

Basic Detail Report



Shield

Date
late 19th to early 20th Century

Primary Maker
Oromo

Medium
Leather and pigment

Description

Due to trade, the many cultural groups of southern Ethiopia interchangeably use very similar styles of shields. Shields of this type have most often been attributed to the Arsi-Oromo. To make these shields craftsmen called chawa in Oromo cut hippopotamus hide to shape, place it on a wooden mold, oil it as it is pounded and stretched into its unique shape, and dry it. A thick leather handle was rolled and apparently wrapped in more leather and secured to the back. This shield sets itself apart from other examples due to its unique shape and lingering red pigmentation. The form of this shield could be explained by how much older it is than other examples or that it was inspired by either the Amhara to the north or Omanis, who traded heavily in eastern Africa.

Dimensions

15 1/4 × 14 3/4 × 5 1/4 in. (38.7 × 37.5 × 13.3 cm)