



Chest Ornament

Date

19th to early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Mendi

Medium

Shell and fiber

Description

This ornament, also known as a pakol, would be worn by a Mendi man as part of his ceremonial attire. Pakol are considered to be the most important adornment items for the Mendi and the neighboring Enga peoples. The shell used to create this ornament is known as the bailer shell. The Mendi reside within the highlands of Papua New Guinea, and thus this shell traveled many miles from the coast via trade networks. While it is common to find pakol decorated with geometric designs, it is very rare to find examples decorated with abstract figures. Such designs are specifically used in the Mendi Valley. These designs

were made by striking the shell in the desired pattern with a sharp stone.

Dimensions

21 × 8 × 3 1/2 in. (53.3 × 20.3 × 8.9 cm)