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Social and Economic Interaction Reflected by Early Metal Age Glass Beads from Selected Sites of Taiwan

This study investigates glass beads recovered from Early Metal Age archaeological sites in Taiwan, focusing on their provenance, exchange networks, consumption patterns, and production processes during the 1st millennium AD. By analyzing materials from seven geographically diverse sites, the research examines the typology, chemical composition, microstructure, and archaeological contexts of these artifacts. The results indicate that the majority of glass beads found in Taiwan during this period were imported from South Asia and Western Asia, with distribution facilitated through the dynamic maritime trade routes of the South China Sea. Variations in typology and chemical composition across different regions and time periods suggest diverse modes of interaction, ranging from long-distance trade with Southeast Asia to localized exchange networks within Taiwan itself. Additionally, the presence of glass beads in mortuary contexts suggests their potential role in social and cultural practices, though further research is needed to determine the extent to which they were linked to status differentiation or symbolic meanings. These findings provide valuable insights into the economic and social dynamics of early Taiwanese societies and contribute to a broader understanding of prehistoric trade networks across East and Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** *glass beads; Early Metal Age; Taiwan archaeology; chemical composition; South China Sea exchange networks.*