

B.C.<sup>8</sup> Vietnamese scholars point out the similarities in decorative motifs of second-millennium pottery from Phung Nguyen with those adorning bronzes of the Dong Son period as evidence of the cultural continuity that characterizes the region (fig. 1).

Some of our knowledge of the trade in Viet Nam at the end of the Dong Son and during the early historical period derives from Chinese texts. The Qin emperor Qin Shi Huangdi, who ruled in China during the Warring States period, pushed south to the lands of the Hundred Yueh (the Chinese term indicating the barbarian countries in southern China and beyond) in the south. Even as early as the third century B.C., the Chinese emperor's interest in the south was recognized as commercial: "Ch'in Shih Huang Ti [Qin Shi Huangdi, 222 B.C.] was interested in the rhinoceros horn, the elephant tusks, the kingfisher plumes, and the pearls of the land of Yueh."<sup>9</sup> At the end of the Warring States period in China (third century B.C.), An Duong Vuong, a northern conqueror driven south by the armies of Qin Shi Huangdi, overthrew the last of the Hung kings and established the kingdom of Au Lac ["Au" refers to his supporters, and "Lac" to the aristocratic class of Viet Nam]. This ruling class grew in power and proved an important element in maintaining Vietnamese tradition, for with the Han ascendancy and their subsequent conquest of north Viet Nam and rule in the region from A.D. 40 to 939, Chinese influence affected all aspects of Vietnamese life.

Though there was a Han presence in the region from 111 B.C., not until A.D. 40, when the general Ma Yuan quelled a rebellion mounted by the Trung sisters, did Chinese rule become more political. Ma Yuan instituted prefectural and district administrators and established Han immigrants in the locale; the Dong Son culture came to an end. With intermarriage, a Han-Viet ruling class arose, and though uprisings occurred repeatedly, the Chinese ruled northern Viet Nam until the tenth century.

Given these rebellions, one might wonder what allure was strong enough to keep the Chinese in the region. Hsueh Tsung, a Chinese living in Viet Nam in the early third century A.D., explains: "What can be obtained from field and household taxes is meager. On the other hand, this place is famous for precious rarities from afar: pearls, incense, drugs, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, coral, lapis lazuli, parrots, kingfishers, peacocks, rare and abundant treasures enough to satisfy all desires. So it is not necessary to depend on what is received from taxes in order to profit the Central Kingdom."<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese presence in the north influenced not only the political and economic arena, but also the arts. Han-style brick, subterranean tombs, oriented in the cardinal directions, included burial furniture—house models, jars, incense burners, basins (cat. no. 12), vessels (fig. 2)—that incorporate both Chinese and Vietnamese stylistic elements.

While the Dong Son culture thrived in the Hong River valley, the Sa Huynh culture (fifth century B.C.—first century A.D.) followed a similar course in central and south coastal Viet Nam. In the early twentieth century, scholars first discovered the secondary burial jars containing pottery and unusual jewelry that characterize the culture.<sup>11</sup> Early excavations carried out in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s at Sa Huynh district, Quang Ngai Province, uncovered more than five hundred jar burials. Only since the 1970s have we become aware of the culture's extent: artifacts have been found as far north as Quang Tri Province and as far south as the Can Gio district east of Ho Chi Minh City. Since 1975, at least one thousand burials have been discovered.<sup>12</sup>

FIG. 2

*Lidded Vessel*, Nghi Ve, Bac Ninh Province, Han type, 2nd–3rd century A.D. Bronze, H: 47.5cm x Diam: 38cm, National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSB17241.

