

Ho admits he has “interwoven... statements of fact, fiction and conjectures... to arouse [the reader’s] interest and imagination” (p. ix). Although endnotes are provided, the lack of notes concerning oral sources makes it difficult to follow up on some of his assertions. Furthermore, his largely “factual” tone of presenting information is not conducive to distinguishing between informed speculations, genuine errors, and deliberate fictive creations. It is difficult, for instance, to understand the extent to which Straits Chinese beadworkers themselves may have regarded the facets of *manek potong* or “cut glass beads” as “accidental effects of polishing” (p. 45) since subsequent research on beadmaking highlights the deliberate production of beads with these characteristics. Attribution of a panel of metallic-thread embroidery (Fig. 77) to “old Malay workmanship” is unexplained and deserves clarification. There are also a number of minor errors. For example, the lotuses in Fig. 59 are described as peonies and the beaded collar in Fig. 33, described as a collar for the flower girl, is of a form generally worn by boys (see the boy’s dress in Fig. 82).

With the benefit of more recent research and subsequent publications, it is all too easy to be critical of Ho’s work and we must acknowledge that Ho’s discussions reflect, in part, the state of knowledge in the 1970s and early 1980s. In attempting to document and categorize information on Straits Chinese beadwork and embroidery, Ho’s book provided a framework for enthusiasts wishing to further their knowledge and develop their collecting agendas. It served a generation of museum curators and researchers. Importantly, Ho’s book also brought to the fore the manifold forms and significance of beadwork and embroidery for Straits Chinese culture and society at a time when hardly any literature on the subject was available. As the several reprintings suggest, the book has become essential reading for anyone interested in Straits Chinese needlework and it can only be hoped that future versions will address some of the shortcomings. Much more than just a collector’s guide, it stands as a major contribution to the study of Straits Chinese beadwork and embroidery. Even in its present form, some 20 years after it was first released, Ho’s work (and his conjectures) can still suggest avenues for further research.

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Chinese Sewing Baskets.

Betty-Lou Mukerji. AuthorHouse, Bloomington, IN. 2007. 202 pp., 71 color figs. Order from Betty-Lou Mukerji, c/o Wolf Run Ranch & Studio, 375 Wolf Valley Drive, Umpqua, OR 97486. ISBN: 978-1-4389-1523-4. \$49.98 (soft cover).

Combining nostalgia and exhaustive research, collector Betty-Lou Mukerji has produced a volume that will be indispensable to all with an interest in Chinese baskets and the “Peking” glass beads and bangles that adorn them. Her love for these 20th-century artifacts, fast becoming antiques, is apparent throughout the book.

Her investigation into the baskets’ origin refutes the often-encountered myth that they were shipped from China already ornamented and filled with exotic wares or delicacies. In fact, they arrived in bundles at United States (and other countries’) ports and were de-bugged, stained, and decorated in the local Chinatowns, usually by children. The glass beads and bangles, coins, and tassels could be bought separately in some of the shops, and the design

of the trimming could at times be done to the purchaser's order. Ms. Mukerji suggests that such a visit to a shop and the choice of ornament could be a rite of passage for a young girl in the early 20th century.

Following are clearly and beautifully illustrated chapters on the varied basket forms and their care, preservation, and repair. Some owners chose to modify and decorate their baskets by painting, lining, or applying their own trinkets, and many of the results are illustrated. There are also unusual applications such as gesso and barbola.

The beads, bangles, coins, and tassels are each given their own chapters, with useful information on Chinese glassmaking and a chart showing the dates of the coins. These ornaments are fragile, and Mukerji makes some suggestions for repair, reuse, and reattachment.

The author is to be congratulated for her care, enthusiasm, and research. She has produced a charming and valuable reference volume that will be appreciated by all who collect or admire these baskets and "Peking" glass. The photographer, too, deserves plaudits for his beautiful work. I must regretfully add, however, that the book would have benefited from the work of an editor or simply a careful proofreader.

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Middle Eastern and Venetian Glass Beads: Eighth to Twentieth Centuries.

Augusto Panini. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 300 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010. 2007. 311 pp., 712 color figs., glossary, index, synoptic tables. ISBN: 978-88-6130-164-1. \$100.00 (hard cover).

This lavishly illustrated volume showcases selected specimens from the author's extensive collection of glass beads acquired in West Africa, principally Mali, during the 1980s and early 1990s. There are over 700 superb color images which provide macro views of individual beads and full-page images of strands of related beads. These will be invaluable to those wishing to know what bead types have been found in a part of Africa where relatively

little archaeological excavation has been undertaken. Unfortunately, as the bulk of the beads were acquired in markets, just about nothing is known about their exact find spots or archaeological contexts.

For the purposes of this book, the beads have been sorted into two groups based on their likely place of origin: the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and Venice. The volume is about evenly split between these two categories which are not only cultural and geographical, but temporal as well as the beads in the former group comprise the early part of the date range provided in the book's title while the Venetian beads are primarily from the late 19th and 20th centuries. The beads discussed in each category are grouped according to the form of their decoration and are then further subdivided on the basis of how they were manufactured and the specific nature of their decoration.

In the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern section, the major classes are Eye Beads, Beads with Striped Decorations, Beads with Wavy Linear Decorations, Beads with Feather Decorations, and "Mirror" Beads. The latter are what are generally termed "folded" beads. The author discusses the manner in which the beads were made, their distribution, provides dates where possible, and acknowledges that not all the beads in the section were necessarily produced in the Eastern Mediterranean or Middle East.

A "Finds" section follows. Although it lacks any introductory text, it is clear that the items in the first 14 photographs are small assemblages of beads and other small finds either surface collected or dug up at various places in Mali. While the general location of the finds is sometimes provided in the captions, it is not known if the beads are all from one site or from a wider geographical area, thus lessening their research potential.

Turning to the Venetian section, we find the beads grouped in much the same way as in the previous one: Eye Beads, Beads with Striped Decorations, Beads with Wavy Linear Decorations, Beads with Wavy Spiral Decorations, Beads with Feather Decorations, Beads with Reticulate Decorations, Beads with Curled Decorations, and Beads with Flower Decorations. The majority of the beads are lamp-wound; only one subgroup of the beads with striped decorations is of drawn manufacture. As in the previous section, information is provided concerning how the beads were produced, their stylistic variability, and their dating.

There follows a "Documents" section which, again, is without any prefatory text but is revealed to illustrate 41