



Eating Bowl (Khomongu)

Date
19th to 20th Century

Primary Maker
Yangoru Boiken

Medium
Clay and pigments

Description

Eating vessels known as khomongu to the Boiken of Papua New Guinea were an essential part of every day and ceremonial life in a village. Pottery was made mostly for local consumption and was not traded widely since every neighboring community had their own respective industries. While khomongu were owned individually by men and women, the process of crafting and designing was solely done by men. Depending on how ornately decorated a khomongu was crafted, in turn determined the purpose that vessel would serve; a more elaborately designed piece meant it would not be used domestically and instead, more so for ritualistic activities. The majority of khomongu designs originate from the flora and fauna of the surrounding environment. Additionally, the repetition of concentric circles and simplified faces is another commonly depicted motif. These designs represent the face of a masalai, a supernatural being which inhabits waterholes, trees and the bush. Each patrilineal clan has its own malasai and consequently, these clans have their own khomongu designs to represent their spirit's face.

Dimensions

11 1/8 × 15 1/2 × 16 3/4 in. (28.3 × 39.4 × 42.5 cm)