



Socketed axe head

On display**Title/Description:** Socketed axe head**Object Type:** axe**Materials:** Bronze**Measurements:** h. 140 mm**Accession Number:** 1034**Historic Period:** Late centuries BC-early centuries AD**Production Place:** Java

This is a fine, highly decorated example of a type of socketed bronze axe found mainly in Java and Sulawesi. It belongs to Glover and Syme's (1993) type 3, which, when found without surface decoration, is the most common and widely distributed of all the prehistoric axes in Southeast Asia. However, this specimen, as are many examples from Java and Sulawesi (in contrast to those found on the Southeast Asian mainland), is facially asymmetrical and decorated in low relief with a series of stylised 'rice-grain motifs, hatched triangles, linked spirals and flower petal designs. Some of these motifs are found on later Javanese bronze drums of the Pejeng type, and appear on another axe from Pekalongan Residency (van der Hoop, 1941: cat. 1503, fig- 51, K). The fine low relief decoration in particular suggests that this specimen may have been made by lost-wax casting and that a ternary alloy quite high in lead may have been used.

This axe has a small hole for a peg to fasten it to a wooden haft, which is unusual for Javanese axes but is commonly found on the Dong Son axes of northern Vietnam, although more often in the centre of the blade. However, this axe was reportedly found in Java and its form and decoration are more Indonesian than Vietnamese. For a discussion of the function and casting technology of Bronze Age 'axes', object 756.

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection* 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).
