

“Jade and Jade-like Artifacts Found in the Philippines”

Archaeological research sponsored by the Australian National University, the National Museum, and the University of the Philippines have been conducted in the Batanes Islands in Northern Philippines since 2002.

The Batanes Islands is composed of three major islands namely: Itbayat, Sabtang, and Batan. In the early 1980s, a Japanese archaeologist found the earliest trace of jade in the island, a green jade adze. When this material was analyzed some years later, it was discovered that the material was made of “Taiwan Jade”.

“Taiwan Jade” is a nephrite found in the Hualien area in Eastern Taiwan known as Fengtien site. This site must have supplied nephritic jade as early as the prehistoric periods in Taiwan.

In the Western world, two types of gemstones are legally recognized as JADE. These are nephrite and jadeite. They have similar physical qualities but have different chemical compositions.

Jade is most identified with Chinese culture. However, to the Chinese, jade is not just nephrite and jadeite. The Pinyin term “yu” applies to any beautiful stone that is “worthy of being carved”.

The recent excavations in the Batanes uncovered two sites, one at Batan and another at Itbayat. The materials found at these two sites were composed of fragments of jade (two cores and left-over materials from fashioned ornaments, probably “ling-ling-o”¹ earrings); some pottery fragments; projectile points made out of slate (probably used to cut the jade material), etc.

These material culture indicate that workshops creating various tools and ornaments from different materials including jade must have existed at these places sometime around 1,000 B.C. and 1,000 A.D.

Activity: Lectures held at Ayala Museum

“The Jade Trail”: New Discoveries in the Batanes and Other Philippine Sites”

¹ “ling-ling-o” is an Ifugao term which was first used by Prof. H. Otley Beyer to refer to ear ornaments found at prehistoric sites. “Received knowledge” as published many times over, tell us that the prehistoric ornament reminded him of earrings used by the Ifugao and other tribal people in the Cordillera which they made out of copper, silver, or gold. However, a re-reading of Beyer’s article entitled, “Philippine and East Asian Archaeology and its Relation to the Origin of the Pacific Islands Population”, published by the National Research Council of the Philippines, in 1948, has further information about Beyer’s thoughts on the subject. He believed that “a good case can be ... made out of ...the relationship of the ornament to the Japanese *magatama*”, other than the Ifugao “ling-ling-o”. Beyer further writes (p. 69 of said publication) that the “ling-ling-o ornament is closely related to the characteristic ones of gold, silver, and copper found in the same Early Iron Age site in Rizal Province where...a blue glass ornament has also been found.”

On the 18th of March 2006 (Saturday)
At 1:30 P.M. with invited speakers:

Peter Bellwood,
Professor of Archaeology,
Archaeology and Anthropology Dept.
Australian National University, Canberra
Canberra, ACT 0200
Australia

Cynthia Ongpin Valdes
Independent Researcher and
President, W. G. Solheim II Foundation
Manila, Philippines

The W. G. Solheim II Foundation for Philippine Archaeology, Inc. thanks the Ayala Museum for sponsoring the above lectures.

Ayala Museum is located at
Makati Avenue corner de la Rosa St., Makati City.

A convenient stop-over for visitors as well as Filipinos who will surely learn their history in a most pleasant manner by going through the Dioramas, the Ayala MUSEUM is housed in a state –of-the art building in the center of Makati, an architectural landmark in the heart of the city. Ayala Foundation, affiliated with the museum, supports arts and culture as well as children’s education with its various programs.

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