



Figure 31. Measuring instruments (Precht 1834, 3: Plates 65, 66).

BEAD PRICES

The prices of glass beads, subjected to drastically changing fashions, popular taste, the introduction of tools and machines and other factors, can only be given here in examples. There is naturally more information available to us from the late 19th century than from the beginning. Here, too, we are limited to the few sources that were published.

Venetian Beads

In 1819, the small Venetian beads or *collane* cost “for a dozen strings, depending on the difference in color, from 30

centesimi to 2 ½ Ital. lire; the scarlet red ones are the most expensive” (Keess 1823:899).

One important factor that determined bead prices was their color; the cheapest were the black beads (4 ½ kreuzer assimilated coinage), the dark brilliant reds the most expensive (23 kreuzer) (Altmütter 1841:92).

Bohemian Beads

The prices for Bohemian Biedermeier beads were listed by the 100 dozen (1,200 pieces, in general, = 1 bundle). Prices for drop earrings and pear ear-drops were by the gross (12 dozen = 144 pieces). In rare cases prices for special strings were listed separately.

“Bohemian stones” were produced every year to a value of 20,000 fl. (Schreyer 1799:309). One must, however, take into account that the price for “composition stones has been brought down by 400 percent in the last 40 years” (Schreyer 1799:311). The following are the prices per 100 dozen composition stones: large – 7 fl. 30 kr., medium – 3 fl. 45 kr., smaller – 4 fl. 30 kr. Stones for buckles brought per 100 dozen: 3 fl. 45 kr. (no. 1) to 3 fl. (no. 4). The crimson-red stones sold for between 2 fl. 45 kr. (no. 1) and 1 fl. 30 kr (no. 6) per 100 dozen. The ruby-red stones were even more expensive because of the gold that was used.

Karl Joseph Zenker (Zenkner) of Josephsthal exhibited a large number of beads in Prague in 1829. Their quantities were listed in strings, their prices per hundred dozen. This is confusing but probably meant that the number of strings (at 50 beads each) was the quantity that was exhibited; the prices listed for a hundred dozen, however, correspond with common practice (Prague 1831:9):

Twelve strings pink cut beads. Hundred dozen, from 52 kr. to 4 fl. 45 kr.

Twelve strings fine cut beads. Hundred dozen, from 1 fl. 40 kr. to 5 fl. 40 kr.

Twelve strings garnet-colored cut beads. Hundred dozen, from 57 kr. to 4 fl. 55 kr.

Twelve strings garnet-colored cut beads. Hundred dozen, from 1 fl. to 4 fl. 10 kr.

Seven strings small wound spools. Hundred dozen at 45 kr.

Seven strings small wound beads. Hundred dozen at 45 kr.

Seven strings medium wound beads. Hundred dozen at 12 fl. 30 kr.

Seven strings small striped beads. Hundred dozen at 1 fl.

Seven strings medium striped beads. Hundred dozen at 1 fl.

Six strings silvered beads. Hundred dozen at 45 kr.

Twelve strings mottled [*genarbte*] beads. Hundred dozen at 5 fl.

Garnet-ruby beads. Hundred dozen at 50 kr.

Coral beads. Hundred dozen at 1 fl. 30 kr.

Garnet laurel berries. Hundred dozen at 45 kr. to 51 kr.

Unfortunately, Zenker (Zenkner) was the only one who gave the prices for the different types of beads separately; Göble from Gablonz listed a total value of 200 fl. for a box with 202 strings of beads (Prague 1831:40), and the prices given by Ferdinand Unger & Co. of Liebenau refer to the sample cards which range from 30 to 50 fl. (Prague 1831:74).

In the catalogue of the Prague Exhibition of 1831 (Prague 1833:58, 59), a relatively broad range in price is sometimes shown for some of the different kinds of beads from the Glass Composition Factory of the Zenker Brothers, Karl and Franz, in Josephsthal (always listed for 100 dozen):

Pink cut beads: 48 kr. to 4 fl. 40 kr.

Ruby-red cut beads: 48 kr. to 4 fl. 40 kr.

Garnet-colored beads: 53 kr. to 4 fl. 50 kr.

Fine cut carnelian beads: 1 fl. 40 kr. to 5 fl. 40 kr.

Ordinary cut carnelian beads: 1 fl. to 4 fl. 10 kr.

Wound beads: 36 kr. (small), 1 fl. 30 kr. (medium), 3 fl. (large)

Wound spool beads: 45 kr.

Striped beads: 1 fl. 30 kr. (small), 2 fl. (large)

Mottled or patterned beads: 3 fl.

Lined ruby beads: 1 fl.

Coral beads: 1 fl. 30 kr.

Olive beads: 40 kr.

Ruby-colored beads: 40 kr.

Whorled beads: 3 fl.

Glass beads: 24 kr. to 30 kr.

Silvered beads: 12 kr. to 40 kr.

A “string of gold-topaz composition beads” was listed at the astonishingly high price of 7 fl. Particularly during the last third of the 19th century, a drop in prices came about due to the introduction of certain tools, gang molds, machines, and finishing processes in the Gablonz area. For blown beads these were the metal molds; for drawn beads they were the machines that snapped off the beads (*Sprengmaschinen*):

The introduction of the machines for snapping off the beads, a single one of which is capable of replacing several hundred people, has increased bead production enormously and this in turn has exerted an enormous effect on the entire situation.

Articles which were difficult to buy at a price of 5 fl. in 1886, are easily had today for 80 kr. Cut-glass beads made today are more beautiful and more uniform than 10 years ago; back then 10 bundles (1 bundle = 1,000 beads [sic! correct: 1,200 beads]) cost 80 kr. to 1 fl.; today the same amount costs 8-9 kr. [Blown beads] Towards the end of the 70s, molds were invented by one producer which could make 10-12 beads at a time instead of just one bead. This was kept secret for a while, but soon became noticeable in a 10-15% drop in prices.... Before the invention of these molds, a no. 0, silvered bead cost 60-80 kr. per 100 dozen, today the same costs 20-22 kr. Repeated attempts to fix minimal prices or wages had no success whatever, since as soon as a single bead blower broke such an agreement, it led to a downward push in prices and wages along the entire line (Gablonz 1897:79-81).

The prices for Bohemian imitation stones (*Similisteine*) were also subject to fluctuations: "The prices for finer types, which had climbed from 5 fl. 50 kr. to 8 fl. 50 kr., gradually began to drop and towards the end of the year 1896, stood at 6 fl. to 6. fl. 25 kr. again" (Gablonz 1897:83).

According to Winter, at the end of the 1850s and the beginning of the 1860s, a bundle of blown beads (blown freehand or in molds) brought a price of one guilder per bundle (1,200 pieces). After the invention of a mold that made it possible to blow a whole row of beads at once, prices sank. By the end of the 1880s, 40 to 45 kreuzer per bundle was reached. Since prices sank further and caused strikes as a result, the price for the 0-bead was set at 28 kr. per 100 dozen. Since this agreement was soon violated, a new strike was called in 1894-1895 and the price fixed at 22 kr. per 100 dozen, a price that held until 1897. The Production Cooperative of Blown-Glass-Bead Producers (*Produktivgenossenschaft der Hohlperlenerzeuger*) was founded in 1898 (Winter 1900:69).

Even the rocaille used to be a well-paying article which could bring in a profit. Today things are different. Formerly, 1 fl. was paid for the kilogram. Now, if the refiner gets 25 kr. for the same amount, it is enough. The waste products from the silver, that account for 2 percent of the turnover, used to be thrown out with the dirty water; today the waters are recycled and the seed-bead producers get 30 to 35 percent of the silver back again. 25 years ago, 10 bundles of 3-cut rocaille cost 2 fl., 15 years ago 1 fl., 7 or 8 years ago they still cost 60 to 80 kr., and now, since the snapping machine increases production, 10 bundles are sold for 6 ½ to 8 ½ kr. (Winter 1900:97).

Price lists of the Ludwig Breit Wiesenthalhütte glassworks in Schwäbisch-Gmünd throw light on the post-war years (1963); the prices were valid "for loose rocailles in large amounts" (art. no. 1004) from Schwäbisch-Gmünd. The prices were set according to color and size; the cheapest colors were crystal and black; the most expensive were, among others, opaque yellow, opaque orange, coral, opaque brown, opaque pink, and ivory. A few figures for comparison: per kilogram, crystal rocailles cost from DM 12.10 (size 14/0 or 4/0) up to DM 8.50 (size 8/0 or 3). Coral-colored rocailles were set at DM 20.10 (size 14/0 or 4/0) to DM 14.30 (8/0 or 3).

GLASS, COMPOSITION, RODS, TUBES, AND CANES

When "Glass and Composition Buttons" are listed on a sample card from Ferdinand Unger of Liebenau (TH 32848, prior to 1837) with the intention of making a distinction between the two, it refers to the different raw materials. Contemporary sources repeatedly mention the terms glass, glass composition, or composition. Usually glass and "composition" are treated as opposites. But "composition" is also glass, albeit glass of a specific composition: it contains lead and easily fusible substances; i.e., substances that melt at a lower temperature than those in other types of glass. The differentiation between "composition" (sometimes one finds the term "Venetian flux") and glass is as common in other languages as it is in German: in Italian we find *vetro* and *smalto*, in French *verre* and *émail*, and in English "glass" and "paste."

The history of Gablonz glass is inseparably connected with composition, the easily fusible leaded glass with colors resembling precious stones: one reads about chrysolite and chrysoprase beads, about beads named for garnets and rubies, sapphires and aquamarines, amber and amethysts, topaz and turquoise, and about coral and crystal. The Turnau gem-cutting industry found itself in a crisis: the "fake" gemstones had pushed the real ones aside (Hallwich 1873:6) and every effort possible was made to discover how to make the Venetian "glass paste" used for producing glass stones. Venetian paste was in demand everywhere. Keess (1823:904) reports that Viennese bead factories started out using the Venetian glass "which was brought here in flat round loaves and afterward was drawn into tubes;" later they mostly used Bohemian glass tubes. The "raw cakes of glass paste" from Venice were even supposed to have been sent to Bohemia "where they were frequently remelted, remixed with harder crystal glass, and used for beads and imitation gem stones" (Altmütter 1841:106, 107). Venetian "glass cakes" from that time still exist today – flat and round or