

Basic Detail Report



Headrest

Date

20th Century

Medium

Wood

Description

This painted black wooden headrest from the Somali people of Somolia, Ethiopia, and Kenya were used by both

men and women alike to keep the user safe from snakes and scorpions while sleeping. Generally, the headrests of men rest on more precarious bases to ensure that herders do not fall into deep sleep and lose track of their cattle. The wide seat of this headrest indicates that it was intended for use by a woman. As with other African cultures, headrests play a greater cultural role than just their utilitarian function in sleep. On their wedding night money for necklaces indicating a woman's married status are left under their headrests while they sleep by their future husbands. It has been suggested that the braided patterns along the base of the headrest indicate Islamic influence.

Dimensions

7 1/2 × 12 7/8 × 4 5/8 in. (19.1 × 32.7 × 11.7 cm)