

48. LOTUS

Go Xoai, Duc Hoa district, Long An Province, 7th–8th century

Gold foil, 7.1 cm

Long An Museum, BT87-M1-V-2

The lotus is a ubiquitous symbol in both Hinduism and Buddhism, where it represents creation, and its very growth signifies purity. It rises on a long stalk that culminates in an elegant and simple flower with a delicacy that indicates nothing of the roots embedded in the mud below the water's surface. In Buddhism, it alludes to one's ability to spiritually rise above the suffering that forms the basis of life. When the Buddha took his first seven steps, lotuses sprang up at his feet; it is one of the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism; and gold foil images of the lotus are frequently encountered in foundation dedications for both Hindu and Buddhist temples (as stipulated in the *Agni Purana*).

Twelve petals flare from the central seed pod of this finely made repoussé lotus. Each seed pod is set apart by a row of raised beads, and the seed pods—circles with central dots—are irregularly arranged on the surface. Each delicate petal is cut away from the one next to it, outlined with another line that echoes the outer edge, and given depth by the raised lines, one long one in the center bordered by two shorter ones.

LITERATURE

Le Xuan Diem, Dao Linh Con, and Vo Si Khai, *Van Hoa Oc Eo: nhung kham pha moi*, 1995; Bui Phat Diem, Dao Linh Con, and Vuong Thu Hong, *Khao Co Hoc Long An: Nhung The Ky Dau Cong Nguyen (Archaeology in Long An Province: Centuries in the Early Christian Era)*, 2001.