

43. LINTEL

Thuy Lieu village, An Giang Province, late 7th century

Stone, H: 58 cm × W: 157.4 cm × D: 22.3 cm

Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 5977

32

Gilberte de Coral Rémusat, *L'Art Khmer: les grandes étapes de son évolution (Khmer art: the great stages of its evolution) (Études d'art et d'ethnologie asiatiques 1)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: 1951); Pierre Dupont, "Les Linteaux Khmers du VIIe Siècle" (Khmer lintels of the 7th century), *Artibus Asiae* 15 1/2 (1952), 31–83.

33

A similar lintel is illustrated in Pierre Dupont, "Les Linteaux Khmers du VIIe Siècle," fig. 27.

The lintel of the Southeast Asian temple served as a sculptural focus for the entrance of the temple and provided a fine surface for deep relief carving. It effectively framed the primary image inside and provided one of the first views the devout had of the building. From the Fu Nan period, which provided an artistic and architectural precedent for Khmer art, the stylistic evolution of the lintel allowed French scholars to develop a relative chronology of the temples, as there was not enough inscriptional evidence to show how the temple architecture evolved.³² The decor of this lintel falls into the Prei Kmeng style of the seventh century.

The earliest lintels are characterized by an arch that imitates wooden forms, medallions containing divine and semi-divine beings, suspended garlands or leaves, and inward-facing *makara* (a fantastic crocodilian) spewing tassels and garlands. By the second half of the seventh century, when this lintel was produced, the *makara* were no longer ubiquitous, and figures were rarer. The *makara* had provided a source for the

tassels and garlands, as they had poured forth from his mouth; he had also provided a particularly auspicious emblem above the entryway. Here, five floriate medallions, two large examples at either end of the lintel and three smaller ones above a curved arch, provide the focus of the lintel. The curved arch recalls wooden prototypes, as the form bears little relationship to stone architecture. Tassels and garlands also dangle below the arch.³³

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, vol. 1, 1959.

