

Journal: Borneo International Beads Conference 2015.

Heidi Munan and Anita MacGillivray (eds.). Craithub, No. 96 Main Bazaar, First Floor, 93000 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. 2015. i-vi + 238 pp., 23 color and B&W figures. \$65.00 plus postage (paper cover). To order, contact craithub@gmail.com.

This journal publishes the nine papers presented at the 4th Borneo International Beads Conference held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 9-11 October 2015. The articles reflect the conference's theme of "Stringing the Past and Present." They range across continents and time periods, but the connection between the past and present is made.



"American Indian Beads and Beadwork," by Jamey D. Allen, discusses the beading traditions of the indigenous peoples of North and South America, but mainly focuses on those of the United States. It discusses these traditions according to whether they occurred before or after European contact, as well as the incorporation of introduced European beads into Native constructs. Allen indicates that beadwork was likely introduced by early European traders.

"The Archeological Beads of Palawan," by Jun G. Cayron, takes the reader on a journey to important archeological sites on Palawan Island, the Philippines: Ille Cave in Dewil Valley, El Nido in the Tabon Cave Complex, and the Pandanan shipwreck. These sites contained glass beads imported from Arikamedu in India, Chinese beads, jade from Taiwan, and gold beads. The trade routes that probably transported these beads are discussed. Shell

beads were the most common and there are indications that they were manufactured on Palawan Island. The Pandanan shipwreck, which has been dated to the mid-15th century, contained various artifacts including Vietnamese earthenware ceramics and beads in Vietnamese stoneware jars.

"Immersion in Modern Medias – The Allure and Attraction of Polymer Clay," by Lara Le Reveur, discusses this medium and how she uses it. She also provides detailed information on the steps in using this versatile type of clay.

"The Art of Bead Stringing – Artist to Entrepreneur," by artist and entrepreneur Elaine Robnett Moore, provides practical and creative advice that includes the factors affecting the overall beauty and visual appeal of bead artwork along with practical ways of getting the pieces into the marketplace.

"Threading for Survival: An Insight into Contemporary Rungus Bead Culture in Kampung Tinangol, Kudat in Sabah," by Reita Rahim and Malina Soning, shows the evolving traditions of the Rungus people of Sabah, Malaysia. The writers, who are from Gerai OA, a non-profit group that works with indigenous women's groups to increase economic security, discuss the external influences, the economic necessity, and a famine that forced the community to enter into beading, as well as current issues that the artists face.

"Tamilakkam: A Multi-cultural Centre for Bead Trade," by Ashvin Rajagopalan and Darshini Sundar, outlines a study that aims to understand the bead trade in Tamil Nadu, India, from 400 BCE to the present day. The writers correlate the beads found in the region to the history of India, Roman influences, trade, and beadmaking techniques. They note that the beads produced at Arikamedu, mother of Indo-Pacific glass beads, are found in Europe and Southeast Asia. In fact, Cayron commented in his paper that beads produced here were found at the Palawan Island archeological sites.

"Turkish Tradition in Contemporary Malaysian Garments," by Dr. Khatijah Sanusi, begins with a description of the evolution of Turkish garments. She then shows the connection to contemporary Malaysian *Baju Kurung*, which is a long, knee-length caftan worn over a long pleated skirt. The Turkish people, who originated in eastern Central Asia and Russian Siberia and migrated towards Eastern Europe in many waves, wore loose-fitting clothing embellished with decorations that could include bead embroidery. Dr. Khatijah draws parallels to this style of clothing, and then discusses the work of two bead artists who also embellish

traditional garments with beads. Wan Norzita Othman adorns the traditional *Baju Kurang* while Azmatul Hazrin creates striking beaded bib chokers.

“The Lukut Sekala Bead of Borneo,” by Wendy Terang, focuses on a single valuable bead, the *Lukut Sekala*, which has cultural, ritual, and economic significance for the Kayan and Kenyah, two of the many indigenous groups of Sarawak, Malaysia.

“Unravelling the History of Glass Beads in Arnhem Land, Australia,” by Daryl Wesley and Mirani Litster, charts the early history of the indigenous people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Australia, which includes interaction with fishermen from Makassar and Sulawesi, as well as Europeans and other foreigners. Archeological sites in the

region that yielded beads date to 1668-1780 and 1810-1921. Possible ways that the people of the area obtained (earned, traded, or were given) beads is discussed.

The articles in the journal are diverse and sweeping in their scope. This variety of topics and interests is the publication’s strength as it reaches out to multiple bead groups including artists, historians, archaeologists, and bead lovers in general.

M M Ann Armstrong
184 Lorong 4A6, Tabuan Laru
93350 Kuching
Sarawak, Malaysia
mmaalangub@yahoo.ca