

18. BEADS

Sa Huynh site, 5th century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Carnelian

Strand, L: 93 cm

National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSb 19625a

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These beads were brought to the museum in 1923 by the Musée Cernuschi. Ian C. Glover and Bérénice Bellina, "Alkaline Etched Beads East of India in the Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Periods," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 88 (2001): 192.

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Bronson, "Glass and Beads at Khuan Lukpad, Southern Thailand," 216.

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Francis, *Asia's Maritime Bead Trade*, 12.

Carnelian beads were produced in northwestern India by the time of the Indus Valley civilization (third millennium B.C.), although they were not exported to Southeast Asia (and then, probably came from south India) until the first millennium.³¹ Most long-distance commerce traded in luxury goods; beads, which functioned as magical charms and decoration, and also performed as status symbols, were luxury goods. Recent excavations at Khuan Lukpad in southern Thailand suggest local production of at least some prehistoric carnelian beads found in Southeast Asia, by the early centuries A.D.³² The large numbers of beads found at burial sites in Southeast Asia attest to their importance as a trade item. Since large quantities took up so little space, one can imagine merchants found them a valuable commodity.

In order to make carnelian (and agate) easier to chip, it is heated prior to working. The stone is then chipped into a crude shape known as a roughout, which is in turn ground into a blank.³³ The seventy beads included here were cut in a vari-

ety of shapes—round, oblong, cylindrical, faceted with four and six faces, and square with the holes extending from one corner to another. The large square bead is typical of a number of such beads, cut from a flat piece of carnelian and the hole from one corner to the other. One small oblong cylinder is inlaid, suggesting it may be from India, as the few inlaid beads produced in Southeast Asia appear to be differently made.

