



Shield

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Zande

Medium

Rattan and wood

Description

This is a shield made by the Zande peoples from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan sometime in the 20th Century. Warriors' basketry shields were personal belongings of the utmost importance that offered protection and embodied prestige. Even after the introduction of firearms, these shields continued to play a vital part in combat. As a weapon the shield is designed for optimal function. Built from an oval wood frame it is woven with split rattan cane strong enough to divert oncoming weapons and at the same time light enough to carry for long distances. Its size allows protection for an entire crouching body. The slight convex shape of the shield is pleasing to the eye and is created by a concave grip board attached to the reverse side. The geometric

patterning on Zande shields served as unique personal identifications. The use of contrasting black and yellow cane was essential for clearly identifying the warrior who held it. A symbol of pride and dignity, a warrior took great care in maintaining the quality of his shield. A small puncture above the central design element in this particular shield gives evidence of it being used in battle.

Dimensions

47 3/4 × 23 × 3 3/8 in. (121.3 × 58.4 × 8.6 cm)