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Maritime Networks and Earring Production Systems across the South China Sea Region: From 500 BC to AD 200

This study presents a new perspective on human activities in the South China Sea region during the Metal Age through a morphological, technical, and raw material examination of nephrite earrings, also known as *lingling-o* and double-headed animal ear pendants. The earrings are some of the most significant artifacts of prehistoric Southeast Asian archaeology, widely distributed in the area from 500 BC to AD 200. Scholars have studied them and their associated trade networks for over half a century. To understand maritime networks across the South China Sea region and earring production in prehistoric times, the targets of this study consist of archaeological sites where earrings with three projections and double-headed animal ear pendants were unearthed. These sites largely belong to the Metal Age period, with some dating back to the Neolithic. They are spread across the South China Sea region, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and Taiwan. In this study, several production systems of nephrite earrings are successfully reconstructed, indicating the presence of distinct groups of artisans. The transitions in these production systems suggest that artisans played a role in the modes of circulation among the maritime networks.

**Keywords:** *maritime networks; earrings; nephrite; production systems; artisans; South China Sea.*