REVIEWS

Katharine Luomala, *Hula Ki'i: Hawaiian Puppetry*. Laie: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1984. Pp. 184, 59 illustrations, index. $24.95

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In her usual thorough, scholarly manner Katharine Luomala has given us a fascinating and eminently readable account of Hawaiian puppetry. These little-known items of material culture are brought to life with accounts of their uses, as well as with narratives that suggest their philosophical and cultural background.

The book begins with a short introduction in which Luomala presents the historical context for *ki'i* as a category and then goes on to explain how she will use the framework for analyzing persistence and change developed, interestingly enough, by this reviewer. It is particularly daunting to be asked to review a book by one of your influential professors, especially when she uses a framework developed by you, her student. But this is typical of Katharine Luomala. She not only taught her students, but she also felt that she learned from them. Always careful to note if a fact or idea came from an informant, student, or colleague, she does not simply use that idea, but develops it. Thus, in her detailed description of puppets in museum collections she never fails to note if the *ki'i* can be associated with an early voyage or a specific date of collection so that her subsequent analysis of function and use can always be related to specific cultural associations based on time and outside influences--which can be related to the framework for studying persistence and change as "traditional, evolved traditional, and folk."

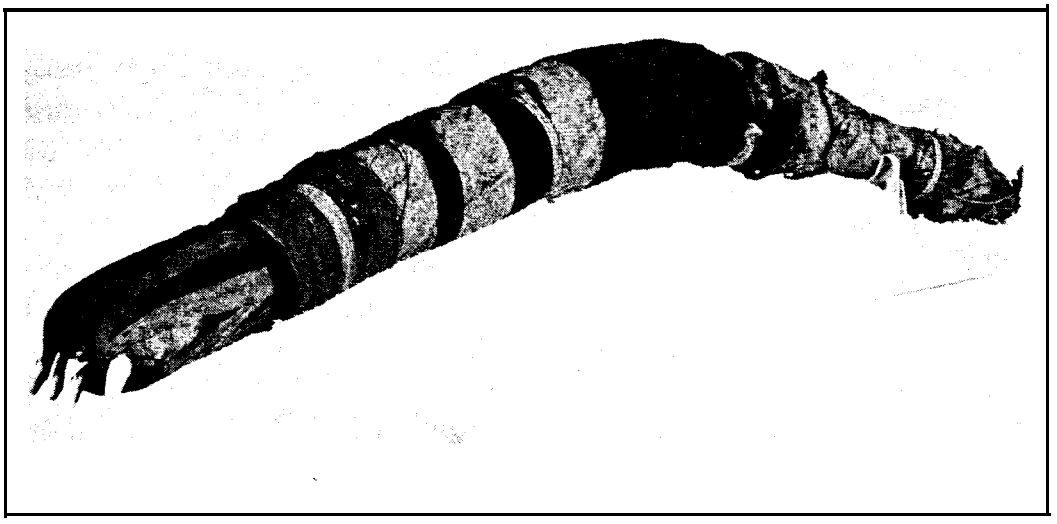
A major section of the book (Part 1) is about the puppets themselves.

The ten manipulable wooden figures, four separate heads, two doll-like objects, and a torso comprise the tangible evidence of the *ki'i* complex. These *ki'i* are of two main types: One has a movable head that is inserted into a hollow torso and has separate movable arms manipulated by a string inside the torso. The other is composed of a one-piece head and torso to which arms are attached at the shoulders.

Of the first type, Luomala describes one complete puppet in the British Museum (Museum of Mankind, London), four separate heads, a torso (which she feels is not part of a puppet), and a "folk' version of a separate head. I would like to add another piece that belongs to this category-- a separate arm of the same type that is part of the British Museum *ki'i.* This arm, now in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland (figure l), was given to the Ulster Museum in 1834 by the Reverend Professor Edgar (Glover n.d. [1986]:25). This flexible, jointless arm of "rushes" is covered with bark cloth (undoubtedly Hawaiian) and has four dogtooth fingers, unlike the British Museum piece, which has six. The 1834 date gives credence to Luomala's supposition that the figure now in the British Museum may have been collected "well before the 1860s" when the Reverend J. G. Wood published it.

Of the second type, Luomala describes nine puppets that were used in nineteenth-century performances. These "folk art" examples are individualized by name but stereotyped according to the roles they played. Such puppets performed behind a screen ("behind" in the sense of a stage apron, not in the sense of an Indonesian shadow play) in plays and as dancers. These performances are described in detail in Part 2 of the book, as are *hula* performed by human dancers in imitation of *ki'i* and modern performances with puppets and in imitation of puppets.

Luomala then goes on to describe "two aberrant Bishop Museum images" described in the Bishop Museum catalog as a "doll" and a "puppet." These were acquired from the S. M. Damon estate in 1921 and from Amy Greenwell in 1973. Because both Damon and Greenwell were well-known Hawaiiana collectors, the attributions as Hawaiian were apparently not questioned by museum workers. Luomala suggests that they "represent carvers' experiments" and she makes it clear that these are not the kind of puppets she is talking about. I would like to add that in my view one or both of these figures are neither puppets nor Hawaiian. If we look beyond Hawai'i, we find that similar figures were used in Alaska as grave markers and in burial caves as shown by documented pieces now in the Smithsonian Institution. One of these (figure 2) is very similar to the Bishop Museum "puppet" (1973.36) from the Greenwell Estate (illustrated on p. 113). The "doll" from the Damon



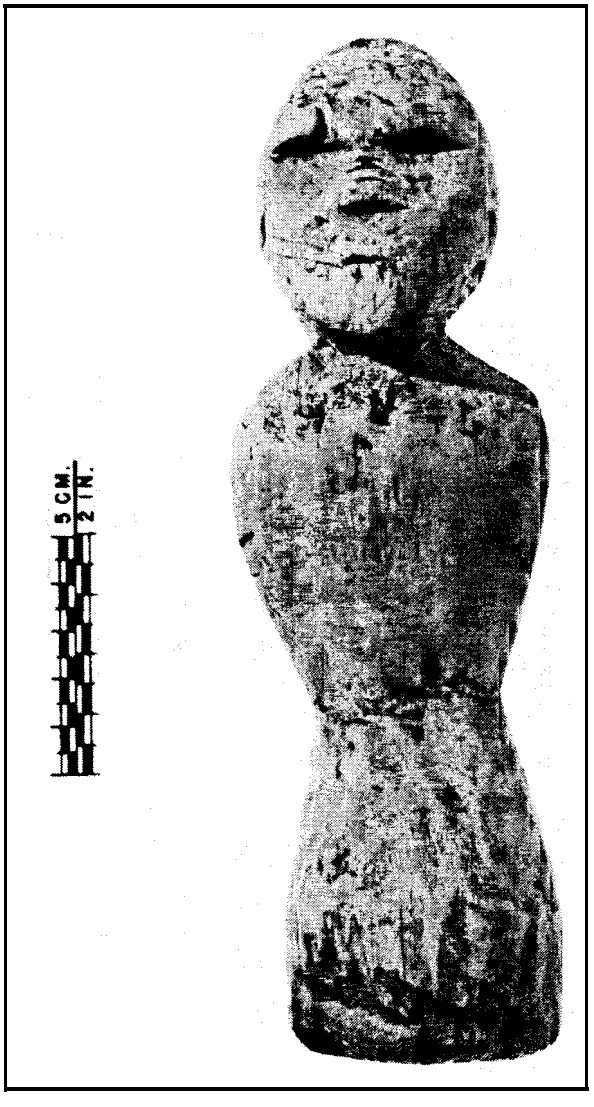


FIGURE 1. Above: *Ki'i* arm with four dogtooth fingers. Ulster Museum (catalog number 1910: 40). (Photograph by W. Anderson-Porter, courtesy Ulster Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland.)

FIGURE 2. Right: Wooden figure from Kagamil Island of the Four Mountains, Alaska. Smithsonian Institution (catalog number 17446). (Photograph courtesy Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.)

Estate (B2821.H.1, illustrated on p. 112) could also be an Alaskan figure, comparable to those examined in Dorothy Jean Ray's study of Alaskan Eskimo mortuary art (1982). The similarity of the two undocumented Bishop Museum figures to the documented Smithsonian pieces illustrates that the attributions of the two Bishop Museum figures must be questioned. The Damon Estate figure is said to be made of *hau* wood, but unfortunately the estate's trustees would not permit a 1 mm sample of wood to be taken in order to analyze it. The wood of the other figures and puppets is being analyzed and further information will be available.

Part 2 of *Hula Ki'i* focuses on function and performance and demonstrates the Hawaiian reliance on the integral association of verbal and visual modes of expression with emphasis on the verbal. Although Luomala does not put it quite like that, she notes that "verbal devices, not a puppet's physical appearance, clothing, or props, were the puppeteer's--or his drummer-chanter's--major resources, since the little images had limited flexibility" (pp. 71-72). Combing the literature and interviewing living performers enabled Luomala to give a veritable history of Hawaiian puppetry--ranging from an 1820 performance on Kaua'i that Chief Kaumuali'i gave for the missionaries (who pronounced it "folly and vanity") to a 1978 performance at the Prince Lot Hula Festival. In tandem with this history, she illustrates the varied uses of *hula ki'i* from the traditional *kaona* of sexual meaning to Punch and Judy shows. Much of this was European-inspired and Luomala concludes that *hula ki'i* "was one of the native forms of entertainment that was adapted to the changing culture of the islands" (p. 138).

Part 2, as well as Part 3, demonstrate Luomala's unique knowledge of the Hawaiian literature. In Part 3 she recounts an array of various narratives and legendary accounts about images imitating people and concludes that they illustrate that Hawaiians "integrated the concept of human-like images that can be made to simulate the behavior of real people. . . . With so many notions of images present in reality and in fiction . . . it is likely that the idea of making manipulable puppets for entertainment occurred to someone" (p. 167). Especially interesting to me is that the images can be called *ki'i ho'opunipuni,* "deceptive images" (p. 141). *Puni,* however, can also mean controlled, which in my view could have something to do with *ki'i* used on *heiau.* That is, they could be controlled by a ***kahuna*** and thereby deceive the populace, an interesting sidelight on traditional religious *ki'i* with movable arms that were not "puppets," Such ***ki'i*** were illustrated by Choris on Ahu'ena *heiau.* Indeed, if the bark cloth wrappings were let down, the *kahuna*

could conceal himself and manipulate the arms and possibly the head--a suitable prototype for nineteenth-century deception in more narrative form!

Through a tour de force of evidence, Luomala has led us from object, to performance, to legendary background. Though one might wish for more integration of the three parts in a concluding analysis, she does infer this integration in her final summary. A more explicit statement of the interrelationships of verbal and visual modes of expression would also have been useful. But, typically, in true Luomala style, she sparks the imagination, and silently exhorts all of us to use her meticulous research for further analysis.

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