

first century A.D. and the earliest evidence of the Cham culture in the third/fourth century A.D. Excavations undertaken in recent years have provided new indications that early influences from India could perhaps have already arrived in central Viet Nam by the last centuries B.C. and may have caused, with a delay of some hundred years, the changes in burial ritual and ceramic tradition.

Under the Emperor Han Wudi, China expanded in 111 B.C. over the northern part of central Viet Nam, and the newly founded southernmost military province of Rinan may have covered the area between the Ngang and Hai Van passes.³² Thus, it is not surprising that during the first century B.C., bronze mirrors or vessels, iron knives, ceramics, or coins of Chinese origin had arrived in the Thu Bon valley, where a trading center for Indian, Chinese, and inland goods had developed.

In March 2004, an exceptional grave with six bronze vessels in Han style, together with Sa Huynh ceramics and an iron chisel, was found among Sa Huynh jar burials at Lai Nghi (figs. 17a–b). A radiocarbon date of the fourth century A.D. is perhaps too late for this assemblage—the second or third century A.D. seems more realistic. However, it is certain that this grave is one of the last known burials with Sa Huynh artifacts in central Viet Nam.

FIG. 17a–b

Offerings from a descendant of the Sa Huynh people (?). During the excavation at Lai Nghi in May of 2004, some offerings in the Sa Huynh cultural tradition were found, together with a set of six bronze bowls and tripod vessels, which were probably produced in the Eastern Han period and perhaps buried later in the 3rd century A.D.

