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Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

EFFIGIES TO FRIGHTEN AWAY SPIRITS OF DISEASE

NICOBAR ISLANDS

The life of the Nicobarese is largely filled with efforts to scare and control the spirits believed to cause illness and all harm.

A prominent object in many homes is the *kareau*, a carved human figure in a threatening attitude. In times of sickness, the *menluana* (doctor-priest) has one of these figures made to discover and frighten away the spirits responsible. If the patient recovers, the image is regarded with favour and kept for future services; if he dies, it is thrown into the jungle. Carvings are also made of ladders, canoes and ships, for the *menluana*'s spirit to climb or sail and seek the disease-causing spirit in the air or among neighbouring villages or islands.