

BOOK REVIEWS

Indian Beads: A Cultural and Technological Study.

Shantaram Bhalchandra Deo. Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune 411 006, India. 2000. 206 pp., 12 color plates, 56 b&w figs., 3 maps. Rs.600 (about \$13.00) + \$9.00 postage (soft bound).

This posthumous publication of a report submitted in 1988 by the renowned archaeologists and ancient historian S.B. Deo is very useful as a source of information on the textual and historical uses of beads, pendants, and amulets on the Indian subcontinent. It is unfortunate that it was not published earlier since a great deal has been published on beads and beadmaking technology in South Asia since 1988. Consequently, many of the issues relating to technology, raw materials, and typology are not up to date and could be misleading to those who are not familiar with the literature.

In Chapter I, the author provides an overview of the cultural significance of the study of Indian beads, emphasizing the importance of literary references that can help to understand the social and religious meaning of specific types of beads. In Chapter II he briefly discusses the antiquity of Indian beads, the techniques of manufacture, and the raw materials used. This chapter is perhaps the least accurate given the amount of research that has been published by numerous scholars in the last decade (*see suggested readings below*). For the experienced scholar, however, this chapter is useful in providing important literary references that have not been noted in other publications. One of the leading archaeologists of India, the author was very well versed in classical Indian literature. He begins with the most ancient Sanskrit texts, the Rg Veda, and traces the various mentions of beads and amulets through the later Vedic texts, the Buddhist and Jain texts, Gupta literature, medieval texts from throughout the subcontinent, and

ends with the important Mughal and colonial period literature. Although he does not always give exact references, an enterprising student will at least know which treatise to examine.

In this same chapter, Dr. Deo discusses ancient beadmaking centers and provides a general map showing the best-known sites. It is unfortunate that he does not include the many prehistoric beadmaking sites of the Indus Valley, such as Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Amri, Balakot, Rehmandheri, and Mehrgarh. The information on beadmaking at these sites was known and in published form at the time of his study. His map of the mineral resources of the subcontinent also does not reflect information that was present at the time. In his summary of bead manufacturing techniques, he has some interesting observations that have not been reported by other scholars—specifically the references to literary texts that discuss polishing, perforation, and bead stringing. Other aspects of manufacture are less informative and in many cases simply repeat what had been published by earlier scholars; e.g., etched beads.

In the extensive section on bead raw materials, Deo does provide information on specific types of materials found at different sites. This is a very useful compilation because it provides the bead researcher with names of many relatively obscure sites that have beads, along with identifications of some new types of raw materials and possible source areas. As mentioned above, however, the source areas are only potential localities and without detailed petrographic studies, it is not possible to link a bead from one site to a specific resource locality.

Perhaps one of the most interesting contributions of this section is Appendix I which provides a list of different types of Vedic amulets. Most of the amulets are made of plant materials that are perishable and not preserved in the archaeological record. Consequently, their enumeration in ancient texts provides us with an

unprecedented view of the range of materials used to produce beads and pendants. Most bead researchers have been limited to the study of preserved materials such as stone, bone, and shell, but here we have reference to perishable materials used to make amulets. Many amulets made from similar materials in South Asia today are made as beads or pendants and it is not unlikely that the ancient amulets were also made as beads or pendants.

Chapter III focuses on typological classification and the author uses the approach outlined by Horace C. Beck. While it would have been nice to see the development of a more comprehensive bead typology, the author does provide important information on the types of beads found at different sites. Here, a table relating bead types to sites would have been a very useful illustrative device.

Chapter IV is devoted to amulets and pendants with a heavy dose of literary references to types of amulets and their meaning. This section provides an important new contribution to the typology of ornaments by presenting them in distinct groups and, where possible, linking these categories with literary and historical references. By placing these ornaments in their social and religious contexts, the author has opened up a whole new perspective on the study of South Asian beads and pendants.

In the next chapter, the author attempts to link specific bead and ornament types to depictions on sculptures. Although some of the associations are somewhat vague, he does provide a glimpse of changing ornament styles from the prehistoric through the historical periods.

Chapter VI discusses possible links between the Indian subcontinent and adjacent regions. Considering that there have been numerous studies of this topic in recent years, this chapter is somewhat out of date and some of the comparisons with beads from other world regions are quite tenuous. Nevertheless, the information provided here is a valuable resource for bead researchers looking for projects that need testing. Numerous scientific techniques relating to materials analysis and technological studies, as well as basic morphological analysis, can be done to determine if beads from one region are derived from or in any way related to beads from another region of the world.

In his conclusion (Chapter VII), Dr. Deo tries to summarize the basic patterns revealed in his broad study. The overall message is that more work needs to be done and his only regret is "the voluminous data which still awaits detailed study" (p.121). The text is supplemented by an extensive bibliography that lists many important and rarely seen sources, primarily from classical and medieval sources of the subcontinent. The numerous illustrations extracted from many different publications, as well as his own original documentation, provide a wealth of information beyond that provided in the text. Overall I found this book to be highly informative and strongly recommend it for the serious bead scholar.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Bhan, K.K., M. Vidale, and J.M. Kenoyer**
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1982 Glass Beads of India. *The World of Beads Monograph Series* 7.
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- Kenoyer, J.M.**
1986 The Indus Bead Industry: Contributions to Bead Technology. *Ornament* 10(1):18-23.
1992 Lapis Lazuli Beadmaking in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Ornament* 15(3):71-73.
1994 Faience from the Indus Valley Civilization. *Ornament* 17(3):36-39, 95.
1996 Antique Bead and Ornament Replicas from South Asia: An Alternative to Antique Bead Collecting and the Destruction of Global Cultural Heritage. *Ornament* 20(2):68-71.
1997 Trade and Technology of the Indus Valley: New Insights from Harappa, Pakistan. *World Archaeology* 29(2):262-280.
- Kenoyer, J.M. and M. Vidale**
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edited by P. Vandiver, J.R. Druzick, G.S. Wheeler, and I. Freestone, pp. 495-518. Materials Research Society, Pittsburgh.

Kenoyer, J.M., M. Vidale, and K.K. Bhan

- 1991 Contemporary Stone Bead Making in Khambhat India: Patterns of Craft Specialization and Organization of Production as Reflected in the Archaeological Record. *World Archaeology* 23(1):44-63.
- 1994 Carnelian Bead Production in Khambhat India: An Ethnoarchaeological Study. In *Living Traditions: Studies in the Ethnoarchaeology of South Asia*, edited by B. Allchin, pp. 281-306. Oxford and IBH, New Delhi.

Lahiri, N.

- 1992 *The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes up to c. 200 BC: Resource Use, Resource Access, and Lines of Communication*. Oxford University Press, Delhi.

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- 1989 Early Harappan Steatite, Faience and Paste Beads in a Necklace from Mehrgarh-Nausharo (Pakistan). *East and West* 39(1-4):291-300.
- 1995 Early Beadmakers of the Indus Tradition: The Manufacturing Sequence of Talc Beads at Mehrgarh in the 5th Millennium B.C. *East and West* 45(1-4):45-80.

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Beads, Body, and Soul: Art and Light in the Yoruba Universe.

Henry John Drewal and John Mason. UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Box 951549, Los Angeles, California 90095-1549. 1998. 288 pages, 420 color figs. \$35.00 (paper cover).

This splendidly illustrated book was produced to accompany an exhibition of the same name at the UCLA Fowler Museum in Los Angeles during the first part of 1998. It sold out quickly and had to be reprinted as the exhibition visited other venues in the United

States. As well as being a gorgeous picture book on beads, this is also a serious piece of research and an essential for African beadwork studies. The Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria are known for the artistic versatility and quality of their beadwork, so this book is a really welcome addition to my library.

The book is divided into three main sections: 73 pages on Yoruba beadwork in Africa, 111 pages on Yoruba beadwork in the Americas, and 76 pages for the catalogue of the exhibited beadwork. The first section is divided into an Introduction, A Historical Overview, and Patrons, Artists, Process, Aesthetics. In the latter subsection, James Adetoye, a member of a famous dynasty of bead artists, was an essential source of information. Among the many illustrations are pictures of the beaded crowns and caps—almost 80 of them—in the ownership of the Alake (king) of the city of Abeokuta, all of them with information concerning which Alake owned them, going from the 1860s to the present day. Contemporary Yoruba Beadwork also features the work of artists Jimoh Buraimoh and Olabayo Olaniyi, showing that innovation can continue alongside the traditional.

Yoruba Beadwork in the Americas has five subsections: History, The Cultural Values Encoded in Beads, Bead Arts in Cuba and the U.S., Yoruba Beadwork in Brazilian Condomblé, and Beads of Identity in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. There is, in fact, a considerable Yoruba population in the Americas—the descendants of former slaves. About two out of every five slaves who were transported to the U.S.A., Cuba, and Brazil between 1500 and the mid-19th century were Yoruba, and among their continuing cultural traditions is the use of beads. One striking use of beads that seems to be unique to this group of Yoruba is to embellish the aprons made for the sacred *bata* drums. It is fascinating to see the richness and diversity of what one might term “overseas Yoruba” beadwork. There are all sorts of pictures including bead stalls that show what is on offer and others that show transatlantic versions of the African objects seen in the earlier section.

The catalogue of 70 objects which forms the final section of the book is fully illustrated and contains full descriptive notes. The objects are all of African