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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EARLY FILIGRANA GLASS AND ROSENBERG CASTLE TYPE FILIGRANA GLASS

There are many differences between the early filigrana glasses (Fig. 1) and the type of filigrana glasses given to the King of Denmark in 1709 in Venice, still exhibited in the Rosenborg castle in Kopenhagen (Denmark)¹. In this article I will call the group of later glasses 'Rosenborg castle glasses', even though many glasses of the same type are in collections all over the world (Fig. 2).

It is still difficult to understand when exactly they started making these glasses. In recent publications glass specialists suggest several different dates. Baumgartner² for example compares the models of Rosenborg castle glasses with models of glasses made in the seventeenth century and calls them second half of the seventeenth, early eighteenth century, others like Theuerkauff-Liederwald³ date them around 1700 while for example Bova⁴ dates a glass like this even more precisely 1700-1710.

For the moment I will date the Rosenborg castle glasses around 1700.

Most glass experts will immediately recognize these glasses. Especially if they have the same form as the glass now in the Rosenborg castle. Only when the form is different from the examples in Rosenborg castle, does it become more difficult.

In these cases it can be usefull to know the exact difference between the two types. The following list is based on the results

¹ Boesen 1960.

² Baumgartner 2003: 108, 109; fig. 50.

³ Theuerkauff-Liederwald 1994: 155; fig. 131.

⁴ Bova 2010: 358; fig. III. 36.

of my study of filigrana glass executed in 2012⁵ and some later observations.

Nine differences between early filigrana glasses and the Rosenborg castle glasses:

1. *Two layers versus one layer*

The earlier glass has two layers, the Rosenborg castle glass has only one layer.

This is a result of the way they were made. The earlier glass is made with a pick up on a bubble technique⁶ or with the sbruffetto technique⁷, the Rosenborg castle glasses are made with the pick up on a collar technique⁸.

The glasses made with two layers have a layer of canes on the outside and a layer of cristallo on the inside. The glasses with one layer consist only of canes.

Looking closely at the edge of the glass it is possible to see the difference (fig.1.1). It is easier to feel it: a glass with two layers is smooth on the inside and has relief on the outside. A glass with only one layer has relief on both sides.

(N.B. Rosenborg castle glasses do have two layers when they are very large).

2. *One set-up versus two or more set-ups*

The early glasses are made of one set-up. The same bubble or parison is used for the bowl and the foot or for the bowl, the stem and the foot.

Therefore the amount of canes is the same in the bowl as in the stem or foot.

The tazza of figure 1 has an extra feature that makes it easy to illustrate this (1.2): because of a mistake in the pattern with alternating a fili and a retortoli canes, at one point one a fili cane is missing. Because of this two a retortoli canes are next to each other. This mistake occurs in the bowl, the stem and the

⁵ Laméris 2012.

⁶ Laméris 2012: 30, 31.

⁷ Laméris 2012: 34.

⁸ Laméris 2012: 34, 35.

foot, which makes it obvious that the same bubble was used. The Rosenberg glasses are mostly made of different set-ups: the amount of canes used in the bowl and foot differ from each other (Fig. 2.2).

One group of glasses is an exception to this rule: Saxon footed beakers. These glasses usually have different amounts of canes in bowl and foot, like the Rosenberg castle glasses.

3 *Canes with external decoration versus canes with internal decoration: ballotini*

One can date a glass, only by looking at the canes. The early glasses were only made with a retortoli canes with external decorations: most of the time a rete canes (Fig. 1.3). The Rosenberg castle glasses are also made with a rete canes, but in combination with a new type of cane: canes with ballotini (Fig. 2.3).

4 *Mixed canes with a fili and external decoration versus mixed canes with ballotini and external decoration*

Sometimes one finds mixed canes used in early glasses: combinations of the then existing canes: a fili canes with an external decoration. For example a cane with one thread in the centre and two groups of five threads around it (see for an example used in Rosenberg castle glass Fig. 2). The thread in the cane can be put in the centre for a straight line or a bit off centre for a wavering effect.

Since the discovery of the ballotini cane, many more combinations can be and are made of canes with ballotini inside and an external decoration around it (Fig. 3).

5 *One or two versus three or more types of canes*

The early glasses are mostly made with only one or two types of canes (Fig. 1.5). The result of the possibility to make so many different types of canes, is that the Rosenberg castle type glasses are usually made with more types of canes: two or three (Fig. 2.5), rarely even four.

The use of a fili canes becomes very rare.

6 *Thin versus thick canes*

In glasses of comparable sizes, the canes of the earlier glasses are thinner than the canes of the Rosenberg castle type (Fig. 1.6 versus Fig. 2.6).

7 *A rete canes with 5, 6 or 8 threads versus more and thinner threads: 10 to 24 threads*

The white threads are much thinner in the later canes and the canes themselves are wider, therefore there can be more threads in each cane. The a rete canes of the glass in Fig. 1 (1.7) are made with five threads, the a rete canes of the glass in Fig. 2 are made with twelve threads, the cane of the enlargement, taken from another Rosenborg castle glass (Fig. 2.7), with ten threads.

8 *White versus whiter*

The white of the Rosenborg castle glasses is of a clearer white than the white used in the older glasses.

9 *Blown foot versus applied solid foot*

Sometimes an applied *cristallo* solid foot is added to the Rosenborg castle type glasses.

These differences between the two types of *filigrana* glasses were found studying hundreds of glasses in different collections. I have found some exceptions to these 'rules'. I found for example one exception to point 1: a pilgrim flask held in the Wallace collection, appears to have only one layer of glass, a feature of the later Rosenborg castle glasses, even though the model is typical for the sixteenth century⁹.

I also found one exception to point number 2: an early glass which was made with two bubbles instead of one. However, the lid of that glass had the same amount of threads. Bill Gudenrath came with a beautiful explanation for this exception.

I hope to describe these exceptions (including the comment of mister Gudenrath) and other thoughts about *filigrana* glass in a future publication. In most cases, however, these nine points can be applied to date *filigrana* glasses.

⁹ Higgott 2011: 78, 79; fig. 13.

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