

Drums

The drums are the most enduring Asmat artifacts; a more resistant wood is used, often ironwood, though the latter is not much appreciated because of the weight.

The carving of a drum requires many months of work, as the wood needs to be aged through a long and delicate process, which is particularly difficult in a climate as hot and humid as the rainforest. The wood can easily crack. The drum has the shape of an hourglass, with elaborate etchings and headhunting symbols.

The process involves an accurate selection of the tree trunk. Embers are placed on top of the block of wood, so as to burn the inner part slowly. The pit is carved out with a pointed instrument and a membrane, lizard or snake skin, is stretched over the cavity and fastened to the wood with a glue mixed with lime and human blood. The master carver often uses his own blood, making small cuts on his calf.

These single-membrane drums are tuned using the heat of the fire and the process is finely perfected with small globs of beeswax placed on the skin. The drum rests on the legs of the player and is held by the handle carved in the wood.

The drums of the coastal and central part of the region (area A) are taller than those of the northwest (area B), while the Citak and Brazza shield are rarely decorated.



Tamburo

Tamburo dai disegni con tratti semplici e decisi, colorati con argilla rossa e delineati in nero

Il manico non è scolpito.

90 x 23 cm; legno di mangrovia, argilla, caolino e polvere di carbone
Cod.1107-168

Drum

The tube of this drum is completely engraved with simple and bold designs, which are filled with red clay and bordered in black.

The handle is small and plain.

90 x 23 cm; softwood, clay, kaolin and soot
Cod.1107-168



Tamburo

Tamburo con vigorose incisioni in bassorilievo, di colore bruno, e manico scolpito con figure antropomorfe, mantidi religiose e becchi d'uccello. Questo pezzo conserva intatta l'originaria membrana di pelle.

85 x 23 cm; legno tenero, pigmenti naturali, pelle di lucertola, rafia, cera d'api
Cod.0020-169

Drum

This drum is entirely relief-carved with lively designs coloured with a natural brown pigment: The central circumferential band cut out at the waist is bordered by an arrow-shaped motif. The handle is an openwork carved with images of anthropomorphous figures, praying mantis and bird beaks. It retains its original drum skin secured with rattan and beeswax.

85 x 23 cm; softwood, natural colours, lizard skin, rattan, beeswax
Cod.0020-169



Tamburo

Tamburo di legno rosso, con corpo asimmetrico. Un bordo inciso delinea la parte superiore e il manico è costituito da una serie di esse poste in verticale. Sui due bordi sono ritratte specularmente decorazioni con il motivo *bipane*.

Il tamburo è stato restaurato in loco con cera e frammenti di legno.

57x 21 cm; legno rosso-bruno, pigmenti naturali
Cod.0095-56

Drum

This redwood drum has a very irregular shaped tube. The circular wide band cut out at the waist is not engraved and is matched by the bottom band. A scallop shaped border at the top encloses a design of mirrored *bipane*, repeated also in the bottom section. The handle consists of a circular grip with an openwork carving.

The original drum skin is missing. The drum is cracked at the top and has been repaired with bits of wood and melted dammar.

57x 21 cm; redwood, natural pigments
Cod.0095-56



Tamburo

Tamburo con bella patina scura naturale e ricco di simbologia. Il manico, composto da cinque segmenti, è inciso con le figure classiche della mitologia Asmat, zampe di cuscus, serpenti e piccoli animali antropomorfi.

*125 x 30 cm; legno, resine e pigmenti naturali ,
caolino
Cod.0154-208*

Drum

The drum has an excellent natural brown patina and is decorated with finely carved relief motifs. The handle, with a square grip, is carved with symbols of the classic Asmat mythology, cuscus feet, snakes and anthropomorphous animals.

*125 x 30 cm; hardwood, resins and natural
pigments, kaolin
Cod.0154-208*



Tamburo

Tamburo dal corpo semplice e irregolare. Il manico si estende con una piccola costola nella parte inferiore, mentre assume una dimensione importante sulla parte superiore scolpita. Nastri di rafia, conchiglie e semi sono intrecciati sul corpo del tamburo.

138 x 26 cm; legno, rafia, pigmenti naturali, semi, conchiglie
Cod.0157-209

Drum

The tube of the drum has a simple and irregular shape. The handle extends downwards with a narrow ridge and upwards with a larger carved openwork. It has tassels made of sago leaf, seeds and shells.

138 x 26 cm; wood, sago leaf, natural pigments, seeds and shells
Cod.0157-209



Tamburo

Tamburo stretto ed affusolato, coperto da una composizione geometrica di bassorilievi tinti in rosso e bianco.

Il manico ha due costole che seguono il tamburo in tutta la sua altezza, scolpite con una complessa scena di caccia tra l'uomo e il coccodrillo, insieme ad altri simboli totemici.

*151 x 21 cm; legno, argilla, caolino e resina
Cod.0159-210*

Drum

An extremely narrow and tall drum, covered by a richly relief incised geometric composition. The inlaid designs are coloured in white and red, leaving the central band natural and plain.

The handle has a small grip and a series of totemic animals and human figures are carved above and below it.

*151 x 21 cm; wood, clay, kaolin and resin
Cod.0159-210*



Tamburo

Tamburo dalla forma lineare con incisioni in rosso e bianco, molto sfumate. Il manico è scolpito con figure di mantide stilizzata.

158 x 32 cm; legno rosso-bruno, pigmenti naturali

Cod.0164-212

Drum

An elegant and simple drum, decorated with relief-carved allegoric designs. A wide plain indentation forms the central band, in line with the square grip of the handle, with an openwork carving of the praying mantis above and below.

The drum retains traces of kaolin and red clay.

158 x 32 cm; redwood, kaolin, red clay

Cod.0164-212



Tamburo

Tamburo lineare con manico che riproduce in forma simmetrica e rovesciata l'animale totemico volpe volante.

108 x 25 cm; legno, pigmenti naturali
Cod.1065-213

Drum

This drum has very deeply etched designs. The handle is marked by two circumferential bands with incised motifs, to match the top and bottom borders. The handle has mirrored symbols of the flying fox above and below the grip.

108 x 25 cm; wood, natural pigments, traces of kaolin and red clay
Cod.1065-213



Tamburo

I tamburi della zona del fiume Brazza sono raramente decorati. Il corpo di questo tamburo ha un disegno accennato di losanghe, il manico scolpito a traforo con un motivo di lineare semplicità.

120 x 20 cm; legno bruno, patina naturale, pigmenti
Cod.0349-34

Drum

The drums of the Brazza River are rarely decorated. This one has very simple lozenges engraved on the tube and the handle with a firm grip is carved with S-shaped designs and cuscus feet.

120 x 20 cm; hardwood, natural patina, pigments
Cod.0349-34



Tamburo

Tamburo la cui tridimensionalità si discosta dalla tradizione, pur mantenendo intatto l'aspetto figurativo. Le due figure hanno braccia che si estendono come rami a contenere la cassa del tamburo.

Gli arti sono delineati da una striscia bianca molto decisa di caolino.

75,5 x 30 cm; legno rosso-bruno, caolino, pigmenti naturali
Cod.0423-146

Drum

This tridimensional drum has an innovative making, but maintains the figurative composition of the past. The arms and legs of the two human figures embrace the tube like the branches of a tree in the forest. The curves are highlighted by white kaolin.

75,5 x 30 cm; redwood, kaolin natural pigments
Cod.0423-146



Tamburo

Tamburo dal fusto affusolato, interamente ricoperto di incisioni. Il manico è scolpito in tutta la sua lunghezza con figure umane, lucertole e figure ad esse.

*159 x 28 cm; legno scuro, pigmenti naturali
Cod.0162-211*

Drum

This drum has a long and narrow tube, entirely carved in bas relief. The handle is composed of a complex arrangement of human figures, lizards and s-shaped motifs.

*159 x 28 cm; hardwood, natural pigments
Cod.0162-211*