

interest. The chronological, regional and thematic scope of the volume is considerable and covers all of the most important subjects presently being studied by investigators of pre-modern beads in Europe.

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Glass Beads from Europe.

Sibylle Jargstorf. Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 77 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, Pennsylvania 19310. 1995. 192 pp., 397 color figs., 87 b&w figs., value guide, index. \$29.95 (paper cover) + \$2.95 postage (North America).

Jargstorf's third book devoted to the study of glass beads is remarkably ambitious. The book is divided into six major sections, the first of which attempts to describe the ancient beginnings of glass-bead production and trade as a parallel circumstance with what was to come later. Although this is a valid approach in many regards, it is also a very different subject from the main body of the work. It could have been either a separate volume or more brief in presentation so as not to take away from the real topic. In the subsequent sections, the author attempts to present a well-rounded view of the history of glass-bead manufacture and trade in Europe from its early development before and during the Renaissance through the present period. She discusses such topics as The Use of Beads, Bead Technology and Bead Art, and The Future of Bead Art and Craft. There is much food for thought.

The grand number of color and black-and-white illustrations is countered by their variable quality and usefulness, by the fact that none are numbered for easy reference in text and, unfortunately, by some of the likely misinterpretations or presumptions applied them. Nevertheless, Jargstorf has an amazing ability to succinctly evoke the *Zeitgeist* of past times in rather few words, and broadly opens what are probably

unknown pages for those unfamiliar with European history. This context giving is remarkably useful and broadening and, for me, is the most important or impressive aspect of the whole book.

The volume's short foreword ends with a request for criticism from Italian glass historians, but asks nothing from her peers. It is remarkable, considering the literature that has developed in North America over the past 25 years regarding glass beads, that virtually none of these respected works are cited by her. Of the papers referenced in the text and listed in the two-page bibliography, the only work by a North American writer is one that was published in Europe! From details in the text, it is clear that Jargstorf is somewhat familiar with our literature, vis-à-vis information, topics and terms that have been published, but these items are not referenced.

In discussing Europe, Jargstorf has the advantage of being European and multilingual and, thus, having access to information not readily available to North American researchers. However valid and evocative some of this may be, a great deal of the scholarship and beliefs proposed must be frankly regarded as being out of date, speculative and countered by the very literature the author ignores. I will cite a few examples.

Several passages deal with the history and manufacture of *rosetta* beads and are incorrect in stating or implying an ancient origin for them. Though this is an issue that has appeared in the literature time and again for well over a century, *current research* demonstrates that the idea is anachronistic (Allen 1982, 1983, 1983-84). The caption for the upper figure on p. 15 states: "Similar overlay cane design is known from Alexandrian workshops during the Roman Empire and apparently they made similar beads around the first to third century AD as well." The passage does not inform us that the similarity mentioned is a visual determination and that technologically there is virtually no similarity. Therefore, no real relationship exists between Alexandrian mosaic-glass products and Venetian *rosetta* beads. Although the caption continues with, "Yet... most of the rosetta-type beads which were attributed to antiquity even by experts up to the 20th century, are in fact the products of Muranese craftsmen," even this is an understatement. It is not that "most" *rosetta* beads are Muranese, but rather that

none have been demonstrated to be ancient, and the implication that some *maybe* is the continuation of an outmoded idea. On p. 19, the author further misinforms the reader by showing a 19th-century book illustration that also depicts a *rosetta* bead. Although this image was composed by a European author a century ago (and is, thus, part and parcel of the problem), it is captioned as being "Egyptian paintings and some glass fragments... and one Rosetta-type bead." The implication is that *rosetta* beads derive from ancient-Egyptian times. This was the intent of the illustrator some 100 years ago, but such beads were certainly not illustrated by ancient Egyptians. The false argument is continued on p. 49.

In numerous passages throughout the book (pp. 7, 9, 17, 19, 20, 36, 40 and 131-132), the author attempts to make a connection between ancient Egypt and modern West Africa in terms of bead preferences. While there may, in fact, be some connections, they are indirect, tenuous and circumstantial; certainly not the simplistic and vague connections proposed. This is pop history at its worst. It can be demonstrated that ancient Egyptian mosaic-glass beads have a stylistic and technological relationship to somewhat later, Islamic, Near Eastern glass beads, and these, in turn, bear upon early (and late) Venetian products. That these Venetian beads went to Africa and became popular there is best related to similar Islamic Period beads that may still be acquired from the antiquities markets of West Africa (not Egyptian beads, with very, very few known exceptions). Therefore, to connect Venice to Egypt via "African tastes" and to ignore the intermediate Islamic beads presents a false perspective.

Further, the author often draws conclusions presenting little or no substantiation, or makes interpretations of historical documents that are the opposite of what seems logical. For instance, on pp. 10-11, much speculation is presented regarding the nature of Bronze Age glass manufacture in Europe. Merely two references are cited, and the second (though provocative and interesting) is not substantial. Also, this section is illustrated with modern beads, and no ancient examples are shown to reveal what beads are being discussed. On pp. 57-58, the author describes how Tyrolian craftsmen immigrated to Italy to learn Venetian methods of production. However, she states that by their being in

Italy, "The entire [Venetian] industry was actually invigorated by such an afflux of foreign talent...." Clearly, the author wants readers to know that Central European glassmakers and glassworkers had an independent and thriving concern that was different from that of Venice (and other parts of Italy), and which has long been underestimated and undervalued. However, a slanted interpretation of history should not be used to substantiate this.

The value guide at the end of the book consists of two pages in which the beads illustrated throughout the volume are given a monetary value in British pounds sterling, which will be of little use to most American readers. Although the worth of proposing set values for a commodity that fluctuates as widely in time and place as do beads is already problematical, it happens that the most interesting and desirable beads are merely evaluated as being "rare" and no price is given. As such, the value guide is not particularly useful.

Jargstorf's book suffers considerably in readability from the presentation of glassworking and bead terms that are incorrectly applied or that will be foreign to Anglophones, as well as frequently poor English grammar and punctuation. On p. 108, the caption remarks that a statue is "A bronze plastic," whatever that may be. On p. 123, the lower caption states that a beadwork pattern is "equilibrated." This is a real word, but it just means "balanced." On p. 125, the lower caption says that certain beads "were highly estimated," where "esteemed" is intended. The book often reads like a bad translation, with constructions that reflect German syntax. I do not fault the author as much as the publisher. This book should have been proofread for presentation and accuracy before it was published, and would have benefited from the evaluation of a bead researcher familiar with the current literature and the needs of potential readers. In instances where I am familiar with the topic at hand, I know that the information presented is often slanted, biased or misinterpreted, or an anachronism, or an unwarranted speculation presented as fact or theory. While I would like to believe in the veracity of passages that are beyond my personal knowledge, what I do know about the rest makes this an uncomfortable proposition. How can we believe the author when so many mistakes are apparent and so much past and recent work has been ignored? This

book had the potential to shed much light on the glass-bead industry of Europe, particularly Central Europe. This is largely negated by the faults of the rest of the text. A detailed critique of the book is available to readers who request it from the address below.

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