



Shield

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Dinka

Medium

Wood and leather

Description

The pole shield was likely the earliest form of shield, with later iterations broadening their defensive coverage. Rather than using full-size wooden shields for internal conflicts the Dinka of Southern Sudan relied on these parrying shields which could effectively deflect blows from Dinka lances and fighting clubs. Full-sized shields were used as a means of defense when battling other cultural groups. Circular attachment to pole shields were made of either leather or turtle shells. The presence of such an attachment along with the excellent condition of the

shield indicate that it was never used for combat, but instead had a ceremonial or exchange function. At least one other type of Dinka parrying shield—a bow shaped pole which has come to be called a staff—also transitioned from usage in combat to usage in ceremony.

Dimensions

53 1/4 × 8 3/8 × 2 7/8 in. (135.3 × 21.3 × 7.3 cm)