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

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Malleret, 1962:3, 152–65.

36. 14 GOLD BEADS

Oc Eo site, My Lam village, An Giang Province, 6th century
Gold, .4–.8 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 2173

37. CRYSTAL BEAD

Oc Eo site, My Lam village, An Giang Province, c. 6th century
Crystal, H/L: 4 cm × W: 8.4 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 1785

36. Gold beads of this period have been discovered throughout Southeast Asia and exhibit a wide range of shapes that attest to the artisans' imagination and ingenuity. Island Southeast Asia was the source of the largest share of gold in the region; most, if not all, of it placer gold. In Viet Nam today, gold is mined in the area southwest of Go Ma Voi, although other areas may have been important sources of it during the ancient period. (This author has seen men panning for gold in Quang Nam Province at the Cham site of My Son).

These beads are formed of sheet gold that is then decorated with tiny circles of gold wire around beads of granulation. The tiniest beads measure less than half a centimeter. They were not all fabricated in the same way; the hole is sometimes perpendicular to the solder joint, and sometimes parallel to it. Some have a collar of round wire; some appear to have had the hole punched (the sheet metal curves into the hole in the bead); while at least one of them was drilled (the gold is sharper around the edge). The difference in their production raises the issue of whether they were all produced in the same workshop.²³

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, vol. 3, 1962.

37. Rock crystal is the clear form of the most common mineral, quartz (silicon dioxide), and one found in most geologic settings. It typically forms in sedimentary rocks such as sandstone, which is found throughout mainland Southeast Asia. Rock crystal was used in Southeast Asia to create beads as well as religious images, and the occurrence of these objects in foundation burials of temples suggests the importance assigned to the material. Stone bead-making occurred at a number of sites in Southeast Asia, including Oc Eo.²⁴

While beads were produced in a variety of forms (see cat. no. 38), this bead is unusual because of its large size. Biconical, with hexagonal facets on each of the two halves, the ring has a smooth ridge that appears to have been intentionally run along one end. The translucency of the bead allows one to see the point at which the holes meet; drilled from opposite ends, they come together closer to one end.

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, vol. 3, 1962.