



# Links to the Past: The Work of Early Hawaiian Artisans

*Wendy S. Arbeit*

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The work of Hawaiian artisans at the time of Western contact was woven seamlessly into their everyday lives and culture—the details of which are now lost. Although we can no longer comprehend the objects left to us with the same depth of understanding as early Hawaiians, we can appreciate their aesthetic qualities and the skill used in their construction, particularly when numerous pieces of the same type are viewed together.

Links to the Past makes this possible by reuniting more than a thousand eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Hawaiian artifacts from over seventy institutions and collections worldwide. The book is divided into twenty-one sections (wooden bowls, gourds, stone vessels, etc.), each introduced with color photographs, quotes from contemporary sources, and brief historical and technical information. These are followed by dozens of line drawings (more than 1,400 in all) based on actual artifacts or photographs and drawn to scale within each object category. Together they support and enhance learning about object shapes, patterns, sizes, and, in some cases, change over time. Accurate and detailed illustrations reproduce gourd, basket, and mat patterns—now faded and almost invisible on the objects themselves—as clearly and vibrantly as when they were first created.

Links to the Past is unique in bringing together hundreds of traditional Hawaiian objects in one publication. In the case of fans, helmets, and patterned water gourds, almost every known artifact is represented. Numerous pieces presented here have rarely or never been seen in print. The book will prove invaluable to those involved in the study and creation of Pacific art and visual culture and readers interested in early cultural exchange and pattern and design among indigenous cultures.

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