from a cultural-geographical perspective. Thus, the first part of the book deals with six relatively distinct regions: Africa; China and Taiwan; Japan, India, Himalayan Countries, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia; Middle East and North Africa; Precolumbian Americas; and The Americas and Europe.

While dealing with the entire continent excluding the area that encompassed ancient Egypt, the chapter on Africa emphasizes the west coast from Morocco to Nigeria. This part of the world has been a principal source of collector beads since at least the late 1960s, when boxcar loads of millefiori and other European-made beads began to flood into the United States from that continent. Then some of the beads began to be bought back by Africans, while others found their way to markets in the Near and Far East. After discussing the complexities of the African bead trade, Robert takes the reader on a tour of the various beads that this continent has made available to the collector. Both local and imported manufactures are included.

China and Taiwan, the subject of chapter 3, are collectively the second most prolific source of collector beads in the world. Following resumption of trade with the People's Republic of China in the early 1970s, the subsequent influx of Chinese beads and jewelry was one of the largest to hit the United States. Among the most intricate and beautiful of the imports are the early glass beads which, unfortunately, have been increasingly faked in recent years. Other imports to be discussed are beads composed of various natural organic and inorganic materials, as well as synthetic inorganics, especially glass.

The next chapter takes in other selected Asian countries, including Korea and Japan, India and the Himalayan countries, Thailand, The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The great diversity of beads, both old and new, to be found here makes this

region an important one to connoisseur bead collectors. It is also the source of strikingly beautiful necklaces and other beaded adornments, such as those of the Naga of India and Akha of Thailand. Here, as elsewhere, most of the older beads have been looted from archaeological sites with the resultant wholesale destruction of truly incredible amounts of irreplaceable scientific data. Even worse, the worldwide craving for ancient beads has turned some individuals to the ghoulish practice of unearthing recent interments which were buried with heirloom beads. It is, therefore, the reviewer's fervent hope that the reader will be content to revel in the beads illustrated in this book and not set out in eager pursuit of actual specimens.

Moving on to the Middle East and North Africa, Liu points out that the former region is the prime source of ancient glass beads, political unrest and warfare facilitating the wholesale looting of archaeological sites in several countries, most notably Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan. For this reason, some of the largest collections of ancient beads are in the possession of Middle Eastern antiquities dealers. The beads are splendid (the Phoenician mask pendants and Roman face beads that are illustrated rank among the finest examples) but generally lack any provenience data, rendering them practically useless as sources of information about past cultures.

The beads of the Precolumbian Americas are not generally popular with collectors. Shell beads are plentiful but have usually lost their color because of leaching. Jadeite, gold and quartz-family beads are at the other end of the popularity spectrum, and one can only admire the skill and tenacity of the artisans who laboriously fashioned beads from quartz crystal and carnelian with little more than stone tools, reeds or sticks and sand.

The cultural-geographical survey of the world's collectible beads ends with an examination of those of The Americas and Europe. Few ancient European beads are available to collectors, and most non-imported European beads on the market are of 19th- or 20th-century origin though earlier examples do occasionally pop up in antique shops in places like Amsterdam. The situation in North America is quite similar with only a few strands of Indian trade beads coming onto the market annually. Peru has also been a source of Colonial-period beads but, again, the quantities involved have not been sizeable.

Liu then enters the classy world of contemporary mixed-media necklaces and contemporary beads, discussing various aspects of their production and marketing, and showcasing the works of some of the world's most talented artisans. The subject of the next chapter, Fakes and Simulations, will be of especial interest to collectors as the burgeoning quest for beads worldwide has resulted in a corresponding increase in the production of numerous, well-made replicas of the scarcer beads. The final chapter deals with the process of Collecting Beads, revealing how to acquire, arrange, display, record and research a bead collection.

Robert Liu has produced a handsome, well-written volume that well covers the subject matter. *Collectible Beads* is beautifully designed and the breathtaking illustrations alone are worth the asking price. A slight impediment to the reader who wishes to check a particular reference cited in text concerns the fact that chapter headings do not include the chapter number, forcing the reader to consult the table of contents to find the appropriate number before delving into the References and Bibliography section. Also, a number of typos and errors of fact have crept into the text here and there. One of the prevalent problems concerns the use of the term "Islamic period." For Muslims, it still is the Islamic period; what should have been used is "Early Islamic period." There also seems to have been a problem with the conversion of some dates from centuries to years. For example, on page 102, a bead attributed to the 2nd to 6th century A.D. by Peter Francis is converted to 200-600 A.D., rather than 100-600 A.D. Similarly, a faience bead Lois Dubin believes to be from the 5th or 4th century B.C. becomes "400 to 500 B.C." (p. 110), rather than 500-300 B.C.

Novice collectors/researchers will find this book very useful, especially since there is an extensive list of further readings in the References and Bibliography section. It may not appeal as much to those who already possess a fairly broad knowledge of beads and their status in the world bead market, or who want in-depth information on specific types or regions. But then, this is not the intended audience.

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