



unadorned.

Dimensions

21 7/8 × 5 × 5 in. (55.6 × 12.7 × 12.7 cm)

Drum (Arpa)

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Elema

Medium

Wood

Description

This is a wooden ritual drum from the Papuan Gulf, most likely made by the Elema culture. Similar in form to the hourglass-shaped drums found throughout Papua New Guinea were it not for the distinctive “fish mouth” or “crocodile mouth” aperture at its base, these drums are used in rituals, festivals and war. Following someone’s death a relative or friend would tap their fingers across the drum one final time to signal the beginning of a period of mourning during which drums could not be played. While many examples of these drums do have designs on their mouths accentuated by a white lime pigment, many more—such as this example—are almost entirely