

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The History of Beads from 30,000 B.C. to the Present.*

**Lois Sherr Dubin.** Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1987. 346 pp., 130 figs., 248 color figs. \$60.00.

Probably the most important line in this work is on the title page: "Original Photography by Togashi." This will be the final word in coffee-table books on the subject of beads. It is not the final word on beads. The photography contained in the 248 (the dust jacket says 254) color plates is flawless. Fig. 169 is a rare exception but is still acceptable. Anyone who has attempted the photography of round glass beads can appreciate the time that has gone into these color plates. In no examples are the backgrounds distracting yet they are not uniformly bland as is so often the case in archaeological reports. The quality paper and printing have also obviously helped to bring out the artistic and technical talents of Togashi.

The black and white photographs tend to be more variable, in part probably due to the use of museum-supplied prints. On occasion the lack of contrast is annoying (Fig. 71) but the use of historic photographs is well done (Fig. 236 is a pleasing example).

Also included in the illustrative material are 15 maps from different geographical regions. Except for the first one, they all represent good projection choices. In general, they are crisp and professional in appearance but some of them (for example, the Far East, p. 155) are so "busy" that the non-professional reader or browser would be lost immediately. The maps for the early time periods take a definite Eurocentric view of the world and the important archaeological discoveries. The obscure list of maps on page six contains an error (195 = 203). Numbering of the maps and a table of contents for the maps and figures would have made this work more of a research tool yet no less of a show piece. A few additional pages of text certainly would not have added much to the production cost and probably nothing to the retail price.

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It is to be hoped that the degree of completeness represented in the map of North America is not indicative of the completeness of the other maps. Only those tribes or archaeological cultures mentioned in the text are included, thus the Chumash represent the California Culture Area, the Yakima represent the Plateau, and the Haida represent the Northwest Coast. We are told in the caption that italics represent prehistoric cultures, yet three of the four listed are the three traditional Southwest cultures - Anasazi, Hohokam, and Mogollon. Combining the Plateau and Great Basin as the "Intermontane" is like combining the Plains and Woodlands into the "Midwest." We are also told by the map that only the Russians brought glass beads to the West Coast of North America; no mention is made of the major contributions by the Spanish, English and Americans.

The maps tend to be transitional between the illustrative material and the text in several ways. They represent in a nutshell the major weakness of this work. Dubin has attempted to do too much in too little space. The work attempts to be all things to all people and as a result opens up the text for scrutiny and negative criticism by an army of specialists. It is not the purpose of this review to go over the text page by page with a fine-tooth comb but only to point out that such an ambitious and widely based book is going to be the target of such criticism.

The book begins with a Foreword, Acknowledgments, and Introduction. The list of acknowledgments is interesting for the total lack of dirt archaeologists in the area of North American historical archaeology (only the work of Kenneth Kidd is mentioned). This is the group doing the most today with glass trade beads from all time periods in North America and the most likely to use the book as a scientific reference.

The next sixteen chapters comprise a melange consisting of chronology (The Beginnings, Antiquity [Neolithic to Roman], Europe [Late Roman to Renaissance], Age of European Expansion, The Twen-

tieth Century); geography (The World of Islam, Africa, The Far East, India, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and South Pacific, Middle and South America, North America); function (Prayer Beads, Eye Beads); and material (The Special Beads: Amber and Pearl). All of these contain elements of the other categories but the emphasis in each is obvious.

As mentioned, it is not the objective to review all of the text, however some indication of the degree of accuracy might be gained by looking at just one small section. A colleague who would clearly qualify as an expert on one specific country sent me a critique of the five paragraphs about that country based almost exclusively on his published material. In the first paragraph the wrong site is mentioned. In the third paragraph the wrong state is mentioned, and the beads are identified as being from the country being dealt with when the published source cited lists them as similar to but probably *not* coming from that country. In the fourth paragraph a technique of manufacture is taken as assumed when the source just suggests it as a possibility. The endnote makes a statement about "beads" that should read "wound beads," thus drastically changing the cited author's findings. Finally none of the beads listed in the Bead Chart as coming from this country are actually known to be from that country and they are placed one century too early.

The text is marred by nonsequiturs ("Figure 4 is a rare star bead traded into the Spanish New World .... This bead, in fact, was found in Africa.") p. 117; errors of fact (pony beads were not used to cover entire surfaces) p. 275; speculation given as fact ("... 'pony beads,' thus named because they were transported by traders on ponies.") p. 274; errors in terminology or spelling (Hudson Bay Company for Hudson's Bay Company) p. 275; and glaring omissions (*Olivella* shell beads, and historic, rolled, tubular copper beads of the Pacific Northwest). However, the text contains a vast amount of information that has been condensed with a fair degree of accuracy and a flowing writing style. The text for a specific time and place is a good beginning but must be supplemented.

The end material includes: Bead Chart: A Time Line in Bead History, Bead Chart Key, Bead Shape Table, Bead Chart Glossary, Notes, Bibliography, and Index. The chart is a tip-in, almost four pages long and printed in color on both sides. Like the text and maps,

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it tries to do too much in too little space. Some of the terms on the maps only show up in the chart. The Chart Key is a very useful addition and again contains information not found elsewhere in the text. The Bead Shape Table in Horace Beck's chart revisited with real beads rather than drawings. The glossary, by Jamey Allen, is tied to the chart and is excellent as far as it goes but is really too short to be useful except as an explanatory supplement to the chart.

The notes are necessary reading for those with a scholarly interest in beads but in today's world of internal citations, it is annoying to have to revert back to a system of end-notes. The Bibliography is really a references cited section and is generally very good. The abbreviation n.p. does not mean "no place" or "no publisher" as is customary, but apparently means "no pages" which translates to mean that the researcher forgot to put them down and no one went back to verify them.

In spite of some major problems with the text, the book is one that any serious bead researcher should have. The price is not surprising considering the quality of the color plates. The volume has already shown up in the discount catalogues so that even those in academia can afford to add this handsome volume to their bead library. With her demonstrated enthusiasm, excellent writing style, storehouse of knowledge, and devotion to beads, Dubin should now edit a series of volumes of contributions from the world's bead specialists.

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### *Beads from the West African Trade Series.*

- Volume I, "Chevron Beads in the West African Trade," 1986. 16 pp., 8 color plates. \$10.00;
- Volume II, "Tabular Beads from the West African Trade," 1986. 6 pp., 4 color plates. \$5.00;
- Volume III, "Fancy Beads from the West African Trade," 1987. 16 pp., 14 color plates. \$7.50;
- Volume IV, "White Hearts, Feather and Eye Beads from the West African Trade," 1988. 36 pp., 31 color plates. \$15.00.