



## Shield

### Date

20th Century

### Primary Maker

Asmat

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

Central Asmat shields such as this tend to be rectangular in shape with rounded edges. The shield itself is cut from a solid piece of mangrove root, including the handle. The cylindrical protrusion at the top was called tsjemen which means penis, though sometimes it takes the form of a man. Among almost all Asmat shields, designs are incised and colored in red and white pigments sometimes with black bands. One of the most common motifs is the flying fox. We see here that a stylized version of this motif makes up the shield's central design. Asmat shields also

served as more than physical protection in combat. They were named for ancestors and via their strength gave the bearer additional power and courage.

### Dimensions

63 5/8 × 21 1/2 × 2 1/4 in. (161.6 × 54.6 × 5.7 cm)