

26. BUDDHA

China, 5th century

Bronze, H: 29.3 cm × W: 11.5 cm

Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 1586

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Manguin, personal communication (December 2004).

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See Saburo Matsubara, *Chugoku Bukkyo chokoku shiron*, 2 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1995), plates 19, 34A, 65; S. Mizuno, *Chugoku no chokoku* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun, Showa, 35 [1960]), plates 8 and 10.

The occurrence of foreign-produced sculpture and jewelry among the objects discovered at the site of Oc Eo and at other spots in the Mekong delta area indicates exchange, though the limited number of items does not suggest extensive trading contacts. Chinese texts spoke of trade with the region by the third century, though there is little evidence of this contact prior to the fifth century.¹² This Chinese Buddha was found in the Linh Son pagoda, in the village of Vong The, Long Xuyen Province. Dating to the fifth century, it does not relate exactly to any published Buddha images from China, though it does share various stylistic elements.¹³ As in other Chinese Buddha images, the back of the figure is smooth and has a loop for the attachment of the aureole. Whether the gilding on the surface is original or was added over the centuries of worship in Viet Nam is uncertain.

The parallel folds of the drapery fall over the left arm of the image in a manner typically Chinese. The very sophisticated representation of the drapery is clearly apparent in the ends of fabric he holds; they are finished in a small fishtail pattern superimposed on a wider, more elaborate fold. The right hand is poised

in *abhaya mudra* (the gesture of reassurance), while the way in which the fingers curve up on the left hand may indicate the *vitarka mudra* (teaching gesture). The figure appears to be leaning forward, the egg-shaped head with its small nose and mouth seemingly solemn, and the continuous line of the brow curves elegantly over the half-closed lids. While local artisans were aware of Chinese-style images, as suggested by this Buddha, the Buddhas produced in the region drew more on Indian prototypes.

LITERATURE

James C. M. Khoo, *Art and Archaeology of Fu Nan: Pre-Khmer Kingdom of the Lower Mekong Valley*, 2003; Le Xuan Diem, Dao Linh Con, and Vo Si Khai, *Van Hoa Oc Eo: nhung kham pha moi*, 1995; *Co Vat Viet Nam (Vietnamese Antiquities)*, 2003; Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, vol. 2, 1960.