



## Shield

### Date

mid to late 20th Century

### Primary Maker

Asmat

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

This carved shield was collected from the Asmat people in the Papua Province (Irian Jaya) of Indonesia, and dates from the mid to late 20th Century. The Asmat are well known for their elaborate war shields; each shield carved from a single piece of mangrove root and named after an ancestor important to the owner. It is believed that shields channel the power of one's ancestors to give them strength and protect them in combat. The shield presented here is oval in shape and features white, black, and red-orange pigmentation. Researchers argue that the top portion of 20th century Asmat shields depict an abstract representation of the ancestral figure the shield is named after. The top portion of this particular shield displays openwork carvings of two figures with linked hands. The rest of the shield features mirrored motifs of

the bipane symbol—a double-curved shell nose ornament. The bipane is considered an important head-hunting symbol among the Asmat.

### Dimensions

98 1/2 × 22 × 1 1/4 in. (250.2 × 55.9 × 3.2 cm)