



Headrest

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Turkana

Medium

Wood and leather

Description

Saddle-shaped wooden headrests are made throughout the border region between Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. This example was most likely made by the Turkana of northwest Kenya. For the Turkana, headrests are as much indicators of status as they are a way to keep one’s head off the ground and protect their coiffure as they sleep. Turkana headrests are kept close-by at all times. They are either in-use, being maintained, or worn around the waist by way of their leather, metal, or more rarely fiber strap. It is said that Turkana men will travel hundreds of miles to secure a headrest crafted by the finest of craftsmen.

Dimensions

6 1/2 × 6 × 3 1/8 in. (16.5 × 15.2 × 7.9 cm)