Background information often provides the best starting point when identifying and further researching any ship, giving us context clues that guide the research process towards the direction of truth. Further, these beginning steps enable us to place the vessel within a surrounding culture, providing additional outlets of information that can yield entirely new results. Within the first moments of observing model 59-44-70/3891, you will surely notice that the model looks particularly familiar and is resonate of a modern Hawaiian outrigger, suggesting that the vessel is of Hawaiian origin.
In looking at the historic Hawaiian production of boats, Model 59-44-70/3891 has evident connections. Historically, boats and ships were produced by carving into a whole tree trunk, progressively hollowing it out until it resembles what we think of today as a canoe. The model still shows such carving marks from its original production. These basic production observations indicate that the boat was almost certainly produced in Hawaii, which is further confirmed by the model’s location of origin listed as Honolulu, Hawaii.

Despite Model 59-44-70/3891’s production to be consistent with models of Hawaiian origin, it does not match any records of ships. The model in particular exemplifies its caveats through its abundance of characteristics. There are two primal ship types that resonate with both the Hawaiian maritime timeline whilst also having key features of Model 59-44-70/3891. As a result of the boat’s single sail, the form resembles that of early sailing canoes. Both exemplify the use of a sail as a primary source of movement, used in combination with paddles to enable both speed and precision as it moves through the water.

Similarly, as we have previously identified, the Model 59-44-70/3891 resembles a primal interpretation of an outrigger, due primarily to the model’s use of a stabilizing “ama” beam, produced from a smaller trunk of wood. The issue with identifying the Model 59-44-70/3891 as either a sailing canoe or an outrigger is that each has their independent similarity feature while
lacking the other. Therefore, as the Model has both a sail and a stabilizing “ama”, it cannot be a sailing canoe or an outrigger.

So what type of ship is it? Who did it serve? In extending the search area to look at a wider scale of boat comparison models, we find a wider range of models, some of which can further our understanding of Model 59-44-70/3891. In looking at the greater Polynesian area, one type of ship, the double-hull sailing canoe yields a sail as well as an extension for support. Further the ship has historic records of appearing within and throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

It is perhaps possible that the double-hull sailing canoe had an influence into the design, but the Model 59-44-70/3891 is almost certainly not fitting of this boat model. Despite having a similar set of characteristics and a relatively similar historical period, the Model 59-44-70/3891 is significantly more fragile, unable to conquer the large waves needed for a transoceanic journey. As a result of this comparison, we can determine that the Model 59-44-70/3891 was mostly used in the calmer waters nearer to the shore. However, it is in extending our search even further that allows us to determine the true purpose of the Model 59-44-70/3891. In searching for
a similar time period of the 1880s when the model was produced, a boat from modern day Shri Lanka was found (pictured below).

As this model is almost identical to the Model 59-44-70/3891, consisting of all the necessary features, it is likely that this model type was a popular style for fishing. As a result of this finding as well as a scarcity of alternatives, we can speculate that this model was used primarily within the Hawaiian Islands as a fishing vessel along the coastline.

Despite limited documentation on the model itself, it seems as though this model would have served a very important role within the cultural society of its surroundings. All historical records indicate that within the time period of this model’s production, fish were a key resource within the Hawaiian lifestyle and economic system, serving not only as a primary food source but also as a crucial trading resource. Sometimes as many as 6,000 men were fishing daily, harvesting small fish through a beachhead netting process and larger fish through a marine vessel such as Model 59-44-70/3891. This vessel allowed the seafarers to increase their productivity from other noted Hawaiian boats as a direct determinant of its combination of characteristics. The sail allowed for less men to paddle and covering more ocean, while the “ama” created stability, both building off one another to create a more versatile and successful ship. However, there are still questions to be asked about the Model 59-44-70/3891. Why in modern times do we
only witness riggers in Hawaii? If the ship was successful as it appears it would be, why was it not recorded in any Hawaiian history records? Perhaps the biggest answer to these would be that the model is not Hawaiian at all, but that begs the question where is its true origin and moreover why was it produced in Hawaii?
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