

Basic Detail Report



Shield

Date
late 19th to early 20th Century

Primary Maker
Oromo

Medium
Leather

Description

This shield was made by the Oromo people of southern Ethiopia sometime in the 20th Century. To make these shields craftsmen—called chawa in Oromo—cut hippopotamus 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. Other examples of Oromo shields also feature the concentric rings seen across the face of this shield as well as the knob. There were always ties between the Oromo and Arab people and some of the Oromo’s more intricate shields appear to come from Oman via trade. The knob seen at the center of this shield could be a synthesis of African and Middle Eastern shield styles.

Dimensions

21 × 18 1/2 × 8 1/4 in. (53.3 × 47 × 21 cm)