

DAN FROST BEAD COLLECTION

Robert K. Liu

Basic to the study of beads, or any other artifacts, is some means of dating, as well as determining their origin or place of manufacture. With older beads, recovery from accurately-dated archaeological sites has been the primary means of determining their age and length of use (Karklins, 1982). For the most prolific periods of bead production, the 19th to early-20th C., there are additional sources of dating; not written records, but dated or datable collections of bead dealers' and manufacturers' sample cards and/or catalogs.

Considering the volume of the trade in glass beads during the above periods, there are really very few known and extant sample card collections and catalogs, with the latter category being in even more neglect. Some early-20th C. catalogs were briefly described (Liu, 1975), but there is insufficient new information presently to warrant further coverage.

BEAD SAMPLE CARD COLLECTIONS

The best-known and studied bead sample card collections are in England: the "Venetian Bead Book" and the "Levin Catalogue" of the Museum of Mankind, recently fully described by Karklins (1982). On the Continent, the Glass and Costume Jewelry Museum at Jablonec (Gablonz) holds important bead collections of its own, as well as the Sacher dealer's collection (Francis, 1979). There are large and probably important collections of beads at the Societa Venetiziana Conterie, Murano, Italy, but these have not been organized or studied (Poris, 1979). For elsewhere, Lamb (1970) has mentioned bead sample cards from a Dutch dealer, now housed at the Dept. of Archaeology, University of Ghana; there is a 3-paneled bead sample card from the Randles Bros./Hudson, Durban, South Africa, at the Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles (Liu, 1980).

DAN FROST COLLECTION

The Dan Frost Collection of Trade Beads at the Illinois State Museum constitutes the largest of such sample card collections, and is considered contemporaneous with the

Museum of Mankind's samples (Karklins, 1982). There are undoubtedly other bead sample card collections in private or dealers' holdings, but none of this size or vintage.

Like most sample card collections, there is very little accompanying information. Stephen A. Frost & Son (Dan) operated out of New York City (thus the triangular logo and New York designation on the sample cards). They traded throughout the North American continent from 1848 to 1904 (Anon., 1976; Karklins, 1982). There are 71 cards, 64 marked Venice/New York; 25 have printed numbers, from 1 to 1100 (Figs. 19, 22; 24-26), 39 with no numbers but all mounted on the same type of card. Twelve of these hold multiples or short strands of beads, 27 have panels of cane and seed beads (Figs. 18, 22). The 7 Gablonz cards have nonsequential 5-digit numbers for the beads, and also have nonsequential card numbers, so it is probable that they were part of a larger series (Figs. 3, 4, 20, 21, 23). It would be important to determine if these differences in stylistics of the sample cards can be correlated with their period of use during the 56-year tenure of the firm. Judi Johnson, curator at the Illinois State Museum, has determined that the cards were made for Mr. Frost in New York.

They are stored in their 7 original samples cases (Figs. 1-2), but the cases, cards and beads are showing the effects of age. Some of the beads have been lost, others are cracked, and the presence of stains on the paper around the beads suggests a possible reaction between the acid-base paper and the beads. The museum is aware of the problem, but no funds are available for conservation. The same type of stains appear on at least 1 page of the British Museum bead book (Karklins, 1982: Fig. 8).

INFORMATION: FROST COLLECTION

What types of information can we derive from the Frost Collection? Ideally, these samples can show us what bead types were in use and/or sold during the mid-19th to early 20th C., but very few of the ca. 1700 bead types in this collection have been found in use and/or recognized as being similar to ones on the cards (Figs. 6, 7). If a comprehensive

FIG. 1 Large cardboard box or sample case, which contained Venetian cane and seed beads of the Dan Frost Collection.

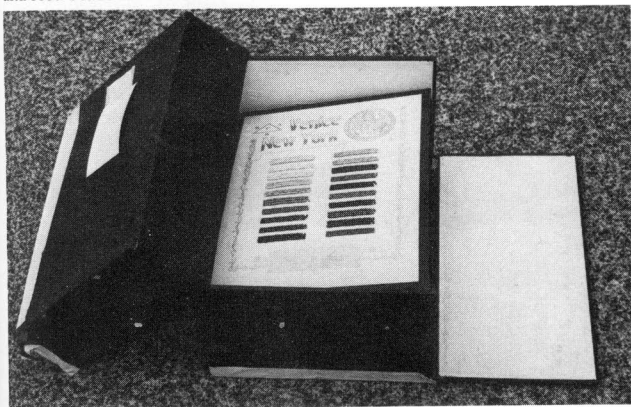
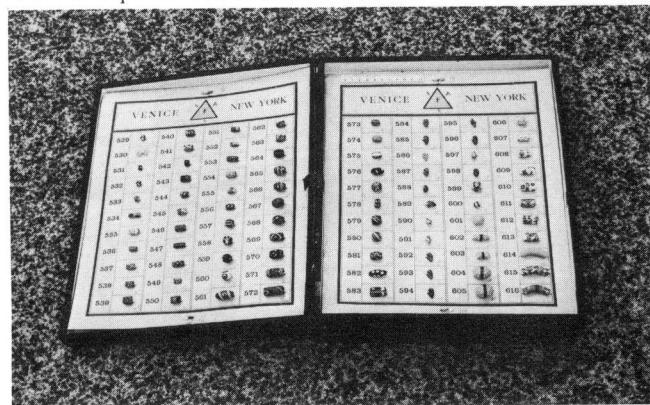
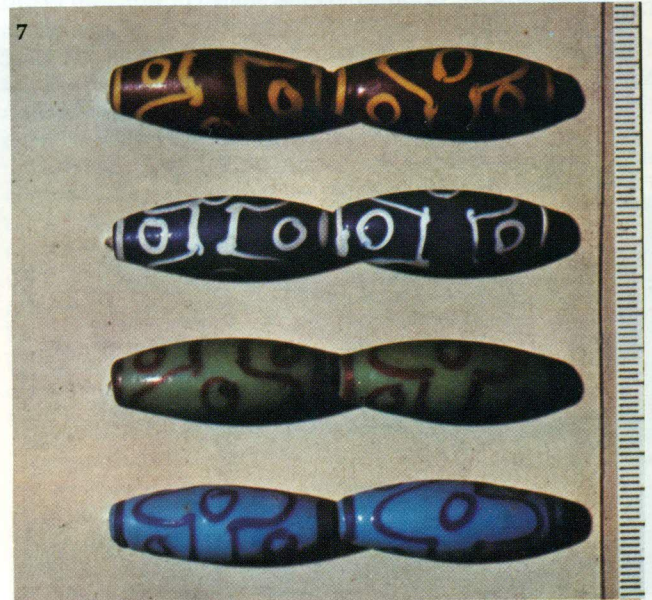
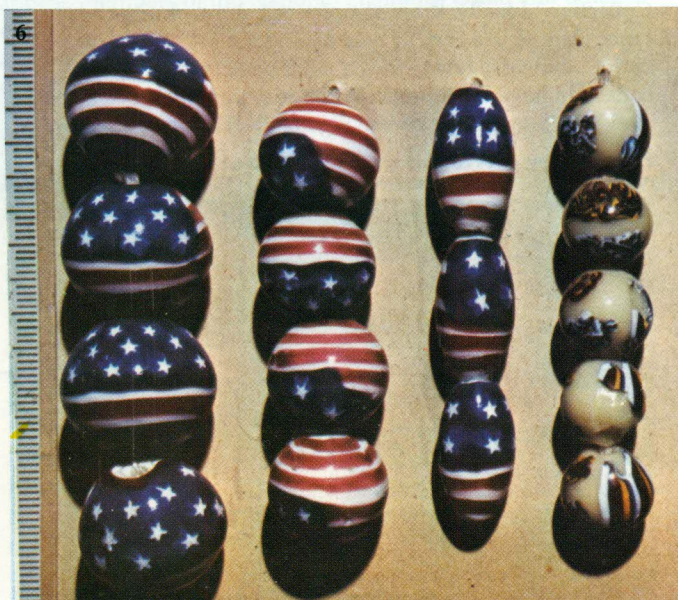
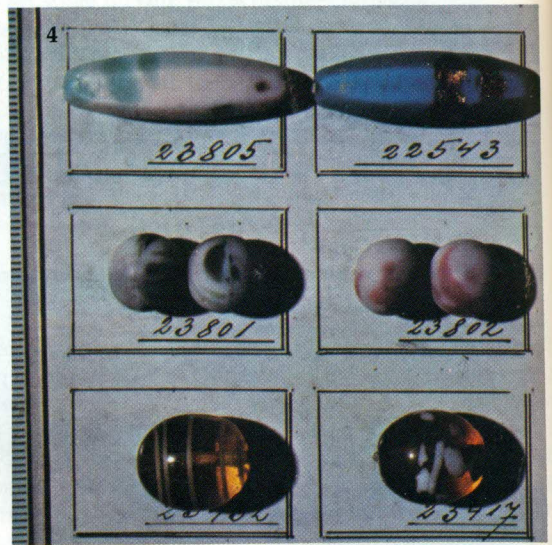


FIG. 2 Sample cases containing Venetian glass bead cards, 25 of which are in numbered sequence from 1 to 1100.





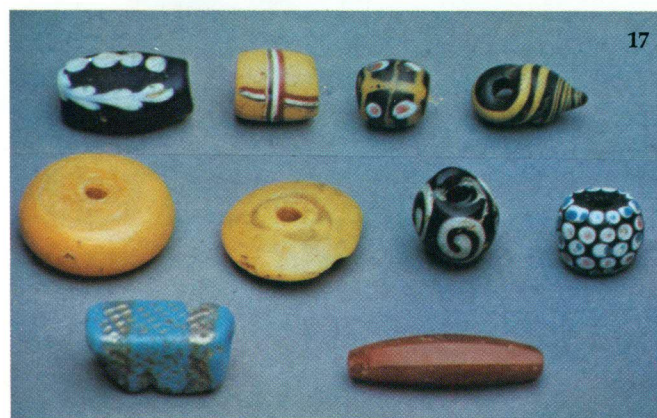
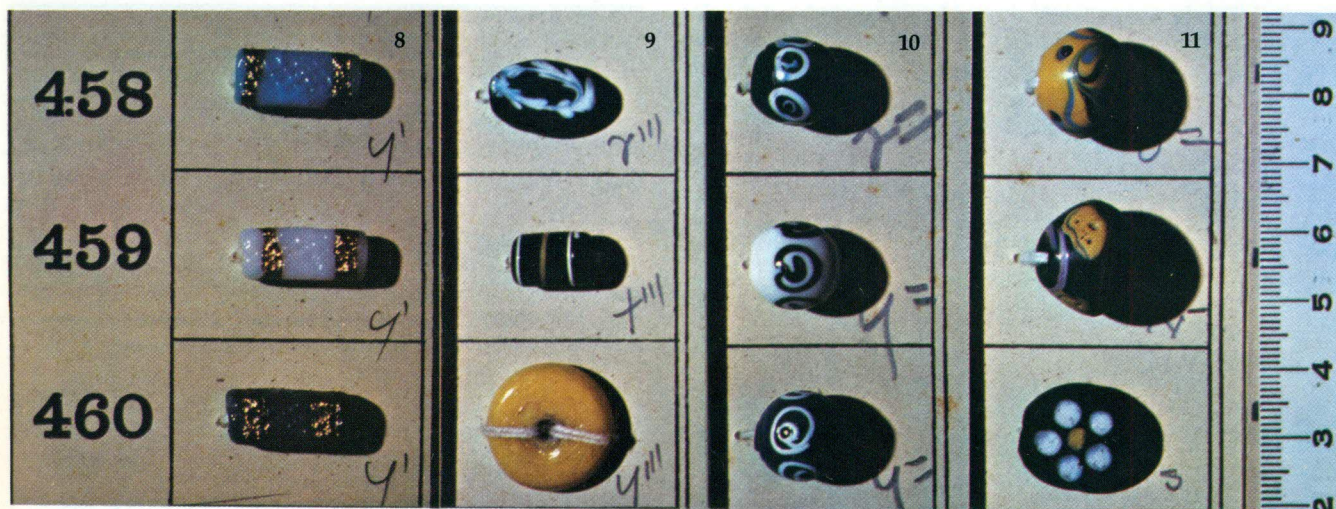


FIG. 3 One of the 7 cards marked Gablonz/NY; these have inked, hand-drawn lines around each bead and are hand-lettered with a 5-digit number, but not in sequence. From the card numbers at the upper right-hand corner, it appears that many cards in this series did not become part of the collection. Note the many simulations of onyx beads in the last 2 rows.

FIG. 4 Enlarged portion of another Czech bead sample card; note transparent impressed crumb bead, of the type often seen from Africa and the Middle East. It is similar to beads described in this issue's *Identification*. Metric scale in all photos.

FIG. 5 Enlarged portion of a card marked Venice/NY; uppermost bead is a moderately rare occurrence from Africa (see E. Harris, *Correspondence*, *Bead J* 3(1): 2, 1976 and Fig. 16). Specimens similar to no. 348 have been noted from NW US and Africa.

FIG. 6 These 'flag' beads, from a Venetian sample card, are among the most appealing designs from Italy, and would have been runaway best-sellers in the US, but have never been reported seen anywhere.

FIG. 7 Venetian simulations of *tzi/dzi* beads; neither the color combinations nor trailed designs suggest much astuteness on the part of the manufacturer.

FIG. 8 Specimens from a Venice/NY card that are of a type usually attributed to Czech manufacture; several cards so marked carried such types.

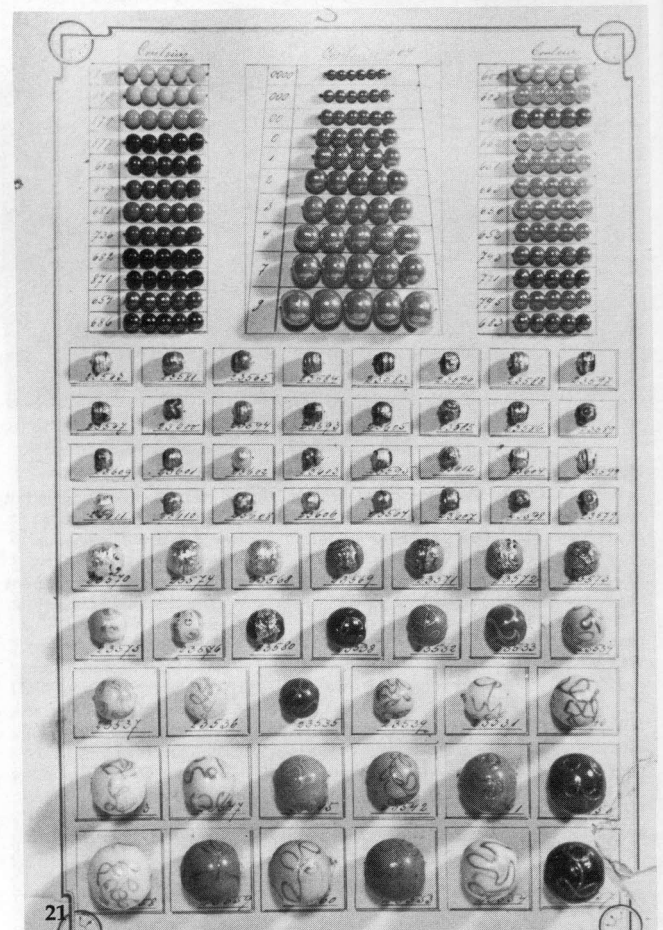
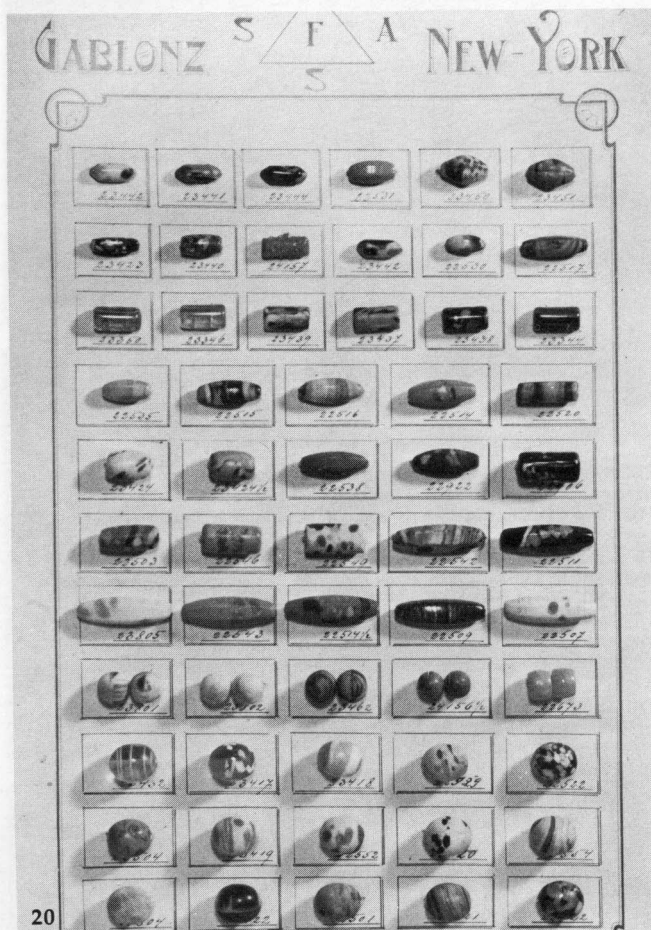
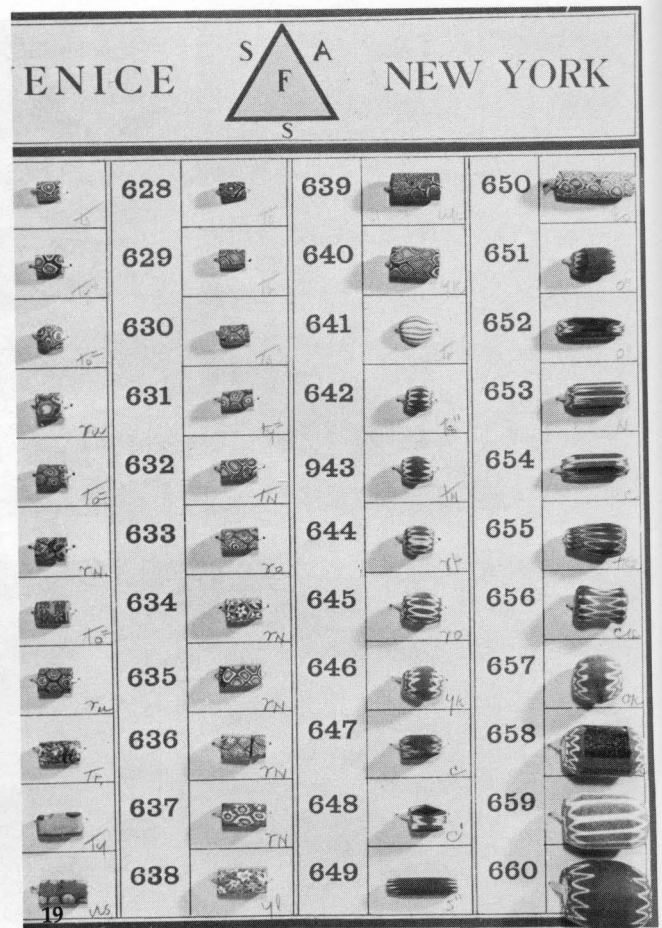
FIGS. 9, 10, 11, 12, Specimens from Venetian sample cards, identical to examples imported from Africa in the 1970's (Figs. 16, 17).

FIG. 13 Snail shell beads from a Venice/NY card; Beck (1981) has described and figured a similar black/yellow specimen, but attributed it wrongly to 18th(?) Dynasty Egypt. Note penciled character on many of these cards, probably a pricing code.

FIG. 14 Delicate Venetian beads from wound, hollow(?) canes.

FIG. 15 Square section millifiori beads; upper pattern often seen among African imports.

FIG. 16, 17 Examples of Venetian and Czech beads (lowermost specimens, Fig. 17), from Africa and the Middle East, which are identical or very similar to types seen in the *Dan Frost Coll* sample cards. Courtesy Patti Yeiter and Liza Wataghani.



survey were done of areas where extensive European glass trade beads have been found such as Africa, the Middle East and the Americas, it would be possible to make a more accurate comparison. For example, even if the collections of major bead importers and collectors of glass beads from Africa were examined, it may be possible to get an accurate measure of those Venetian and Czech bead types which actually went into circulation. But even superficial scanning of local collections reveal beads identical to those on the Frost sample cards (Figs. 5, 8-14, 16, 17, 23, 24). Archaeological finds have also provided counterparts (Lamb, 1978; Meighan *ms*, cf Fig. 26; Orchard, 1975; Sorenson and LeRoy, 1968).

European beads of this period have even confused the experts, as in the example of the snail bead (Figs. 13, 17), which Beck (1981) attributed to ancient Egypt; 15 color variations of this bead appear on 1 Venetian sample card. Of course, Venetian/Czech beads have long been passed as ancient by various Middle Eastern dealers (cf *Identification* this issue; Figs. 4, 25; Dale, 1978).

UNRELIABILITY OF LABELS

Due to a great deal of secrecy in the bead trade, both on the part of dealers and manufacturers, there are often deliberate attempts to confuse the competition and the customer. If one looks carefully at all the sample cards, the identical or at least similar bead types appear on cards labelled either Venice or Gablonz; the most notable offenders are square-section beads with impressed designs (Figs. 8, 17), onyx simulations (Figs. 3, 18), and monochrome beads with 'squiggle'-like decorations (Fig. 21). The first two types are usually characteristically attributed to Gablonz. In the Levin catalog (Karklins, 1982: Fig. 6) and the Venetian bead sample book (Karklins, 1982: Figs. 4, 8), there are definite and probable

Czech bead types mixed in with Venetian samples. This should serve as a caution for too literal an interpretation of labels on bead sample cards.

BRITISH AND US SAMPLE CARDS COEVAL?

Karklins (1982) has made a comparison of the two sets of sample cards in the British Museum with those of the Dan Frost Collection and considers them coeval or contemporaneous, due to correlations among them. The Levin catalog (ascribed to 1851-69) and the Frost Collection share

Continued on p. 44

FIG. 18 One of 12 sample cards marked Venice/NY having no numbered samples; the beads are usually in multiples or short strands. Right-hand column contains fancy polychromes found in NW US and Africa; in left-hand column, 6th down are onyx simulations that are usually attributed to Czech glass factories. Such imitations are found in Africa, the Middle East and the Philippines. *Courtesy Illinois State Mus.*

FIG. 19 One of 25 cards marked Venice/NY that are numbered consecutively from 1 to 1100; note the predominance of millifiori and chevron beads. *Courtesy IL State Mus.*

FIG. 20 Another of the 7 cards marked Gablonz/NY, primarily molded, mottled and impressed crumb beads. *Courtesy IL State Mus.*

FIG. 21 Only Gablonz/NY card with gradated beads; lower rows of beads with "squiggle"-like trailed designs are very similar to ones mounted on cards marked Venice/NY. Compare with Fig. 24. *Courtesy IL State Mus.*

FIG. 22 One of 27 Venice/NY cards with either small cane beads or panels of seed beads in gradated colors.

FIG. 23 Unmarked Czech sample card, with simulated carnelian beads, *talhakimt* and *higa/fica*. Light-colored beads in opaline glass.

