



Headrest

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Dinka

Medium
Wood, leather and metal

Description

This is a wooden headrest made by the Dinka culture of South Sudan in the 20th Century. Headrests produced by the Dinka often depicted either figurative or highly abstracted representations of cattle, which were essential to the Dinka way of life. Rather than having a spiritual function, the role of these headrests was twofold: first was the utilitarian function of keeping one’s head off the ground while sleeping and protecting one’s coiffure which was a status symbol; the other is that the headrests were themselves status symbols. Amongst the Dinka, tribal elders also used headrests as stools as it was considered poor form to sit on the floor. This headrest is particularly interesting for having four legs rather than the standard three.

Dimensions

10 × 22 × 6 in. (25.4 × 55.9 × 15.2 cm)