

Basic Detail Report



Shield

Date

late 19th to early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Oromo

Medium

Leather

Description

This shield was probably made by the Oromo people of southern Ethiopia sometime in the 20th Century. Due to trade, the many cultural groups of southern Ethiopia interchangeably use very similar styles of shields. Most shields of this type have most often been attributed to the Arsi-Oromo. To make these shields craftsmen called chawa in Oromo cut hippopotamus or rhinoceros hide to shape, place it on a concave receptacle, oil it as it is pounded and stretched into its unique shape, and dry it. A thick leather handle was rolled and secured to the back. Interestingly the shape of this shield seems to be at least partly inspired by the shields of the Amhara of northern Ethiopia. Without their beautifully ornate bronze, silver, and gold metalwork, their shields appear much as this example does. Other examples of Oromo shields also feature the pecking seen across the face of this shield.

Dimensions

26 3/4 × 26 1/2 × 5 3/4 in. (67.9 × 67.3 × 14.6 cm)