



Headrest (Kali Laloni)

Date
20th Century

Medium
Wood and sennit cord

Description
This wooden headrest was made with three parts bound with sennit cord using a canoe builders’ technique. While

historic documents discuss headrests serving to preserve the elaborate hairdos of Fijian men while at rest—the head and one’s hair being the most sacred part of the body—due to the similar use of headrests in cultures which wear their hair short, like the Tongans from which the headrest was imported, it is as likely that the primary function of the headrest was not to protect the hair, but rather to elevate the head. In addition to other beneficial factors this improved on the airflow one received when they slept. Either way, in Fiji these tend to be presented to men by their brides to show their ability to create a successful household. There are several distinct headrest designs from the simple and elegant kali that were more commonly used, to more elaborate and rare examples inlaid with whale tooth or mother-of-pearl shell and carved with creative variations that stray from traditional design. The kali laloni is very specific in its design: two arched legs terminating in square feet are attached to the bench by sennit cord. The tops of the legs are skillfully attached to the bench so the cord is visible only from the underside. This type of headrest was reserved for those of chiefly status or for the deceased.

Dimensions
5 3/4 × 4 7/8 × 17 1/4 in. (14.6 × 12.4 × 43.8 cm)