



Headrest

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Arsi Oromo

Medium
Wood

Description

Rather than being imbued with rich spiritual importance, the headrests of many eastern African countries were instead utilitarian. This wooden headrest of the Arsi subgroup of the Oromo of Ethiopia was used to elevate one’s head when sleeping, thus protecting one’s hairstyle which was a symbol of status. Though little art from north eastern Africa is figurative due to Islamic influence, this headrest may be the stylization of a butterfly or bird.

Dimensions

6 1/2 × 7 1/4 × 2 3/8 in. (16.5 × 18.4 × 6 cm)