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*Journal: Borneo International Beads Conference 2019.*

**Heidi Munan and Anita MacGillivray (eds.)**.  
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This attractive compilation consists of papers from the 6th Borneo International Beads Conference (BIBCo) which was held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, in October 2019. Heidi Munan has held the directorship of BIBCo since its inception and, with a talented team in Kuching, has brought together experts from around the world to share the results of their research, their experience, and their very real practical knowledge. This conference had as its theme “Beads of our Time.” As a result some timely papers are to be found in this volume.



Ritu Sethi and Moe Chiba write of “Protecting the Material Culture Based on/of Indigenous Knowledge” (pp. 149-180). Exploring how to protect Indigenous Intellectual Property is an issue that concerns Indigenous peoples around

the globe, from North America to the Pacific Islands and particular ethnic groups in India. Ritu Sethi’s international experience with UNESCO and as chairperson of a number of national craft-related bodies in India make her an ideal person to tease out the common pitfalls, whilst seeking resolution to the desire for legal protection. Cultural flow and the diffusion of cultural forms has always taken place, but with a plethora of current internet sites that display a vast array of visual forms, that global flow occurs minute by minute. The authors recognize that this flow cannot be stopped, but rather they suggest ways of mitigating it through Collective marks (p. 165) and/or Geographical Indicator (GI) tags (p. 166). These suggestions involve essentially branding a product whereby the collective, rather than an individual, assumes ownership of what they understand to be their Indigenous knowledge. This practice falls outside the realm of the legal system of any given country, which may make the reader ask where the IP aspect comes in. The suggestion is remarkably practical, however, given the ubiquitous flow of things and their design. The authors do describe nations that have gone the legal IP route, yet we are living at a time when the first two decades of the 21st century are almost complete. The rate of technological change is increasingly rapid. These changes affect every piece of craft, including beads, made on the planet. “Developments in new technologies of mass replication from 3D printing, AI and other regular new technological developments that besides multiplying the numbers, lowers the costs to a fraction of the handmade” (p. 154).

It is thus to another paper that I now turn. Technological change alerts us to new fields opening up in the realm of craft-related research. “Viking Beads – Evidence of Long Distance Trade and Local Glass Bead Production” by Torben Sode (pp. 181-202) examines the means of dating found objects – beads made in the 8th and 9th centuries. This project, involving a team of researchers, was begun in 2011 and involved 500 samples of specific glass beads found in the general geographic region of southern Scandinavia. The analyses of glass beads and glass objects was conducted by Dr. Bernard Gratuze at the University of Orléans in France using Laser Ablation-Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS). Who would ever have read of research such as this in a craft-related article or book twenty years ago? The method requires no sample preparation and is particularly well adapted to composite objects and small objects like beads. The article is detailed and scientific. The conclusion has implications that could go well beyond the origin and spread of these particular glass beads, for

the fascinating finding is that the beads were not made in southern Scandinavia, but rather at Islamic glass centers in the Abbasid Caliphate and may well have been traded along the Russian river systems. "In this way the glass bead import in Late Iron Age and Viking Age Scandinavia make out an important archaeological material, which testified to far Oriental trade connections. This is in contrast to most other archaeological materials which have not been preserved in the same numbers. Glass beads are one of the earliest archaeological objects which confirm the early long-distance trade and the first contacts between ancient cultures" (p. 195). These Abbasid glass beads have been found as far east as Thailand and Indonesia as well as in Scandinavia, Central Russia, and North Africa.

Could textiles also have spread in this way? Dating of threads has improved considerably, but knowledge of much older movement of textiles relies on historical trade import/export data as well as written records of travelers, pilgrims, and envoys. Much of this information is from European records, although Indian, Chinese, Turkish, and Arabian sources are now accessed by serious scholars. Research into modes of travel, whether by ship or overland, forms part of this picture, as do meteorological studies of prevailing winds and contemporaneous knowledge of disruptive historical conflict. The knowledge of ancient glass bead manufacture plus current technological dating methods opens up a new page in research into possible trading routes of cognate craft domains.

As a companion to the Abbasid beads of the 8th century, there is an article on glass beads in India, "Chevron and Millefiorie in India," by Alok Kumar Kanungo from the Archaeological Sciences Centre, IIT Gandhinagar, in which the state of glass beadmaking in the 21st century is examined. Competition from China has led to a number of production centers closing, a story that can be repeated in many places around the world.

Studies of material culture most often draw on the richness of design theory in combination with a broad range of anthropological theory. The opening article on the Western Sioux Lakota people of the Central Plains of the United States of America gives a comprehensive account of the way that beads, and quills, were and are used in both ritual practices and everyday life of the Lakota. "Living Bead Cultures of Gujarat," by Niyati Kukadia and Sonal Mehta, takes a similar approach in examining the beadwork of four communities in the Gujarat region – Kathi Darbar, Mahajan, Rabari, and Mir/Mirasi. There is a wealth of material in each

of these articles, each of which draws on extensive in-depth field study by the authors.

Contemporary studies of Borneo are not forgotten and are found in the article about making beads from sago processing residue by Chan Margaret Kit Yok and two others. This is a pertinent topic for our world. Waste is too often discarded rather than used. A local perspective with a gender dimension is given by Dora Jok in her article, "Belawan's Beaded War-Sword: Material Symbols of a Kayan Spirit-Hero." This article pictures the beaded swords that are made both for the tourist market and also as wedding gifts. The same sword can happily serve a dual purpose, a fact that substantiates the theme, "Beads of Our Time." As recognition of the number of locals attending the conference, each of the articles in the journal begins with an abstract in the Malay language.

I shall conclude by drawing attention to the article "Beaded Textiles of the Katu Ethnic Group Living in South Laos and Central Highlands, Vietnam," by Linda S. McIntosh. These are isolated places where the weavers incorporate tiny white beads onto the weft thread as they weave their garment, thus creating what might be seen as three dimensional cloths, decorated with attractive geometric designs where the background colors are predominantly red and black. It is painstaking work which still takes place in the 21st century, albeit with considerable aid from Japan for both production and marketing, the latter being a crucial aspect of all small-scale craft production. With advanced technological expertise and dedicated local creativity, we do indeed live in a rich and varied world where studies of beads give one window into that vast vista.

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