

On the other hand, every year brings new archaeological surprises: since spring 2007, villagers of Prohear in Prey Veng Province in south-eastern Cambodia have discovered, through looting activities on a burial site, in addition to gold ornaments, bronze, and iron weapons, beads of glass, and semiprecious stones, an incredibly large number—many dozens—of bronze drums of Heger I type, which were immediately sold. Not only do the drums, tools, or ornaments from Prohear allow us to surmise intensive and long-distance relations to central and northern Viet Nam, but so do some extraordinary finds from Bit Meas, a second looted burial site nearby in the same province, as will be demonstrated in a later context.

Certainly, it was not only the value of the art or metal in these drums that ensured their wide distribution in Southeast Asia, but also their intercultural function.⁴⁶ Otherwise it would not be possible to explain why the distribution of more than 150 huge bronze containers (*thap*), which were also very valuable and cast and decorated in an equally elaborated manner (cat. no. 6), remained constricted to northern Viet Nam and southern China.

The Sa Huynh people also left tracks across a wide area of Southeast Asia. Thus, their double-headed earrings have been dispersed to the southern groups of the Dong Son people, to Western Thailand, and to the Philippines. Their specific meaning, symbolic character, and distribution, however, lead us to suppose that they were not trade goods, but rather personal items that attest to their owners' range of action and travel.

Beads in many shapes and of different materials were very popular among the Sa Huynh people. More than ever before, they used a wide range of precious materials. At Lai Nghi in Quang Nam Province, for example, more than 10,000 beads were recovered from 63 graves during the excavations in 2002–4, among them 8,643 glass beads and 104 of gold. This is one of the largest bead collections of this period ever found in Viet Nam, and analyses are still in progress to determine their origin and methods of production.

Of all the varieties of precious stone, carnelian was the most favored by the Sa Huynh people. At Lai Nghi, about fifteen different bead shapes were made from this material (fig. 25). Mostly, an origin in India or Burma is supposed. But although up to now no resources are known in Viet Nam, nevertheless, and especially the northern half of this country, it has all geological conditions for carnelian deposits.⁴⁷ Some mountain areas in Viet Nam remain geologically unexplored, and the number of material analyses made on finds so far is too small. Therefore, it is too early to exclude the use of local resources for some precious materials, or to begin searching for their origin abroad when a Vietnamese source is still possible.

Indeed, among the 1,136 carnelian beads from Lai Nghi, three are special examples: the first is shaped like an aquatic bird; the second may show a lion; and the third is an etched bead. These three beads were found in three different graves with many other rich offerings (see, for example, fig. 16), and are dated to the second/first century B.C.

Both the animal-shaped beads are the first examples that have been found in all of central and southern Viet Nam. The most numerous similar beads are known from some burial sites in Guangxi Province, especially in Hepu district close to the sea. Generally, the beads from Lai Nghi appear to be more carefully elaborated, smoothed, and polished. In contrast, the animal beads from northern Viet Nam or Guangxi Province/South China have a rough-edged surface. But similarities in the shape of their bodies, their sitting positions, and the same combination of bird/lion