

#### 45. VISHNU

Bien Hoa, Dong Nai Province, 7th century  
Sandstone, H: 167.4 cm × W: 56.3 cm × D/L 25.8 cm  
Dong Nai Museum, BTDN 02

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Although lacking attributes, the miter and four arms identify this sculpture as a Vishnu. For the Tuol Dai Buon Vishnu, see Jessup and Zephir, eds., *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia*, 163–64; Dalsheimer, *Les Collections du musée national de Phnom Penh*, 82–83.

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For examples, see Dalsheimer, *Les collections du musée national de Phnom Penh*, 71–73; Jessup and Zephir, eds., *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia*, 142, 152–53.

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See Manguin essay (pp. TK) for a discussion of Angkor Borei, and also Miriam T. Stark, "Angkor Borei and the Archaeology of Cambodia and the Mekong Delta," in Khoo, ed., *Art and Archaeology of Fu Nan*, 87–105.

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For dating of Phnom Da images, see Michael de Havenon, "The Earliest Vishnu Sculptures from Southeast Asia," *Walters Art Museum Bulletin* (forthcoming) for an excellent overview of the dating of early pre-Angkor images; Nancy H. Dowling, "A New Date for the Phnom Da Images and Its Implications for Early Cambodia," *Asian Perspectives* 38, no. 1 (1999): 51–61; Paul A. Lavy, "As in Heaven, so on Earth: The Politics of Vishnu, Siva, and Harihara Images in Preangkorian Khmer Civilisation," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (February 2003): 21–39, esp. 28–32; N. Dalsheimer, *Les collections du musée national de Phnom Penh*, 71–73; Jessup and Zephir, eds., *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia*, 142; Hiram Woodward, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Thailand* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 59; Jean Boisselier, *Trends in Khmer Art*, trans. Natasha Eilenberg, ed. and trans. M. Elliot (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1989), 27. The dating proposed varies accordingly: Dupont, first half of the sixth century; Dowling, mid-seventh century; Woodward, mid-seventh century (see de Havenon); Dalsheimer, late sixth-seventh century; Jessup, late sixth-seventh century; de Havenon, late sixth-seventh century.

This elegant Vishnu was discovered in the Dong Nai riverbed in 1976 and relates to a Vishnu found at Tuol Dai Buon (Prei Veng).<sup>35</sup> The two sculptures appear to follow, both stylistically and chronologically, a famous group of Vaisnavite images in the so-called Phnom Da style,<sup>36</sup> which were discovered in the hills south of Angkor Borei. Angkor Borei was an extensive early inland city of the Fu Nan culture, located today in Cambodia, on the western edge of the Mekong, but apparently connected by canals to coastal centers.<sup>37</sup> Artifacts at Angkor Borei and other Fu Nan sites suggest interaction; the relationship between Angkor Borei and coastal ports is probably based in trade, for the hinterlands would have supplied the forest goods, which were coveted Southeast Asian commodities.

The dating of early Southeast Asian Phnom Da sculpture has been a topic of scholarly debate for decades, with the earliest suggested dating (sixth century) now believed by many scholars to be the late sixth to early seventh century, or mid-seventh century.<sup>38</sup> If one accepts a late-sixth- to early-seventh-century date for those works, this piece was probably created in the mid-seventh century.

The slightly squared face, characteristic of the Phnom Da style, is set off by the fringe of hair along the top of the forehead and the row of four fat curls at the temples; these curls echo those that fall over the shoulders at the back of the sculpture. A raised line encircles the eyes with their incised pupil, and the brows arch over the eyes and come together at the ridge of the nose. The treatment of the folds of the drapery, which turn up naturally to the gathered cloth tucked into the waist of the *sampot*, differ from the

Phnom Da sculptures and are closest in treatment to the Tuol Dai Buon Vishnu, found at a site north of Angkor Borei.

The discovery of this work at a great distance from either Angkor Borei or Tuol Dai Buon raises the question whether this work was transported to its present findspot. Future analysis of the stone might clarify this issue if the quarry can be discovered.

#### LITERATURE

Vo Si Khai, "The Kingdom of Fu Nan and the culture of Oc Eo," in James C. M. Khoo, ed., *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; Do Ba Nghiep, *Ban Hoa Khao Co Hoc O Dong Nai 10 The Ky Dau Cong Nguyen: Nien han 1994–1996*, 1996.