

5. HALBERD

Kien An district, Hai Phong City, 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.
Bronze, H: 15 cm × L: 30 cm
National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSb1408

The halberd, a weapon based on a spear, combines the merits of both a spear and an axe. The Chinese developed a halberd during the Shang period (c. 1600–c. 1050 B.C.), though the Vietnamese halberd is of a different form. The weapon was used for hook-cutting, pecking, or piercing one's opponent. This example was collected on the elephant mound in Hai Phong City in the early twentieth century. Blades of similar shape have also been recovered in excavations in southern Viet Nam (see cat. no. 22). The curved blade continues to the section of the weapon to which a pole would have been strapped, then extends up to the pierced rectangular piece that sticks out from the blade's back. A fabulous ithyphallic crocodilian decorates the two sides of this halberd; if read with the bottom of the handle as the top, the crocodilian doubles as a tall, thin standing creature

with a feathered headdress, the characteristic type of figure found on the drums of the Dong Son period (see cat. no. 3). The figure, like the spotted dog that trots before two lines of dots on the upper blade, appears to have been stamped into the mold before casting. Like the dots that give texture to the crocodilian, raised specks adorn the dog.

LITERATURE

Miriam Lambrecht and Christian Schicklgruber, eds., *Vietnam: Art et cultures de la préhistoire à nos jours*, 2003; Magdalene von Dewall, "Decorative Concepts and Stylistic Principles in the Bronze Art of Tien," 1972.