

10. Addenda to 'Ken-Pai': A Glass Bracelet from Yap

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I. NOTES ON THE CRESCENTIC BAKAL

Before discussing the occurrence and possible provenance of translucent glass rings, as the one dealt with in my paper (*AP*, 5(1): 113-115), may I summarize the present state of research on the three kinds of crescent-shaped pieces among the Palauan money, and locally known as *bakal* (Kubary 1889). Among these the *barak* and *bungau* which are yellow and red respectively, prove to be of material identical with that of the opaque glass rings found in the Philippines (Barnett 1949, Force 1959). Their analysis, as reported by these two authors, reveal that the material is the fusion of a clay mixture or silicates and not a mineral (jasper) as Kubary had erroneously assumed. His mistake had long ago been pointed out by Finsch (1893, 1914).* Therefore one may be justified to consider the pieces in question as fragments of bracelets (Force 1959).

The second type is represented by crescents of translucent glass, bluish or green, which rank among the 'glasses', *kaldoyok*. Kubary illustrates a *bakal kaldoyok* in the colour plate which accompanies his study on the native money on Yap and on Palau islands (1889, pl. 1: nos. 16, 17, 19, 22). From the curved shape of these pieces, the triangular cross-section and ridges, one may regard them as segments of glass rings, as recently found on Yap, and reported from the Philippines, New Guinea and elsewhere.†

The most interesting crescentic *bakal* are doubtless those bearing a coloured design on blue glass and called *merrimmer*. Ritzenthaler (1954) mentions *merimer*, of which 70 pieces are still in circulation. Two pieces of this type—one of them apparently of considerable size—are illustrated by Osborne (1958: 171, fig. 16) and described as 'section of triangular curved gorget of deep blue glass with coloured glass scroll-and-dot decoration', and 'a smaller fragment of the same type' respectively. Osborne groups with these two decorated pieces another plain 'gorget of greenish glass' and states that all three are sections of arm rings. However, as far as I am aware, we have no proof yet of the occurrence of such ornamented rings. Kraemer (1926: 158, fig. 155) depicts a *merimer*, identical with that of Osborne, which is 6 cm. long. Kubary's colour plate shows a much shorter *merimmer*, without dots (pl. 1, no. 18). He believes that these pieces might be fragments of handles of ancient glass vessels. About a certain specimen of this kind, named *rodok sis*

* Finsch in pointing out Kubary's mistake about the material, also mentions the differences between Kubary's two publications on the subject. Kubary in *Ethnographische Beiträge* (1889) corrected some of his mistakes which had appeared in the *Journal* of the Museum Godeffroy, 1873.

† Kraemer (1926, p. 158) was the first to remark that the *bakal* have to be regarded as segments of rings, though such rings had not as yet been found at the time of his research. He refers to arm rings with triangular cross-section from the Moluccas and elsewhere in Indonesia.

(meaning 'cordyline fruit', according to Kraemer)—richly embellished with a design of leaves and fruits (p. 21, figs. *a*, *b*)—Kubary thinks that it is the broken part of the rim of a large glass bowl, especially as the design is typical of an ornamental border. In this connection a Palauan tradition is of importance—it was told to Ritzenthaler that about four hundred years ago—the crews of two stranded Portuguese ships cut up the decorations of the ship's cabin, bored the small pieces to string them on cords, and traded them to the natives, in exchange for food and water (Ritzenthaler 1954: 11). While crescents of opaque and translucent glass are obviously segments of rings, the derivation of the last mentioned decorated pieces, must so far remain an open question.

2. NOTES ON GLASS RINGS

Upon my return from Yap to Formosa, I visited the exhibition of the Calatagan excavations in Manila. Side by side with the heavy, wide rings of opaque glass were also displayed a few bracelets of translucent greenish glass (Fox 1959: pl. B). As they were found together with Chinese ceramics, this would date the Calatagan burial sites for the period between the late 14th and the end of the 15th century, or the early period of the 16th century (Fox 1959: 334).

Professor Beyer was kind enough to show me his collection of opaque rings, in a wide range of colour, red-brown, orange, yellow, green and cobalt blue. These however looked strangely 'new' and unused, and lacked the dull appearance and dirt filled pores of the *barak* pieces seen on Yap. Beyer (1949: 234), basing himself on the finds at the Novaliches sites in Rizal Province, assumes that glass was manufactured locally during the Philippine Iron Ages. On plate 15, no. 4 he depicts a green glass bracelet from the same site.

Fragments of blue glass rings have also been found in Sarawak, and Beyer (1947: 341) gives evidence that the area of Santubong may possibly have been an important ancient centre of the bead-making industry. This holds also for the island of Papan, former Dutch Borneo (*ibid.*: 342).

Two translucent rings of bluish glass recently have been unearthed together with some pottery and a few beads in a burial site of north-western Taiwan. The area was inhabited by the Ketangalan, one of the so-called plains tribes, who were crowded out by the Chinese, at the end of Ming or beginning of Ch'ing Dynasty. That at the time of the burials the people were in touch with the Chinese is proved by some pieces of iron metal also found in the graves. The Museum of the National Taiwan University has three bluish glass rings, which were collected by Japanese investigators from the Paiwan tribe of southern Formosa, which kept them as heirlooms. It is with the Paiwan (and the related Puyuma) that most of the coloured glass beads of Formosa have been found. Due to their southward migration, the Paiwan must have had early contact with Chinese traders passing through the China seas, not to mention the Chinese pirates, who made southern Formosa their stronghold, before trading their loot further south.

An interesting evidence for the presence of green glass rings comes from West New Guinea. Van der Sande (1907: pl. xxiii, fig. 16, and p. 219, fig. 143) illustrates and describes an antique glass ring of green colour called *kās*, an exact

counterpart to Yap's *ken-pai*, which he found at Tobadi village, Humboldt Bay. The piece belonged to the community; it was kept under the protection of the chief and was carefully wrapped up in a long, narrow strip of bark, so thickly packed that accidental breaking was nearly impossible. Only with much difficulty one could have a look at the precious object. Its origin was unknown, and it had become almost an object of worship. An offer to exchange it for 24 large axes was not even considered. However, the ring was undoubtedly recognizable as made of glass. According to van der Sande, Rumphius (1740) begins his report, on a green glass ring (*mamacur*, or *macur*) which he found on Ceram, saying: 'Here I shall relate, how an insignificant thing, by single agreement and fancy of man, can be raised to such a value, that it is reckoned among the principal treasures'. Rumphius further mentions glass rings from the Aru-Kei and Timorlaut Islands, and stresses the prominent position of the *green* glass ring, which is found only in the possession of kings, and 'moreover of its being considered a holy object, an oracle, an amulet, the stripes and bubbles of the mass being of great significances'. Van der Sande quotes a number of authors of the last century who speak of glass rings from Ambon and especially Ceram, and thought they were of Chinese origin. Among the authors Meyer (1884: 15), dealing with four bluish glass rings from Ceram, proves the export from China of such rings 'to the east and west'. The jars of Chinese origin known from the Moluccas and the north coast of New Guinea, prove Chinese navigation at early times. That the numerous ancient glass beads, found circulating in the area, came directly from China, as van der Sande assumes, seems to me unlikely. It may not be so with what Nieuwenhuis (1904: 138-39) calls 'new beads for Borneo, especially the transparent blue, and round red kind, as well as certain yellow opaque beads, which also occur in New Guinea. Nieuwenhuis (1904) saw these beads in Singapore, from where they were exported to Borneo wrapped in Chinese paper and kept in Chinese boxes. Glass rings however, especially the green kind in imitation of jade, may have been manufactured in China, where they were not considered of much value. Up to most recent times, green glass bracelets were sold throughout China, and even reached the local markets in the southwest.

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