



Eating Bowl (Khomongu)

Date
19th to 20th Century

Primary Maker
Kubalia Boiken

Medium
Ceramic

Description

Eating vessels known as khomongu to the Boiken people 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 each neighboring community had their own potters. While khomongu were owned individually by men and women, the process of crafting and designing was solely done by men. The complexity and density of design with which a khomongu was crafted determined the purpose the vessel would serve. A more elaborately designed piece would likely be used for ceremonial activities rather than in everyday domestic use. The majority of khomongu designs originate from the flora and fauna of the surrounding environment. Additionally, the repetition of concentric circles and abstracted 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 its own distinct khomongu designs to represent their spirit’s face.

Dimensions

9 × 10 × 9 3/8 in. (22.9 × 25.4 × 23.8 cm)