

Basic Detail Report



Bowl

Date

early 20th Century

Medium

Wood

Description

This ceremonial feast bowl would have been used at community gatherings such as the passing of an elder.

The large size, along with the double-headed crocodile and carved spirit face designs, would have indicated the high status and wealth of the owner to the other attendees at such events. The Huon Gulf area is known for having a distinctive style of wood carving, often referred to as the Tami style. This does not suggest that wood carvings were only made on the Tami Islands, but also encompasses the styles of other surrounding islands in the area. Oval-shaped wooden bowls with pointed edges are some of the most recognizable types of carved wooden objects from the area. Large bowls were typically classified as being approximately 110 centimeters long and are referred to as on tina in the Siassi Islands. As the Huon Gulf area is part of a vast trade network, these on tina wooden bowls served as an important trade item that supplemented the income of local carvers. As such, most of these bowls were used for trade and not ceremonial purposes; however they are sometimes used as food preparation vessels for large community feasts or gatherings. Feast bowls such as this example could be classified by other names, depending on if their designs represented powerful mythical creatures or beings or family specific clan figures. Wooden bowls are also used as bride price along with various other significant items such as clay pots, shell money and modern currency. Feasts are the premiere social gatherings in New Guinea. These village-wide or multi-village events can mark the end of a battle, the passing of an elder, or the celebration of a marriage. The day of the feast the host provides as many pigs as he can afford to ensure his social status for years to come. The pigs are ritually killed and then roasted in a rock pit for hours. Eventually they are served along with other Oceanic staples like taro and sago. As the gathered crowd awaits the food, elaborate dances are performed to further demonstrate the organizer's wealth and power.

Dimensions

8 × 17 × 37 in. (20.3 × 43.2 × 94 cm)