

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Beadwork: A World Guide.*

**Caroline Crabtree and Pam Stallebrass.** Rizzoli, New York; Thames & Hudson, London. 2002. 208 pp., 600+ color figs., index. \$50.00/ £ 29.00 (hard cover).

At first sight, this book, with its colorful dust jacket and over 600 illustrations, mostly in color, seems to be everything that a lover of beadwork could wish for, and would greet with enthusiasm.

The layout of contents is promising, with headings that read Introduction; Bead Manufacturing Centers; Africa; The Americas; Asia, Oceania, and the Arabian Gulf; Europe; and Construction and Techniques. The book ends with short appendices on Collecting Beadwork; Acknowledgments; Sources of Illustrations; Collections; Bibliography; and Index. But when one gets down to study the book seriously, the many flaws become sadly apparent.

When it comes to the picture captions and the textual content, there are disappointing errors. Almost at once (p. 12), we have the name of George F. Angas misspelled in the caption to a Zulu illustration dated to 1849. Then on p. 15, we have the picture of a sandal made of faience beads, "probably dating from the New Kingdom, ancient Egypt, 1500-1000 BC". It is, in fact, from the grave of the pharaoh Tutankhamun, who died in 1325 B.C., and is in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, and not, as stated, from the collection of Torben Sode.

There is unorthodox and questionable terminology: "red-under-white" [sic] rather than the generally used "white heart" (p. 17) and "sweetie" beads (p. 18). On p. 21, glass beads are described as "porous"—an obvious mistake. When discussing beads from Bohemia, there is no mention of the amount of work that was done in Czech prisons under Communist rule. The beads on p. 14, described as handmade, from Papanaidupet, India, look suspiciously like machine-drawn white beads with blue stripes, such as are common in African beadwork, and of European origin.

The section on African beadwork (concentrating on the Tsonga, the San and Ovambo, and the Ndebele), which was written by outside contributors, is more or less adequate till it comes to western Africa where the treatment is far from that. The Cameroonian elephant mask shown on p. 69 looks all wrong, as it lacks the long trunk-like flaps and has

a crouching animal on the crown. It looks like something made for the tourist market. Despite writing about Yoruba beaded crowns (pp. 70-73), not one is illustrated—the illustrations are all of headgear or caps, lacking the essential conical shape, beaded veil, and ritual birds. These ritual birds do not refer to the power of women, as stated on p. 72; they are the royal *okin* birds. The belt at the bottom of p. 70 is Kuba, from the Congo, and should have been on the previous page. The illustrations on p. 71 are far from doing justice to the skills of Yoruba beaders. At the end of the book, on p. 199, there is an "unique horned hat made by the Kuba." If it was made by the Kuba, it would indeed be unique since the type is that of the Pende, and more recently, the Yaka. It is modern, and made for the tourist market.

Sometimes there is a lack of coherence in the text. In writing about beadwork in the Americas, topics such as dentalium shells and quillworking are mentioned without clarification, which may come a few pages later on. When writing for the popular market, as here, it is better not to use out-of-the-way terms like *katami* (p. 107) without saying what they are. And on p. 110, there is no such place as the Caucus mountains of Georgia—the Caucasus are obviously meant, although not featured on the accompanying map.

There is a missed chance to make an interesting connection between the Naga head hunters (p. 116) and the necklace illustrated which shows two small replica heads as tokens of the real thing. It is too bad that the accompanying necklace is not Naga, but from the Solomon Islands of Melanesia, right on the edge of the map, and that on p. 138, the caption refers to the "Soloman" Islands.

Moving on to the Ukraine (pp. 158-161), the textual coverage is thorough and detailed enough to make one wonder if Tamara Stadnychenko, whose work is cited in the bibliography, wrote it. Yet there is no trace of her writings to be found through an Internet search, and no detail of the publication in 2001 is given.

While I am not fully versed in the finer points of beadwork technique, there are some obvious lapses. On p. 178, there is a piece in so-called "Shembe stitch," which is misleading, as the key feature of Shembe-style beadwork is a cross-like motif on a white ground—not at all like the design illustrated. On p. 181, Ndebele beadwork is described as being in strong primary colors, yet the piece illustrated on

pp.180-181 shows the post-1970 palette, which uses darker colors. The Gujarati fan on p. 189 is certainly not in three-bead netting as stated. The term “zipper edging” (p. 193) is an unsatisfactory substitute for “picot edging.”

Anyone seriously interested in beadwork would want to know where a given piece illustrated in the book is to be found. Here the Sources of Illustrations on p. 202 is not only in minuscule print (which is, regrettably, par for the course) but also unevenly put together and woefully lacking in real and correct information. A vast number of pieces are credited to Tessa Bunney who turns out to be a photographer, not an owner, and, furthermore, one whose captions are often incorrectly given. This means, among other things, that a good many illustrated pieces in Stefany Tomalin’s collection are not credited to her but to Tessa Bunney. While it would have meant that captions were fuller and more obtrusive, it would have been so much more useful to give the location or ownership of each piece as part of the caption instead of forcing the researcher to trawl through the Sources of Illustrations section on p. 202. Yet we find that the Afri-Karner collection is credited not only on p. 202, but also in every hyped caption to an illustrated piece from it. It should have been possible to extend that treatment to all the illustrated pieces.

“Collections” on p. 203 lists 13 South African museums with collections, which is useful to know but nearer home, the British Isles and Europe could have been better covered. Museums in the U.S.A. and Canada seem to be well listed.

The Bibliography contains some surprising omissions and errors. The very first entry, *Beaded Splendor*, ought to have put in under Africa, and it is remiss not to have included Stefany Tomalin’s *Beads!* The articles in Bead Society of Great Britain newsletters nos. 48 and 52 ought to have been named. Under “Africa,” Ulli Beier’s *Yoruba Beaded Crowns* and even my own *Beads and Beadwork of West and Central Africa* should have been included. Under “Asia,” Jamey Allen would very likely be the first to say that *Magical Ancient Beads* was not worth including, and should be replaced by Heidi Munan’s pamphlet on beads in the Sarawak Museum, or by Oppi Untracht’s *Traditional Jewelry of India*. The whole bibliography should have included the place of publication, date, and preferably, ISBN number for every entry.

At the end of this review, the feeling is one of great regret that a book that has so much going for it in splendid illustrations and wide coverage of the subject should have so many avoidable flaws. A complex subject like this needs to be checked, re-checked, and checked again, not only by the

authors, but also by the proofreaders of Thames & Hudson and Rizzoli who have done a cursory job in spotting typos.

Errors in the text and captions are far too numerous to list here, where I have limited myself to just a few. The Bead Society of Great Britain is concerned that there are many factual and textual errors in this volume which ought to be corrected in a second or subsequent edition, and a list of *errata* is being compiled which will be sent in good faith and in a spirit of co-operation to the authors and the publishers in the hope that these mistakes will be rectified and enhance the reputation of the book in future editions. A copy of the *errata* will be posted on the Bead Society of Great Britain’s website <http://www.beadsociety.freemove.co.uk>.

Margret Carey  
2 Frank Dixon Way  
London SE21 7BB  
United Kingdom  
Email: [margret@macarey.demon.co.uk](mailto:margret@macarey.demon.co.uk)

#### *A Bead Timeline. Volume I: Prehistory to 1200 CE.*

**James W. Lankton.** The Bead Society of Greater Washington, The Bead Museum, 400 Seventh St., N.W., Washington D.C. 20004. 2003. 96 pages, 79 color figs. \$24.95 (paper cover).

This catalog was published as an adjunct to “The Bead Timeline of History,” a permanent exhibition that opened in 2000, at the Bead Museum in Washington, D.C. It is intended to be the first volume in a series to accompany the exhibit and covers the time period from the Paleolithic/Neolithic transition (ca. 12,000 BCE) through the Early Islamic period to 1200 CE. But its subject matter and value go far beyond what one generally expects from exhibition catalogs.

Installation of the Timeline exhibit was carried out by Jamey Allen, James Lankton, and Hilary Whittaker. It is about 34 feet long and displays some 5,000 beads which are organized so that chronological time runs along the horizontal axis and cultural/geographical associations are placed on the vertical axis. Over 2,300 of the beads are illustrated in the book. Lankton electronically repositioned some of the beads for the publication to correct their location and added a few others that were not included in the Timeline at time of publication. This is entirely in character with the concept behind the exhibit for it is meant to be a work in progress, with beads being added or rearranged when appropriate.

Inside the catalog’s front cover are two useful maps that show the locations of the main cultures of Europe, western