



Shield

Date

early 20th century

Medium

Wood, paint, rattan, leather, cloth, metal and fiber

Description

This shield likely comes from the Jimi Valley area in the Jiwaka Province (previously part of the Western Highlands Province) of Papua New Guinea. Its black and white design, rectangular shape, and the rattan binding at the top are typical of this area. Until very recently war was woven into the fabric of every day life in New Guinea. Every man had his war shield ready for battle. Carefully carved and painted with important objects etched into the wood surface, the designs represented important objects connected to the warrior's ancestors, features from the landscape, and from the bird, animal and human worlds. The design declared the status of the carrier, his strength

as a warrior, and his connection to the spiritual world. Shields were named by the warrior and possessed a spirit that connected them to their ancestors - a spirit that would insure success in battle. When warfare was expected, the men would repaint their shields hoping that the colors shone brightly to dazzle and threaten their enemy. Once in close range to the enemy during battle the shield protected him physically from attack from slingshots, spears, arrows and clubs. In addition the shield symbolically protected him from harm by the power of his connection to his ancestors.

Dimensions

65 3/4 × 23 7/8 × 4 in. (167 × 60.6 × 10.2 cm)