

BOOK REVIEWS

Manik-Manik di Indonesia/Beads in Indonesia.

Sumarah Adhyatman and Redjeki Arifin.
Penerbit Djambatan, Jakarta. Distributed by Indoarts, Inc., 3424 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94118. 1993. i-xvi + 164 pp., 63 b&w figs., 155 color figs. \$48.00 (hard cover) + \$4.25 postage in the U.S. (\$58.00 + \$5.25 abroad).

This very welcome work doesn't just "fill a gap" in the bead literature of the Insulindies—it *is* the bead literature of the Insulindies. Until the publication of *Beads in Indonesia*, the bead researcher had to comb a multitude of learned and art journals for information, thinly strewn. This book pulls most of the relevant information together for the bead amateur and provides the more serious researcher with a few pointers for further study.

The book starts with a sketchy overview of the world's ancient beadmaking centers and bead trade, especially with reference to Southeast Asia. It is when the authors reach Indonesia proper that they are on firmer ground. They appear to be especially familiar with Java and Sumatra—ancient, old and modern—though their main slant is archaeological throughout. Much of the available bead literature deals with these two large islands and their colorful past; *Beads in Indonesia* introduces the main types of old and contemporary beads with color illustrations of acceptable quality which are vital for comparative purposes.

Well-captioned, high-quality color illustrations are doubly necessary until the bead world manages to agree on a fixed terminology and comprehensive classification system for beads. "Jatim polychromes, mistakenly called 'Majapahit Beads' by antique dealers who were looking for a popular trade name..." is the authors' lament when describing a very distinctive bead of East Java (Jatim, i.e. "Java

Timor")(p.63). Just about any researcher comes up against such local names, whether they were bestowed by dealers, collectors or the bead owners and users. "Pony bead" and "padre bead" don't mean much to an Indonesian collector, but neither do "Banter bead" or "Manang bead" to a French one. Descriptive names like "bird bead" or "polychrome eye bead" are self-explanatory and useful if supported by good illustrations. For that matter, "mutisalah" is by no means a universal term for the peppercorn-sized bead of opaque Indian-red glass! Some Insulindian peoples who value this drawn or coiled bead highly call it by completely different names.

Various ethnic groups name their own beads, but such terminology should only be used very sparingly in pure bead research. It belongs properly to the province of the ethnographer and *Beads in Indonesia* is not intended to be an ethnographical study. That, considering the variety of peoples in Southeast Asia's largest nation, would fill a book ten times the size of the present volume!

The volume is well written and easy to read, but in some parts it tantalizes rather than informs. A casual statement like "in Kalimantan 16th century Chinese monochrome beads were changed into eye beads..." (p.7) begs the traditional journalist's questions: when, where, how and who? A statement like "...considering that the practice of burial in megalithic stone graves can continue into the classical period, and based on the latest data concerning Indo-Pacific beads, it might be necessary to review this dating..." (p.38; reference to East Java) is much easier to take than unsubstantiated assertions casually tossed about!

The last chapter, "Modern Beads," is very informative; it demonstrates the authors' hands-on involvement with current bead affairs. Modern Egyptian and African beads are indeed turning up in the Insulindian markets; "new-beads-as-old" are sold, bartered, substituted, renovated and ground;

well-known antiques are reproduced, faked... you name it! The burgeoning Indonesian bead manufactories draw on a pool of economical skilled labor. If they can satisfy the buyers' demand for pretty beads and leave the antiques where they belong—in Indonesian hands—long may they flourish!

The bibliography at the end of *Beads in Indonesia* is fairly sketchy. Its most useful aspect is the inclusion of a number of works by younger Indonesian researchers which may not yet be well known overseas. This being the case, further information on how and where to obtain copies of their studies would have been valuable.

Beads in Indonesia is a well-produced and attractively bound book, one in a series of Penerbit Djambatan's Indonesian Cultural Heritage dual-language texts. This policy ought to increase the size of print runs and thus reduce cost, but that doesn't seem to be the case. In the Singapore market at any rate, compared to similar-sized tomes, it is considered very expensive. This is a pity; the Insulindians are exactly the people who should read it!

In the introductory pages of the book is a caveat that speaks straight to the heart of many readers, especially those who live in areas trying to preserve an endangered heritage. The authors initially hesitated to publish this work because:

...books on antiques will stimulate the demand for the objects concerned and will increase their prices. Archaeologists thus fear the damaging of more historical sites by illegal digging. But the insatiable demand by international collectors and art dealers for Indonesian antiques will continue, and as the reality has shown, the existing preventing measures are inadequate..." (p. xiii).

Is it too much to hope that every serious student and admirer of these fascinating artifacts will take these words to heart and buy this book, not a bead?

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Catalogue of the Beck Collection of Beads in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology: Part 1, Europe.

The Bead Study Trust. Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3DZ, England, U.K. 1997. 160 pp., 117 b&w figs., 2 color fiches. £9.95 (\$19.70US) postpaid (soft cover).

The Bead Study Trust (BST), England's premiere organization of bead researchers, has produced the first in a series of publications that fulfil its mission since 1980: to publish the Beck Collection. Four volumes are anticipated, and will cover different regional aspects of the collection acquired by Horace C. Beck in his lifetime, and now housed at the University Museum at Cambridge. The BST is a small but dedicated group of scholars and enthusiasts, whose members have particular areas of interest. The first volume pertains to beads from Europe, and spans such areas, in sequence, as: England, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, Sardinia, Spain, Tunisia, Malta, Crete, Cyprus, Rhodes, The Eastern Mediterranean, Greece, Russia, and Hungary—all areas from which specimens in the collection are derived.

The catalogue is organized such that original assemblages, as acquired and kept by Beck, are presented. This is a logical and simple approach to presentation, but is not always useful—depending on what one may wish to study—for a diverse collection that contains materials such as stone, metal, natural materials (teeth, bone, shell, ivory, amber and other fossils), faience, and a broad variety of glass beads which may range anywhere from ca. 30,000 B.C. through medieval times.

Beck made concerted efforts to get researchers (mainly archaeologists) to describe beads in a comprehensive manner that would be meaningful, and which would allow assemblages to be compared one to another. He is primarily remembered for composing his classification of beads and pendants, published in 1928, and used with greater and lesser success by those who have followed him. In this new catalogue, it is greatly ironic that Beck's advice was not incorporated into bead descriptions. Although Beck did not classify glass beads by their specific technologies (as he was often unfamiliar with or undecided about much of this,