

in the assemblage, it has required considerable time to identify, measure, classify, and quantify the beads from various site contexts all the while maintaining provenience control. As Blair and Pendleton reveal in their preface, there were successes and there were changes in approach. This monograph succeeds because of the thorough consideration of the many archaeological and historical facets presented by such an assemblage of artifacts: context, origin, economic value, social usage, and personal meaning. I believe it will be much valued in the future as a resource and as a standard for presenting archaeological bead data.

The volume may be purchased in paper form or it can be downloaded as a free pdf file from the library website of the American Museum of Natural History at <http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/dspace/handle/2246/5956>.

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Editor's note: It should be pointed out that AMNH bead types 27-32 (pp. 39-40, 241-244) are not Kidd type If (tubular beads modified by grinding) but If (rounded beads modified by grinding).

Zulu Beadwork: Talk with Beads.

Hlengiwe Dube. Africa Direct, Inc., 2300 Krameria Street, Denver, CO 80207. 2009. 112 pp., 114 color figs. ISBN 978-0-9816267-0-3. \$35.00 (paper cover).

The reputation of Hlengiwe Dube as an active collector of contemporary and early KwaZulu-Natal beadwork is well established in South Africa. This is her first book, published abroad as the result of losing a decade-long struggle to interest local publishers in the subject of beadwork, the primary means of aesthetic expression of southern African women. Publications on beadwork of the region are relatively sparse,

and those that include indigenous knowledge systems and authentic voices are rare. The role of the American publisher, Africa Direct, must be acknowledged in validating the art of Zulu beadwork.

The significance of this small publication is that it is a unique narrative and an authentic voice of a contemporary observer, who skillfully negotiates both the traditionalist and the modern realms of KwaZulu-Natal culture. The meaning and symbolic use of materials, color, style, and form in beaded adornment has long been a subject of fascination for outsiders – from the earliest colonial records of 17th-century travellers at the Cape to later visitors to Port Natal (Durban).

Today, this fascination has been seized upon by the tourist industry resulting in the mass production and sale of “beaded love letters” with accompanying explanations of their meaning.

In reality, the majority of southern Africa's diverse population would not openly part with intensely private meanings of their beaded items of adornment, worn possibly as “love tokens” or to effect the prescribed treatment of a diviner or appease ancestral spirits. It is in this area that Hlengiwe's book is strongest, for the light it throws on the stylistic variations of beadwork design across space and through time in the locus of a Zulu-speaking community. Dube extends the legacy of her maternal grandmother, MaDlamini Tatata Dube, who was well known as a valuable source of knowledge to the founders of the African Art Centre in Durban. She was called upon in the 1970s, when Hlengi was a little girl, to provide both examples of her own work and background information on pieces she collected. Hlengi acted as an interpreter for her *Gogo* (grandmother) who could speak only isiZulu, and consequently her own vocation was born.

The meaning conveyed in northern Nguni beaded adornment continues to be complex and can be imagined as a visual language. Personal messages are expressed metaphorically through the use of color and design that change frequently with the whims of fashion, but remain within certain stylistic cannons that identify work from specific regions in KwaZulu-Natal, such as Msinga or Eshowe. This is the central concern of Dube's book and she expands on this theme in twelve chapters and it is further emphasized by the subtitle she has chosen, *Talk with Beads*.

Given the significance of *Zulu Beadwork: Talk with Beads*, and the fact that there is a paucity of information from

primary sources on the subject matter, it is disappointing that the publisher, Africa Direct, was unable to budget for professional photography or rigorous editing. Little inaccuracies (such as using the now obsolete *Northern Transvaal* instead of *Limpopo Province* on p. 20 or the spelling of *intsimbi* [not *insimbi*] on p. 53) and the disregard for any coherence in the captions and attributions of the illustrations diminish the success of the publication. It is hoped that future editions will have corrected these errors, thus giving *Zulu Beadwork: Talk with Beads* the respectful attention it deserves.

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Straits Chinese Beadwork and Embroidery: A Collector's Guide.

Ho Wing Meng. Times Books International, Times Centre, 1 New Industrial Road, Singapore 536196. 2003. 176 pp., 88 color figs., 9 B&W figs., glossary, index. ISBN: 981-232-480-1. \$38.50 (hard cover).

Straits Chinese Beadwork and Embroidery: A Collector's Guide was first published in 1987, and reprinted in its hard-cover format in 2003 and 2006. In 2008 it was published in a paperback version by Marshall Cavendish (ISBN: 9789812616647). As neither the 2006 nor 2008 editions could be procured, this review is based on the 2003 printing.

This volume is one of a set of four books on Straits Chinese works of art – porcelain, silverware, furniture, and needlework. Its author, Ho Wing Meng, was a professor of philosophy at the National University of Singapore. The publication of Ho's series in the mid 1980s coincided with a rise in the popularity of Straits Chinese material culture as collectibles. Although it was prefigured by Ho's (1976) *Straits Chinese Silver* and a catalogue of an exhibition on porcelain at the University of Malaya by William Willetts and Lim Suan Poh (1981), the series forms one of the earliest sustained efforts to document and contextualize a body of artifacts associated particularly with the Straits Chinese.

"Straits Chinese" is a potentially confusing term which deserves clarification, especially as current emphasis on the

connections between acculturated Chinese communities in Malaysia and Singapore, southern Thailand, and Indonesia has now rendered the term "Peranakan Chinese" a commonplace, although not uncontested, appellation. Historically, the term "Straits Chinese" is derived from "Straits-born Chinese" and refers to Chinese born in the Straits Settlements – primarily the port cities of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore – which had been founded or taken under British jurisdiction between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Strictly speaking, not all locally born Chinese were part of the "Peranakan Chinese" (or "Baba and Nyonya") communities for whom Chinese and Malay practices were incorporated into daily and ceremonial life. Ho's (1983) use of the term "Straits Chinese" relates to the Peranakan Chinese, for he reminds readers of the "Sino-Malay" elements of their "hybrid culture."

Although some Nyonya needleworkers may have carried out both beading and embroidery, Ho's two-part division of his book into beadwork and embroidery gives recognition to the distinctions between each of these practices and the materials they employ. He organizes the content in each part according to wider contexts of beadwork and embroidery elsewhere in the world, as well as origins, materials, techniques, and typology according to function.

Examples illustrated in the book were drawn primarily from four important private collections: Mrs. Grace Saw, whose family was involved in the provision of wedding equipment and whose collection was formed largely in Penang; Mr. Peter Wee, owner of Katong Antique House in Singapore and grandson of a prominent Straits-Chinese family with roots in Singapore and Melaka; Mr. Don Harper, a longtime resident and collector in Indonesia; and Mrs. Ho Wing Meng. A number of pieces from the Harper collection were subsequently acquired by the then National Museum of Singapore and have been published in Eng-Lee Seok Chee's (1989) catalogue.

In his opening, Ho stresses that beadwork and embroidery are works of Straits Chinese women themselves and therefore typify their unique aesthetic (pp. 13-17). In the first part, a review of the value of beads and beadwork as items of prestige in the ancient world precedes his presentation of Straits Chinese beadwork and its association with wedding tradition in Chapter 3. Ho reiterates the "hybrid" nature of Straits Chinese culture, arguing that their beadwork conforms to a distinct aesthetic. After examining the characteristics of beadwork, he concludes that Straits Chinese beadwork "owes its form and functions to old Hindu-Malay customs and practices, its decorative designs to ancient Chinese