



## Ancestor Board (Gope)

### Date

c. 1915

### Primary Maker

Kerewa

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

Gope boards are sculptures that depict ancestors and embody their spirits, or imunu. The carving on these sculptures is quite graphic in appearance. These carvings almost always depict a stylized human form, but also sometimes include area and family-specific imagery such as animals and other natural forms. Generally, these boards were hung in men's houses throughout the gulf as a way to recognize and appreciate ancestors. In addition, the boards offered protection to living family members. The gope boards from the Goaribari Island area are more elusive in their purpose as they were rarely photographed in situ, and scholars writing about the Kerewa peoples tended to focus on their headhunting and military practices rather than their men's houses and rituals. Scholars believe that in addition to other uses, gope boards from this area were held in one's hands during specific ritual dances.

### Dimensions

54 1/2 × 8 1/4 × 1/2 in. (138.4 × 21 × 1.3 cm)