

Stick Image (Akua Ka'ai)

Academy Purchase (1962)

H. 25"

# [redacted]

351.1

HAWAII

Early 19th C.

Gallery 27

Subject: A wooden stick figure with a pointed prop known as an Akua ka'ai image. The term "ka'ai" may refer to the malo or other clothing that was always ritually applied for it means to bind or tie. However, many of these figures have notches or other ring-like patterns on the shaft. It has been suggested that this tradition of notching the support is the key to the term "akua ka'ai." The distinguishing characteristic of the ka'ai images is their relatively small size; figures (not including the shafts) are usually between 3 and 24 inches. They are not free-standing for the feet are usually continuous with the shaft. The portable akua ka'ai images functioned primarily on a personal and private level which reflected the religious values ritualized in the temple cult. The chief's ka'ai image was carried into battle by a color-bearer known as a Kahu. The image was bound to the body of the kahu by the ka'ai or sash. Other accounts link akua ka'ai figures with rites associated with fertility and childbirth. This image is a relatively large ka'ai image found in a cave in Waimea Valley on Oahu, wrapped in tapa at the side of a skeleton.


Medium and Technique: The akua ka'ai were carved from wood by individuals rather than designated artists. They were adzed down to shape then smoothed, first with rough lava and coral, then with finer coral, then with shark skin or the skin of a stingray. Finally, the figure was polished by sand or earth on a pad of tapa or leaves and rubbed with kukui nut oil.

Style: The notches or ring-like pattern which appear on the shaft of most akua ka'ai images indicate that these figures may have stylistic antecedents in Southern Polynesia. Thus, they and the slab-type temple images may be the forerunners and models for the sculptural style of monumental temple images. The emphasis on 3-dimensional form, the flexed knees, arms separated from the body and protruding mouth and chin area are all stylistic characteristics of Hawaiian sculpture. The faceting of surface planes is also typical of much Hawaiian sculpture and seems to have developed as a stylization of form rather than as a means of producing form.

Instructional Aids: Compare this image with the ancestress figure from New Guinea, the seated Mayan figure and the kneeling Yoruba figure in terms of style and how they express primitive man's first concerns.

1. Discuss the function of the post. 2. Compare the figure with the other stick image in the Hawaiian section (in adjoining case).

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	<p><b>STICK IMAGE ('aumakua (?))</b>  <b>Maker:</b> Hawaii, Oahu, Waimea Valley - wood, tapa belt  <b>Description:</b> <u>WOOD IDOL</u> or Household God or Bird God</p> <p>Unknown wood, rough cut; blackish tone at top, brown below. Nude male figure standing on <math>7\frac{3}{4}</math>" high post. Post is octagonal, with serrated edges, tapering to plain point. Figure stands erect, with arms hanging. Very long neck topped by conventionalized head having nose and forehead in one plane; oblique, protruding (spirit) eyes; long jaw with pursed lips. Notched crest runs from center of hair line to crown. Flanges suggesting ears project from temples. Brown tapa belt. (Set into natural teak stand <math>7\frac{1}{4}</math>" high)</p> <p><b>Period:</b>  <b>Signature or Mark:</b></p> <p><b>Measurements:</b> figure with post: <math>32\frac{1}{2}</math>"</p> <p><b>Gift of:</b></p> <p><b>Bought from:</b> Mr. Keith K. Jones, 369 Kalaheo Drive, Kailua, Oahu.</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Prim. Art</p> <p><b>Date:</b> November, 1945  <b>Price:</b> [REDACTED]</p>
<p><b>COUNTRY:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hawaii</p> <p><b>OBJECT:</b> Wood Idol</p> <p><b>NO.:</b> 351.1</p> <p><i>1979 Post Box, P.O. Station - Camp. 23 (7/90)</i></p>	

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p. 9

Hawaii Wood Idol 351.1  
COUNTRY OBJECT NO.

HISTORY: (COLL.) Found by a Hawaiian, ca. '36, wrapped in tapa, in cave at Waimea, Oahu. Sold to K.K. Jones for [redacted]

LABEL:

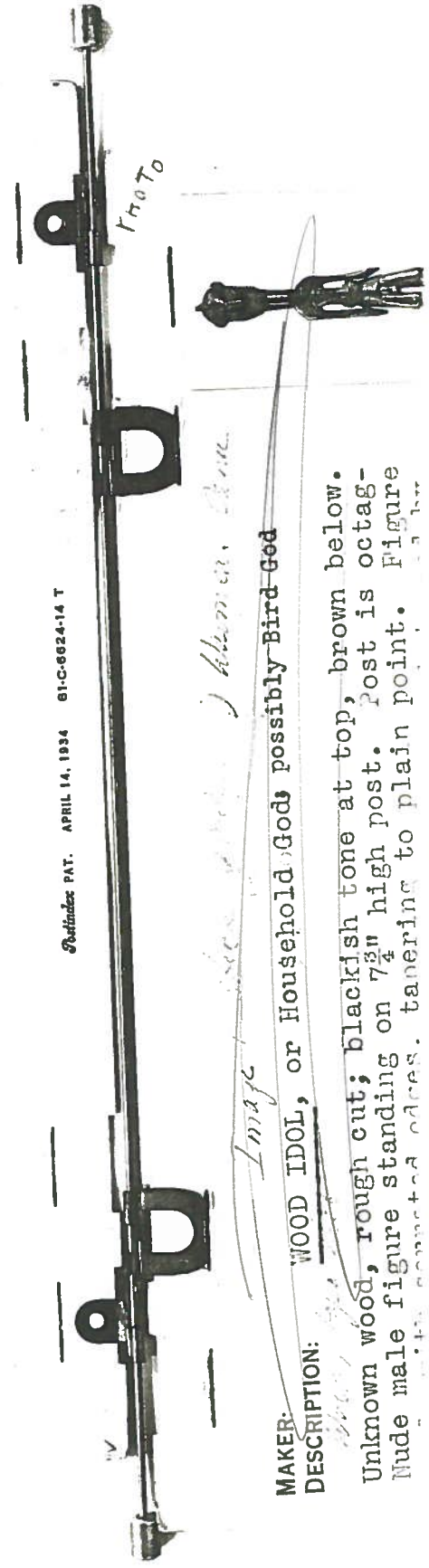
CONDITION: Vertical cracks: R. forehead through eye; also, waist through abdomen. Gouge in R. jaw. Belt: fragile.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lower part of face, neck, like African head: Album of Primitive Sculpture, Pl.#1.

PUBLISHED: HAA News Bull. & Cal. Vol.VII, No.9, Dec.1945 - reproduced p.2; article p.1&2. See Historic Hawai'i, July-August 1991, "Mana and Ritual", p. 14.

OPINIONS: Dr. Paula Rudall of Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew states tentatively Psychotria (coffee family) 11/86 that the wood used is of the Family Rubiaceae,

REMARKS: Luquiens: When tabu was broken by King Liholiho in 1819, wood idols were burned, or hid by the faithful in secret caves. (Also filed under Wood Carving, Hawaii)



Photodisc PAT. APRIL 14, 1934 61-C-6624-14 T

MAKER: Image (possibly Household God)

DESCRIPTION: WOOD IDOL, or Household God, possibly Bird-God. Unknown wood, rough cut; blackish tone at top, brown below. Nude male figure standing on 7/8" high post. Post is octagonal with beveled edges, tapering to plain point. Figure

REMARKS: Luquiens: When tabu was broken by King Liholiho in 1819, wood idols were burned, or hid by the faithful in secret caves. (Also filed under Wood Carving, Hawaii)

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Patent Index PAT. APRIL 14, 1934 81-C-6624-14 T



PHOTO

*Image (Specimen) of Hawaiian. Stone*

MAKER: WOOD IDOL, or Household Gods possibly Bird God

Unknown wood, rough cut; blackish tone at top, brown below. Nude male figure standing on  $7\frac{1}{4}$ " high post. Post is octagonal, with serrated edges, tapering to plain point. Figure stands erect, with arms hanging. Very long neck topped by conventionalized head having nose and forehead in one plane, oblique, protruding (spirit) eyes; long jaw with pursed lips. Notched crest runs from center of hair line to crown. Flanges suggesting ears project from temples. Brown tapa belt. (Set into natural teak stand  $7\frac{1}{4}$ " high)

PERIOD: Before 1819 (?)

SIGNATURE OR MARK: none

MEASUREMENTS: Total H.  $52\frac{1}{2}$ " (figure & post only)

GIFT OF:

BOUGHT FROM: Ir. Keith Jones, Honolulu

LOCATION: Prim. Art. Dept. U.S. Nat. Mus. (copy)

*Coll. 25 - 7/90*

DATE: November, 1945

PRICE: [REDACTED]

*(C. 1935) photo*

COUNTRY: Hawaii OBJECT: Wood Idol NO. 351.1



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351.1

Hawaii Wood Idol  
COUNTRY OBJECT

551.1  
NO.

HISTORY: (COLL.) Found by a Hawaiian, 1935, wrapped in tapa, in cave at Waimea, Oahu. Sold to Keith Jones for [redacted]

Found by Mr. BERTLEMAN

LABEL:

Painted with fish scales, eye 6-24, 1967.

CONDITION: Vertical cracks: R. forehead through eye, also, waist through abdomen. Gouge in R. jaw. Belt: fragile.

EXHIBITION: ~~Met. Museum, New York, 1935~~ (See [redacted])

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lower part of face, neck, like African head, Album of Primitive Sculpture, Pl. #1.

PUBLISHED: H.A.A. News Bulletin & Calendar, Vol VII, No. 9, Dec. 1945: Lead article; photo, p. 2.

Illust. Catalogue - THE SCULPTURE OF POLYNESIA, by Allen Wardwell, exhibition at Chicago Art Institute, Nov. 17-1967-Dec. 31, 1967; Museum Primitive Art, N.Y. 2/14-5/14/68

OPINIONS: A carved wooden statue of the akua ká'ai religious class stands near the towers. These small statues were carried for various ceremonies and used in funerals. This particular sculpture is an enlarged replica of the original found in a Waimea burial cave in 1935. The original figure

from "Mana and Ritual in Historic Hawaii," July-August 1991, p. 14.

REMARKS: #1 See above for exhibitions at Chicago and New York, 1967-68

*Copy of statue, Paul [redacted] Waimea (copy should be given about 1935) (copy 20 35)  
As a replica of the original, it may have been made of Koa, Scaevola, or other local woods.*

Patented PAT. APRIL 14, 1934 81-C-5624-14 T



STICK IMAGE ('aumakua (?))

MAKER: Hawaii, Oahu, Waimea Valley - wood, tapa belt  
DESCRIPTION: WOOD IDOL or Household God or Bird God

Unknown wood, rough cut; blackish tone at top, brown below. Nude male figure standing on 7 1/2" high post. Post is octagonal, with serrated edges, tapering to plain point. Figure stands erect, with arms hanging. Very long neck topped by





Akua ka'ai,  
Hawaii  
collected 1825  
Academy  
Purchase, 1962  
on view in  
reinstallation  
of the arts of  
Hawaii in  
Gallery 27

MAR/APR 79

3075.1



Honaunau Bay, Hale-oeKeawe, early 19th century

MAKER: STICK IMAGE (akua ka'ai)

DESCRIPTION: WOODEN FIGURE AT TOP OF POINTED SPIKE

Description given by Dr. Peter Buck: "Mesial spike enlarged and lengthened and there are no side wings. Mesial enlargement has front and back ridges which are coarsely notched and which end above in a blunt point. Small ridges on each side are more finely notched. Head has two elliptical eyes, broad-pointed-nose and a figure-of-8 mouth with the lips notched. Chest projects forward and is bounded below by two curved edges. Rest of body and limbs follow general pattern."

PERIOD: Early 19th century  
SIGNATURE OR MARK:

MEASUREMENTS: H. overall, 22"; H. image only, 9"

GIFT OF:

BOUGHT FROM: J. J. Klejman, New York.

LOCATION: GAKA 25-1193

DATE: November, 1962  
PRICE: [redacted]

Negative # 421126-3

COUNTRY: Hawaii OBJECT: Wooden figure-atop a Spike NO. 3075.1

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3075.1

Hawaii Wooden Figure-atop a Spike  
COUNTRY OBJECT NO. 3075.1

**LABEL:**

Fumigated with bisulphide, May 8-22, 1967.

**HISTORY: (COLL.)**

Formerly in Cranmore Museum, Kent, England.

**CONDITION:**

EXHIBITED: HAA. OCEANIC ARTS SHOW, March, 1967, Cat. No. 2.

Collected by Midshipman John Knowles of H.M.S. Blonde from the House of Heawe, Honaunau, Hawaii in 1825.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

OF POLYNESIA at Art Inst. Chicago, 1967-68, etc.

**PUBLISHED:**

Illustrated- ARTS AND CRAFTS OF HAWAII by Dr. Peter H. Buck, Bishop Museum Press, 1957, p. 486-87, fig. 305-b.

**OPINIONS:**

Illustrated: Catalogue- THE SCULPTURE OF POLYNESIA by Allen Wardwell, exhibition at Art Inst. Chicago, Nov. 17-Dec. 31, 1967 & Museum of Primitive Art, Feb. 14-May 14 1968

APOLLO VOL. CIK NO. 204, 2/79

**REMARKS:**

Dr. Paula Rudall of the Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew states that the wood used is Santalum (Ellipticum) Hawaiian Ili-ahi - Sandalwood 11/86