

Jar burial is relatively rare in Southeast Asia (fig. 3). It occurs in the Malay peninsula, north Borneo, the Sulawesi Sea islands, various sites in Indonesia (Bali, Java, and Kalimantan, to name a few), and the Philippines. Until recently, the phenomenon has been believed to be associated only with maritime contexts; recent discoveries in the mountains of South Sumatra, however, contradict this standard assessment of its being a littoral society feature.¹³ In fact, the peoples of the Sa Huynh culture are believed to be of Austronesian descent and therefore linguistically related to the peoples of insular Southeast Asia. Not only do their burial practices relate to other areas of the oceanic region, but similarities exist in their earthenware ceramics, particularly with ceramics of the Kalanay culture of the Philippines.¹⁴ Specific types of jewelry, the *lingling-o* (fig. 4) and the bicephalous ear ornaments (cat. no. 15), found in excavations in the extent of the area covered by the Sa Huynh culture have also been found in the Philippines.

That the peoples of central and south Viet Nam were engaged in international trade is clear not only from foreign goods found within the region. Sa Huynh-produced objects have been discovered outside the area, notably the bicephalous ear ornaments found at a Thai site, in the Philippines, and in Taiwan.¹⁵ (Most of these earrings have been found in two distinct regions in Viet Nam, Quang Nam Province and in the south-east of Ho Chi Minh City, suggesting their production arose from a common tradition that developed in two separate areas.¹⁶) Pottery and jewelry produced by the Sa Huynh culture have been excavated in north Viet Nam as well.¹⁷ Recent excavations in central and south Viet Nam continue to reveal numerous and diverse foreign objects. The important Cham site of Tra Kieu (the former Cham capital in Quang Nam Province) provides one example. The lowest level of the excavation seems to have been a Sa Huynh village. There Vietnamese, Japanese, and British archaeologists have discovered Indo-Roman rouletted ware, an Indian trade ceramic generally dated from 300 B.C. to A.D. 100 or 200,¹⁸ thus proving that a trade network extended far beyond Southeast Asia or its neighbor, China.

Other sites in Quang Nam Province are equally rich and point to the early importance of the Thu Bon River area as a trading center. The recently excavated site of Go Ma Voi (fifth to third century B.C.) revealed jar burials, the largest number of bronze objects (twenty-nine) from an early Sa Huynh site in central Viet Nam, and the first bimetall tool of bronze and iron ever discovered in the area of the Sa Huynh culture.¹⁹ Iron tools are common in Sa Huynh burials (fig. 5). As Andreas Reinecke has pointed out, the Thu Bon River plain is very fertile and able to support one of the larger populations of central Viet Nam, and this higher economic potential explains the developmental leap to an affluent society in the later stages of the Sa Huynh culture. Evidence of gold objects, as well as the five Han bronze mirrors found in the area, indicates both wealth and trading connections.²⁰

In the north, the extent of exchange with India and farther west is less clear than it is in southern and central Viet Nam. Premodern trade was a function of certain variables: an area or community might possess a technological advantage that could not be diffused or copied; certain commodities had unique sources, and thus had to be purchased at the source. Finally, consumer tastes played an important role in creating a market for goods, which explains the strong commercial ties with the Chinese, who sought the natural products available only in Southeast Asia.²¹ The first century A.D. saw an increase in international trade from the Mediter-