

40. BUDDHA

Vinh Loi, Tra Vinh Province, 6th–7th century

Stone, H: 57.2 cm × W: 23 cm × D: 22 cm

Fine Arts Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, BTMT186

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Vo Si Chai lists the findspots for stone Buddhist images later than the sixth century: Hon Soc (Kienn Giang), Vung Tau, Duc Hoa (Long An), and Vo Si Khai, "The Kingdom of Fu Nan and the Culture of Oc Eo," in Khoo, ed., *Art and Archaeology of Fu Nan*, 75.

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Liu Jinglong, "The Cave Temples of Longmen," in Jan Van Alphen, ed., *The Buddha in the Dragon Gate: Buddhist Sculpture of the 5th–9th centuries from Longmen, China* (Ghent: Musea Antwerpen, 2001), 57.

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Hajime Hagiwara, *Kaogu Yu Wenwu (Archaeology and cultural relics) 6* (2003): 61–71.

During the Fu Nan period, Buddhist imagery is less prevalent than Hindu imagery, though the existence of wooden sculptures (see cat. no. 27) from the period may indicate Buddhist works produced in that medium have been lost due to the vicissitudes of time. Stone sculptures of the Buddha in both seated and standing positions have been found, however, at a number of sites.²⁶

This example, seated in "European pose," represents a depiction of Buddha popular at this time in the Buddhist world and described in China as Maitreya.²⁷ When the Chinese monk Xuan Zang returned from his travels in India, he lived in the Cien temple in Si Xian from 649 to 658. There he produced ten thousand votive tablets of three different motifs, one of which was a Buddha with legs pendant, and accompanied by two bodhisattvas.²⁸ It is uncertain whether Xuan Zang's Buddha in this particular *asana* (posture) recalls a revered image that he had seen in India, or indicates a particular time in the life of the Buddha, or represents the Buddha Maitreya (as this iconography is sometimes interpreted in Chinese Buddhism), or the Buddha Vairocana, as he is depicted in slightly later Buddhist art.

But, Xuan Zang's votive tablets and this image are not isolated examples, as Buddha images with legs pendant are also known in Dvaravati Thailand (Nakhon Pathom) and at the Buddhist caves of the western Deccan in India. Unfortunately, this figure's right hand is broken, so the *mudra* (gesture) is no aid in identifying which Buddha he might represent. The pedestal is unusual, built up of a series of squared-off moldings, and contrasts with the rather voluptuous portrayal of the figure, with its full lips, elegantly shaped and downcast eyes, and the smooth surfaces of the robe, interrupted only by the tiny pleats at his left arm and between his legs.

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, 4, 1963.