

Basic Detail Report



Headrest

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Sidama

Medium
Wood

Description

Rather than being imbued with rich spiritual importance, the headrests of many eastern African countries were instead utilitarian. The block-shaped wooden headrests of the Sidama of Ethiopia were used to elevate one’s head when sleeping, thus protecting one’s hairstyle which was a symbol of status. This type of headrest was generally, though not exclusively, used by women. A rich, dark patina on the headrest’s platform will often evidence this, the result of natural hair products used by Sidama women. The shape of these headrests can vary from rectangular to inverted conical section and sometimes incised geometric carvings will decorate the sides of the headrest’s body. Interestingly, a number of Ethiopian headrest designs share similarities with headrests made by Egyptians up to 4500 years ago.

Dimensions

6 7/8 × 7 1/8 × 3 1/4 in. (17.5 × 18.1 × 8.3 cm)