

to 700 men, and a cargo of over 10,000 *ho* (a Chinese corn measure about 10 pecks).³⁰

More than three hundred Fu Nan sites have been identified in the Mekong delta region, with those in the Dong Nai River basin the most northerly location.³¹ These sites are characterized by domestic architecture built on stilts, typical pottery, gold jewelry, and Hindu and Buddhist architecture with a preponderance of Vaishnavite imagery (fig. 6). Oc Eo is the best known of the cities because it has been extensively excavated, with results published in Western languages, and also because along with rich local remains were found relatively few examples of international contact—Roman coins and jewelry, Chinese sculpture, and Indian beads.³² A system of canals connects Oc Eo to other Funanese sites, one of which is Nen Chua (known in the mid-twentieth century as Ta Keo), located closer to the coastline and probably the more important port.

The monsoon winds, blowing as they did in a single direction for part of the year, meant traders were forced to stay in port for extended periods of time. Located in the wet-rice cultivation region of the delta that, even in this early period, produced a surplus of rice, the rulers of Fu Nan were able to provide for the traders. A functioning entrepôt possessed certain requisites: adequate food and lodging for the merchants, storage and marketplaces for goods. Since the many entrepôts that lined the littoral of the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and China competed with each other, it was to the advantage of local administrators to fairly tax the ships that entered their ports and to offer all provisioning that the traders needed. As one author has said, "When a port of trade lost its reputation of fairness, it was only one step removed from commercial bankruptcy."³³



FIG. 6

Vishnu, Oc Eo site, Vinh Long, 5th century, Stone, Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTL5 5528.