

53. SURYA

Ba The village, An Giang Province, 7th–8th century

Stone, H: 89.5 cm × W: 36.8 cm × D: 15.2 cm

Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTL5 5527

Surya, the sun god, is an important generative force derived from Indian Vedic and other solar deities. When portrayed without his chariot and attendants, he can be distinguished by the two lotuses he holds, here lotus buds like those carried by his South Indian counterparts. His heavy clothing attests to his ties to solar gods of northern countries—he probably wore boots on his now-broken feet—and to reliance on Puranic literature. He is often associated with Vishnu, and in this instance, shares the mitered headdress indicative of Vishnu, though this miter is octagonal, rather than the more common Vaishnavite cylindrical form.

Early images of Surya have been found in many areas of Southeast Asia, including Java, and the Dvaravati art of Thailand. His importance lies both in his independent identity as the sun god, and in his

close association with the Hindu god Vishnu. Like the Durga (cat. no. 46), he has small eyes beneath a continuous brow; heavy earrings pull down his earlobes and rest on his shoulders. Incised lines depict the folds of his clothing.

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *Catalogue Général des Collections: comprenant des Notices descriptives et explicatives, accompagnées de 31 Illustrations*, Musée Blanchard de la Brosse, vol. I, 1937.