

65. RELIEF OF FIGURE MAKING OFFERING

Late 10th century

Stone, H: 10.8 cm × W: 8.9 cm × D: 16.9 cm

Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTLS 5906

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For an illustration of the Dong Duong figure, see Baptiste and Zephir, eds., *Trésors d'art du Vietnam*, 218–19; for a group of architectural elements, see *Suu Tap Hien Vat Champa tai Bao tang Lich su Viet Nam Thanh pho Ho Chi Minh (Champa Collection, Viet Nam Historical Museum, Ho Chi Minh City)*, figs. 16–26, 34–35.

Lions, dancers, *garudas*, *kinnara*, *kir-timukha*, and elephants are commonly depicted motifs on the exterior of Cham temples; in addition to those auspicious figures, recent excavations have uncovered narrative reliefs along the bases of temples. This figure, bearing the closed bud of a flower, kneels before a floral motif that is unidentifiable, yet the gesture of raised flower and the kneeling posture seem to indicate that he is making an offering. Other examples of figures honoring the gods include a three-dimensional kneeling monk from Dong Duong offering a lotus and numerous examples of architectural elements of single figures with a lotus clasped between the hands. Those would have adorned the spire of a temple.³⁶

The likely placement of this relief remains uncertain. Curved tympanum are placed over the door or mock door or window of a temple, but it seems unlikely that this figure, which seems to be a minor one, possibly a donor, would have been

in that exalted position. Unfortunately, the findspot of this piece is unknown, so it is not possible to establish context. It is possible, however, to date it, based on style. Rather than the multitiered headdress of a divine or semidivine figure, the hair is arranged in a high chignon of diminishing tiers that seems to relate to the complex headdresses of the tenth century. The suppleness and generalization of forms also fit in the late tenth–eleventh century.

LITERATURE

Suu Tap Hien Vat Champa tai Bao tang Lich su Viet Nam Thanh pho Ho Chi Minh (Champa Collection, Viet Nam Historical Museum, Ho Chi Minh City), 1994.