32.

DISC WITH INTAGLIO LION

Oc Eo site, An Giang Province, c. 6th century
Carnelian, H: 1.8 cm × W: 2.2 cm × D: 0.4 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 2248

INTAGLIO WITH SEATED FIGURE

Oc Eo site, An Giang Province, c. 6th century
Carnelian, H: .4 cm × D: 1.7 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 2258

INTAGLIO WITH SEATED FIGURE

Oc Eo site, My Lam village, An Giang Province, c. 6th century
Crystal, H: 3.1 cm × W: 2.4 cm × D: 1.3 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 2253

The use of carnelian for stone seals was common in the ancient world, but according to the twelfth-century author Al-Khazim (*Book of the Balance of Wisdom*), by the twelfth century, the use of carnelian had fallen out of fashion in the West: "Men have been long tired of the cornelian [*sic*], so that it has ceased to be used as a stone for seal-rings, even for the hands of common people, to say nothing of the great."[19] A close look at the two carnelian intaglios reveals that they were carved with a rotary abrasive tool, which leaves a curve at the end of the line of the cut, and in which the scratch marks are parallel. The line left by an engraving tool would not end the line in a curve. Another possible form of production would have been to rub small pieces of stone back and forth.

A few crystal intaglios with a figure seated in royal ease and holding unidentifiable attributes were excavated at Oc Eo. That figure's hair cascades down his back beneath a large hat, or a great deal more hair. Unlike the fine carnelian carvings, this intaglio was more coarsely produced, and the fact the artisan did not use a rotary abrasive tool to carve the crystal intaglio further suggests a different area of production from the two carnelian intaglios. Under magnification, small lines coming in from the sides of the figure are visible; they indicate it was chiseled; the lines are especially clear along the legs and arm. The tool used had an edge rather than a point, as normally a round-tipped tool would result in a symmetrical break, with the force going in all directions.[20]

The shape of the crystal is further indication that it was fabricated in a location different from the carnelian intaglios; the front is flat, and a hole pierces two intersecting domes forming a ridge. The hole appears to have been pecked from one side, then the other, until the two holes met.

LITERATURE

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Francis, *Asia's Maritime Bead Trade*, 123.

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I would like to thank Mark Fenn, conservator, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, for his insights on the technical aspects of these intaglios.