

### 7. BELL

Ninh Binh Province, 5th century B.C.–2nd century A.D.

Bronze, H: 25 cm × W: 16.3 cm

National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSb 1844

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Collected by d'Argence, who was in Ha Noi prior to 1959.

Bronzes were produced in Viet Nam from the second millennium B.C., with the quantity and types of bronzes increasing from the mid-first millennium B.C. Only a small number of iron objects have been found in burials of the Dong Son culture. The bronzes consisted of weaponry and ritual utensils, such as drums, ornament, urns, and gongs; most have been found in graves, suggesting a belief in the after-life. The decoration of the larger objects includes motifs generally referred to as dongsonian motifs, which include geometric motifs—triangles, spirals, hatched lines—as well as anthropomorphic figures with elaborate feathered headdresses. Some objects, such as this bell, are devoid of decoration.

Excavated prior to 1959,<sup>7</sup> this bell, like many Dong Son artifacts, was collected from local peoples; the museum records

do not say from what locale. These bells are often referred to as elephant bells, since they are about the same size as elephant bells used on those beasts into the twentieth century. The lack of decoration on this example is balanced by the elegant curve of the two pieces that rise up above the body of the bell.