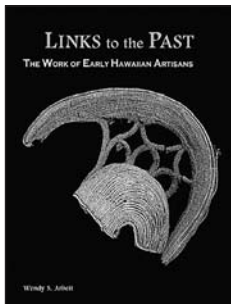


Book Reviews

Arbeit, Wendy S. *Links to the Past: The Work of Early Hawaiian Artisans.*



Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011. 336 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8248-3476-0. US\$75 (cloth).

Review by Windy McElroy,
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Links to the Past is a compilation of line drawings of Hawaiian artifacts that includes more than 1,000 illustrations of items dating to the 18th to 19th centuries AD. The pieces are housed in museum collections around the world, with artifacts from more than 70 institutions represented. The book is organized by ethnographic category (e.g., bowls, baskets, capes, etc.) and includes an introduction, brief descriptions at the start of each chapter, and appendices with lists of plant and animal names, names of *tapa* beater patterns, a glossary of artifact names, and suggestions for further readings.

The introduction presents an insightful summary of changes that occurred in Hawaiian society as a result of Western contact, from the arrival of Captain Cook, to impacts of the sandalwood trade, to the abolishment of the *kapu* system, and the coming of Christian missionaries. These factors all had an effect on traditional material culture, and the book focuses on the earliest collected artifacts that were least affected by the changes brought about by outside influence.

The chapters are arranged with the earliest collections presented first (e.g., items acquired during the Cook and Vancouver voyages), with “the rest according to similarities,” and the author infers that this will allow for observation of stylistic change over time (Arbeit 2011:3). It is unclear, however, which attributes are used to discern similarity between artifacts of a given category. In this and other respects, the character of the book veers more toward the artistic than the scientific or archaeological.

A short introduction to each chapter provides useful information on the given artifact categories, setting the context for the drawings that follow. Descriptions, uses, and Hawaiian names are provided for each kind of artifact. Notes on the size of the artifacts and materials used in their construction are also included. The chapter introductions often indicate how these items compare with their counterparts from other parts of the Pacific. For example, some Hawaiian shark tooth knives are very

similar to those from Kiribati, while wooden daggers are unique to the Hawaiian Islands.

The illustrations themselves are well done and often to scale, offering an excellent instrument for comparison. Each drawing is labeled with a brief description and data on where the piece is housed. Opportunities for further research abound, with possibilities including the study of feather helmet design, an examination of motifs displayed on coconut leaf fans, or variability in the morphology of twined baskets. The volume may also be used as a reference tool for archaeologists to compare a find with the items pictured. More photographs and variations in angle might be helpful in this regard. The use of color in some of the drawings, especially the vibrant reds and yellows of Hawaiian featherwork, might also enhance the utility and visual charm of the book.

While some chapters are relatively comprehensive (e.g., 100 of the 170 extant *ahu‘ula* are illustrated in the “Capes and Cloaks” chapter) others are by no means exhaustive of the variability that occurs within a given artifact category. Only a few pages are devoted to fishhooks, for example, and no mention is made of variations in head shank morphology, one of the principal indicators of stylistic variability in Polynesian fishhooks (Allen 1996; Emory et al. 1959; Graves & McElroy 2005; Sinoto 1962, 1967, 1970, 1991, 1995).

The focus of the book is on utilitarian objects, with categories such as sculpture and religious objects omitted. Also excluded are items such as *‘uhumaika* and other gaming pieces (*pahe‘e* darts, etc.), slingstones, canoe paddles, as well as tools that are pervasive in archaeological collections, such as coral abraders, bird bone picks, or sea urchin spine files. Although not as visually stunning as the artifacts featured, these items nonetheless display variability in their design that could be tracked through photographs and drawings, and their inclusion might also show the range of variation in utilitarian Hawaiian artifacts in general. Nevertheless, it is refreshing to see uncommon items featured, including fans, kites, and string figures, for which the available literature is less widespread.

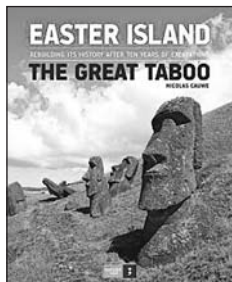
The appendices provide thorough lists of Hawaiian terms. The catalog of artifact names and variants is particularly useful, as is the collection of *tapa* beater pattern names and their descriptions. The reading list is rather sparse, but includes most major references.

In all, *Links to the Past* is an impressive piece of work. This volume represents the most comprehensive compilation of Hawaiian artifacts since the classic texts of Brigham (1902) and Buck (1957). It is an excellent reference book for those who study material culture and the layperson alike. The collections depicted highlight the exquisite craftsmanship displayed by the traditional Hawaiian artisan.

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Cauwe, Nicolas. *Easter Island: The Great Taboo. Rebuilding Its History after Ten Years of Excavations*.



Brussels: Versant Sud, 2011.
160 pp., 100 color plates.
ISBN 978-2-930358-55-0.
EU\$24.50 (softcover).

Review by Christopher M. Stevenson, *Richard Bland College, The College of William and Mary*

This new work by the author consists of a two book set that includes a volume of text and discussion and a second volume of color photographs. The format of this publication is directed towards the generalist public. Brightly colored photographs of Rapa Nui's landscape, archaeological features, and vegetation convey the present day context of the island. However, the discussion is direct, reasoned and not over-simplified for the lay public.

During the prehistory of Rapa Nui two major corporate efforts were conducted over multiple centuries that included the sculpting of hundreds of tuff statues (*moai*) at the Rano Raraku quarry and their transport to, and installation on, religious altars (*ahu*). In contrast to much of the conventional thinking about these prehistoric activities, the author provides us with a new, and potentially controversial, interpretation of the archaeological record. At the Rano Raraku statue quarry, the current visitor sees hundreds of statues in the process of creation scattered on the face of the cliff and erected in a vertical position at the base. Are the latter statues awaiting transport? Apparently not, says Cauwe, who interprets the intentional positioning of the unfinished, partial, and standing *moai* as impediments to the removal of additional statues. Thus, we now see the statue quarry not as a production center that came to a quick demise but an intentionally closed precinct. Statues at the margins of the quarry lying in a prone position on the "*moai* road" are not in transport but were once vertically set warning signs to those who approach that the tradition of ancestor worship had come to an end.

The author does not enter into the fray and excess verbiage concerning statue transport but provides the reader with an understanding of *ahu* refurbishment practices in prehistory. Ten years of careful excavation at smaller *ahu* around the island has shown that *ahu* platforms were constructed, utilized, abandoned, refurbished, and *moai* fragments were recycled into the fill of the reconditioned *ahu*. Again and again this happened, until the final time in the late 17th century when the *moai* began to be lowered for the last time, a process that took at least a century. The positioning, torso breaking patterns, and lack of damage to the face argue for a gentle lowering; a process that symbolically changed the *ahu* and surroundings from socio-religious precincts to burial mounds or necropoli. As with the statue quarry, ancestor worship had come to an end.

The data used to support the interpretation of the statue quarry, and statue lowering process, are likely to be closely scrutinized. A serious spatial analysis of the positioning and temporal order of the quarry *moai* is required, as is the retrieval of chronometric data from the quarry. At present the interpretation is mostly impressionistic, but not without merit. However, the statue lowering hypothesis will certainly raise some