



Buddha

8th century

Korea

(Unified Silla Dynasty, 668–935)

Gilded bronze

7 x 2 inches (17.8 x 5.1 cm)

This tiny sculpture of a standing Buddha is only seven inches high. It may have once been part of a private altar, surrounded by a lacquered or gold and silver shrine, and used in worship by a royal or aristocratic devotee. Scholars have suggested that portable images such as this piece were important in the spread of Buddhist teachings and regional artistic styles. The delicate details and graceful proportions exemplify the refined taste and exquisite craftsmanship of **artisans** working during the years of the Unified Silla dynasty (668–935), a high point in the production of Buddhist sculpture in Korea.

The sculpture was originally cast in bronze and then plated with a thin layer of gold, much of which has worn away. The figure has elongated, partially closed eyes, gently arched eyebrows, and a faint smile. The bump on his head, which accommodates superior wisdom, and his elongated ears, which reflect compassion and a desire to hear the sounds of the world, identify this figure as a Buddha. His right hand is raised with the palm facing outward, his thumb and middle finger drawn together in a gesture of teaching and serenity. His left hand is close to the body, the palm facing upward in a gesture of giving.

Buddha images are often seen wearing robes of a monk; in this case, he is shown in a two-layered, ankle-length garment that encircles the body, drapes over the left shoulder, and is left open at the chest. The modest dress reminds the devotee that the Buddha renounced all worldly pleasures and riches to live a simple, secluded life.

Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louis E. Stern Collection, 1963-181-210