

A Guide to the Pirates Mini-figures Part IV

Expanded Horizons



In 1994 a new adversary took Admiral Woodhouse's Imperial Guards and Red Beard's Pirates by surprise. Here was a faction completely different from what had come before: the Islanders.

Bringing a tribe of gold-loving natives to the party definitely expanded the Pirate world, the concept was inherently limiting: it's hard to have a swashbuckling high-seas adventure when the largest seaworthy craft

your enemies have consists of two canoes strapped together.

As a result, the Islanders filled a somewhat smaller niche in the theme than their colonial counterparts and had no new sets released after the initial wave. Nonetheless they provide a fascinating insight into the original inhabitants of the region.

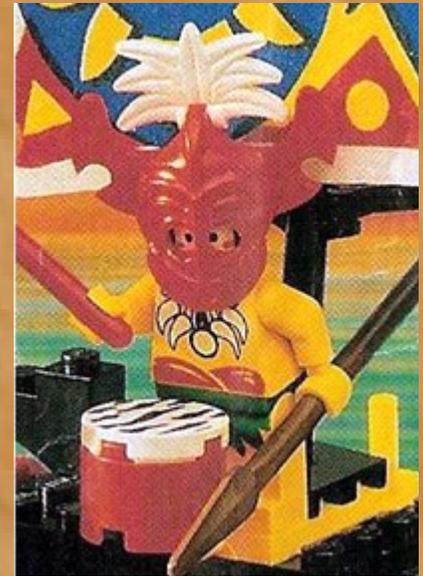
But how did they go unnoticed for so long?

The Islanders

1994 - 1996

Unlike the lead figures from the Soldier and Guard factions, who tended to stick to the relative safety of higher-priced sets, the King was included in most of the Islander sets, including his own tiny **6263 King Kahuka**. Kahuka was one of the few Pirates characters, along with Ironhook, Red Beard, and Broadside, to have his name featured in a set. But thinking about it further you may realise that Admiral Woodhouse was the only named mini-figure in the Pirate theme whose name did not feature in the title of a set... Well **6247 Bounty Boat** was known as **Admiral's Launch** in places like the United Kingdom...

The King



Island Royalty



Kahuka wears a large, feathered headdress. Like the old plumes, these came in a plastic wheel that also included two “bone” pieces. This clips into a large red mask, with two large horn-like projections on either side. This shape is a common motif in the Islanders theme, reflected in the shape of the bone pieces worn by other Islanders and in the large tiki statues in the bigger sets.



Underneath the mask, the King's face is a simple smiley, decked out in white facepaint with a blue border and red strips. His torso features a large bone necklace and two red blotches that might have been intended to be a belt. Or more body paint. Or possibly the dried blood of his enemies; I've never really been able to tell what the LEGO Group was trying to do here. Like the rest of the Islanders, he doesn't wear much more than that.

The Islanders

1994 - 1996



Behind the mask!

The Island Girl



This is a kid's toy right?



Red blotches aside, Kahuka wears the same leaves-over-bare-legs as the rest of the Islanders do. He may be royalty, but he puts his loincloth on one leaf at a time like everybody else - not the most comfortable form of underwear mind you. This would be the first and last time Pirate mini-figures had printing on their legs. This was a new concept back in 1994 but has since become more common. This figure was used as a different kind of Islander—a prince, maybe—in the **6264 Forbidden Cove** set. He just wears the hair-with the topknot favored by the other Islanders instead of daddy's giant mask.

The Islander Girl is the rarest of all Islander mini-figures, appearing only in two sets. She wears the common topknot hair that bared a convenient clip in which to put decorations. Like the prince and Kahuka, the Islander Girl wears the royal feathered headdress. Her face had previously been seen on the Pirate wench, and she is the only Islander without face paint. (Unless one counts the lipstick, of course.)

This allows for the possibility that she is in fact a captured wench, making way for some very interesting Pirate scenarios (no wonder Ironhook made some appearances in the Islander sets). The Islander Girl wears even less than most Islanders — less, in fact, than most mini-figures. Her yellow torso is printed only with a red-white-and-green floral necklace... and two intriguing black curves...

The Islanders

1994 - 1996



Ooooooo! La! La! What a hot babe!

The Islanders

1994 - 1996

The **Warrior** is the footsoldier of the Islander theme, and wears a bone in his topknot as a display of his hunting prowess. This piece was later used for LEGO triceratopses, among other things. He has a nifty red-and-white face paint design over the same bland smiley face worn by Imperial Guard and Soldier grunts. The warrior also carries a quiver of arrows and sometimes a spear, both borrowed without asking from the Castle theme.

His torso features a feathered necklace in green, red, and white, as well as a green, blue, red, and yellow belt. This belt is also beaded in pearls with a seashell clasp...or, if you're in a more macabre mood, bones with a shrunken skull.

The Islander warriors were noble and preferred to live peaceful lifestyle. They did so for many years even after the arrival of Broadside and his soldiers, their weaponry used merely for hunting and keeping crocodiles at bay.



The Warriors



Carrying a captured cutlass



Pirates quiver at the sight of this arrow-packing Islander

Unfortunately this harmony was not to last. After the arrival of Admiral Woodhouse and the Imperial Guards, pirates found it increasingly difficult to plunder colonies, forcing them to seek their fortunes elsewhere. One pirate in particular, Captain Ironhook, became aware of the Islanders gold-loving nature and saw opportunity (golden opportunity you might say). Much to the annoyance of the Islanders pirates began appearing on their Islands giving the once peaceful warriors a new purpose.

The Islanders

1994 - 1996

The Islander warriors now had to constantly rid their Islands of marauding pirates, who were ceasing any opportunity to steal Islander gold. To make matters worse the pirates had the advantage of firearms and other superior technologies that made the playing field uneven. The Islanders were not stupid however, and realised the pirates' greatest weakness was their lust for gold.

They used this as a strategic advantage when reclaiming their treasure, knowing all too well that the covetous pirates would often abandon their crews to make off with the plunder. This created a perfect opportunity for the Islander to ambush the pirates when they came ashore to bury their treasure.



Kahuka had a generous pile of gold at the base of his throne



After the pirate crisis reached an epidemic scale the Islanders began to take innovative means. They constructed wooden cages to imprison the pirates and as a further means of security guarded them with hungry crocodiles. This gave the captured pirate the choice to remain in the cage until the point of starvation or attempt to escape and run the risk of preventing the crocodile from reaching the point of starvation. The cages were built on the shores of the islands to serve as a warning to other pirates who might dare come a treasure huntin'. Ironhook however, was not so easily dissuaded and did not hesitate to raid **Forbidden Cove**, but we shall learn of those escapades at a later date.

The Islanders

1994 - 1996

Curious how a seemingly Polynesian culture exists in a seemingly Caribbean setting - the explanation is really quite simple however...

Once upon a time there was a great land in the Pacific Ocean known as Hawaiki. It was a thriving civilisation set amongst a lush tropic paradise. There were coconut palms... There were banana palms... This allowed the inhabitants to build banana lounges from which they could sip coconuts. Their abundant wealth was enabled by a magical energy which assisted their crops to grow and their flocks to prosper.

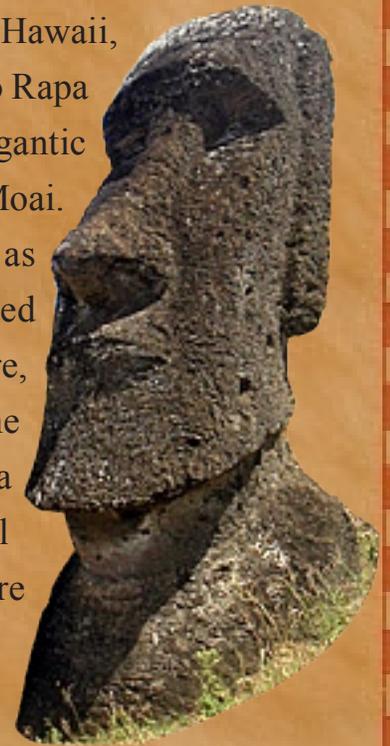
Unfortunately there was trouble in paradise! They were in conflict with another great civilisation in the west - Atlantis! The Atlanteans also possessed this magical energy and were using it for a more nefarious use - war! The peace-loving Hawaikians had no choice but to use their magical energy for self defence.

Eventually the two civilisations wiped each other out, quite literally, causing two entire continents to sink beneath the waves. This is why neither landmass exists today, but evidence of their existence can be found throughout many parts of the world.



A typical backyard in Hawaiki

Survivors from Hawaiki spread out across the Pacific islands. Some travelled west to New Zealand and evolved into the Māori, while others travelled east to Hawaii, and some further still to Rapa Nui where they built gigantic stone heads called Moai. Some even travelled as far Americas and started new civilisations there, but not all, as some chose to continue a more traditional tribal lifestyle, and these were the Islanders.



It was no surprise the Islanders built their own Moai, but perhaps somewhat more fierce in appearance to those on Rapa Nui. This indicated that the purpose of their Moai was somewhat different.

The Islanders

1994 - 1996

Like their counterparts on mainland South America, the Islanders sculpted huge chunks of stone (known as megaliths) into figures which resembled their deities. Their chief god however was not bloodthirsty like Huitzilopochtli (don't ask us how to pronounce that) the Aztec god of war, who was partial to a human sacrifice every 52 years.

The Islander god was partial to gold however and this is why it was imperative for the Islanders to prevent the pirates from stealing it. If their god was not constantly endowed with riches he would become angry

Islander Moai



and erupt the volcanoes on the surrounding islands. This would definitely not be pleasant for pirates and Islanders alike.



Captain Ironhook established a secret base in the heart of the Islanders' territory which he code named "Pirate's Chest". This way it was harder for the Imperial Guards to cotton to his whereabouts. Nevertheless they eventually caught up with him, but like most things, that tale will come another day.

The Islanders made a brief appearance in 1995's special promotional set **1788 Pirate's Chest**. This was the only year when new sets included figures from three different factions. Thanks to the LEGO's Group three-year set rotation policy, Islander sets could still be found skulking on store shelves when the Pirate theme was revamped the following year. This ensured that the Islanders would encounter the Pirate's new Imperial foes... and perhaps share an connection with their mysterious leader...

Next Time...

Imperial Armada



Credits

Authors TalonCard & Mr Phes

Layout & Graphics Mr Phes

Proof Reading

Contributing

We are seeking the following

Graphic Designers

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If wish to contribute then contact:

administrator@classic-pirates.com