

Basic Detail Report



Octopus Hook (Leho He'e)

Date

20th Century

Medium

Shell, stone, wood and fiber

Description

Octopus fishing was regularly practiced in the waters off Hawai'i. Although multiple methods were used to catch

different kinds of octopi, primary consumptive fishing was done by diving with a spear. An alternate method involves dangling an octopus hook or leho he'e from canoes in deeper waters, usually at a depth of 480 to 720 feet. The leho he'e is made of wood, cowrie shell, cord, and a weight such as the stone employed in this object. The brightly colored cowrie shell operates as a lure, catching light and the attention of octopi as the cord is tugged up and down. The principle behind this object was not that the hook would get lodged in the cephalopod's mouth, but instead that the octopus would latch on to the shell and refuse to let go, even at the cost of its life. This method of octopus hook fishing was done for both sustenance and sport by Hawai'ians with high social status.

Dimensions

with string: 8 1/2 × 4 × 3 in. (21.6 × 10.2 × 7.6 cm)