When I moved to Hawaii in July 2001, I was immediately enthralled by Hawaii’s natural beauty; the jaw-dropping beauty of soaring green volcanic mountains, exotic tropical flora, stunning white sand beaches and sparkling turquoise seas. The rich mix of cultures, especially the Hawaiian host culture, captivated me with its treasure of art, music, food language and traditional practices. As an amateur archeologist, Hawaii’s amazing number of readily accessible prehistoric sites drove me to explore ancient temples (heiau), fish ponds, sacred rock formations, cave shelters and petroglyphs. This report will focus on the most prolific of prehistoric Hawaiian features, petroglyphs. I have included a few of my petroglyph photographs to illustrate important features.

Petroglyphs are pictures and symbols carved into stone by prehistoric people in nearly every part of the world. Pictographs refer to similar images created by painting on the surface of rock. In this report, the term petroglyph or the Hawaiian word Ki‘i Pohaku will be used interchangeably. Petroglyphs are a direct link to prehistoric people, but are usually enigmatic because their origins and meanings are rarely known through written documents, traditional oral history, or knowledge of current inhabitants living near petroglyph sites (Cox & Stasack). Most moveable products of ancient people like pots, tools and cloth are often lost to posterity. Petroglyphs however, generally remain at the site of production and endure.

Ki‘i Pohaku were created by descendants of ancient Hawaiians who are believed to have first migrated over 1,000 miles from South Pacific islands to the Island of Hawaii (the Big Island) over 1,500 years ago. Petroglyphs are present in many other Polynesian islands, especially in eastern South Pacific (McBride). However, no other area of Polynesia has nearly as many petroglyphs as Hawaii.

There are over 100 petroglyph sites in the state of Hawaii. Sites are found on each of the eight major islands, but the Island of Hawaii (Big Island) has the largest concentration with about 70 known sites containing more than 22,000 images (Cox & Stasack). They are most often found on the surface of lava that cooled after spreading on relatively flat areas (pahoehoe lava). Throughout the Hawaiian Islands, petroglyphs are most commonly located on the leeward (dry) side of the island, often near travel routes, but away from habitation sites. Ki‘i Pohaku are frequently found on boulders, cliff faces, cave walls & sandstone beach shelves.

Based on the evaluation of unfinished petroglyphs, the usual process to make petroglyphs on pahoehoe lava has been identified (Cox & Stasack). A sharp stone was used to scratch a line drawing on the rock surface. Then, small holes about an

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Introduction to Hawaiian Petroglyphs

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...inch apart where created along the lines. Lastly, the rock between the holes was removed to produce the final image. Other techniques like bruising or rubbing were used depending on the type of surface. After Western contact, it is likely that metal tools were also used in the production of Ki`i Pohaku.

The most common subjects of Hawaiian petroglyphs are human figures, animals, and geometric forms, especially circles and dots. Cox and Stassack have proposed a method for the relative dating of Ki`i Pohaku human figures. The oldest forms are stick or line figures (Fig 1), followed by triangular body forms (Fig 2) and the most recent are more realistic, muscled forms (Fig 3). It is clear that petroglyphs of horse and rider (Fig. 4) or letters (Fig 5) were created after contact with the West which occurred with Captain Cook’s arrival in 1777. The creation of these Ki`i Pohakuln occurred after significant Western activities in Hawaii. In 1838 King Kamehameha III invited Spanish-Mexican vaqueros (cowboys) from California to manage wild cattle herds. In 1820 Congregational missionaries arrived in Hawaii and introduced a 12 letter Hawaiian alphabet that was used to create a bible in the Hawaiian language.

The meaning of most petroglyphs is open to speculation. However, it is generally accepted that that most of the Ki`i Pohaku located in the Big Island’s Pu´uloa site in Volcanoes National Park are part of birth rituals. This place is thought to have been chosen for these birth rituals because of its special energy or mana. The name Pu´uloa itself was important to Hawaiians. It literally means long hill, but also has a hidden meaning or kaona as long life. To ensure a long life for their newborns, ancient Hawaiians brought part of the umbilical cords of their newborns and placed then in petroglyph holes (Figure 6) and covered it with a rock. It is believed that the holes with a circle around them were for first born and those with two circles were royalty (ali`i).

On the island of O`ahu in the Nu`uanu valley near Kapena Falls there are Ki`i Pohaku that are widely believed to relate to a legend of the guardian dog, Kaupe (Fig. 7). Kaupe was said to be a guardian spirit or kupua that protected people from harm and could take on various shapes (James).

I hope this brief report has piqued your interest in learning more about Hawaiian petroglyphs. If you would like to read further, I suggest starting with the books by Cox & Stassack and McBride listed in the references. For those of you who have the opportunity to visit Hawaii. I would recommend traveling to the Kona (leeward) side of the Big Island Hawaii to visit three large, accessible sites. These are, Pu `uloa in Volcanoes National Park, Puako near the Mauna Lani Resort and Aneho` oamalu by the Kings Shops shopping center about 5 minutes south of Mauna Lani Resort. At these sites you will find thousands of petroglyphs representing many different styles and time periods. The best time to viewing Ki`i Pohaku is in the early morning or evening when the sunlight creates more shadows and improves visibility and more satisfying photographs.

Happy Ki`i Pohaku hunting and Aloha.

References & Figures Continued on Page 4

October Birthdays

October 1           Kay Veith
October 2           Jeff Good
October 29          Cindy Schroer

Please complete the MCASV Membership Application and submit to the MCASV Treasurer, so we have your birthdates for the newsletter.
Certification Program Opportunities

Submitted by Carole Nash

The following is information on upcoming certification opportunities:

**Historic and Prehistoric Lab Work:** Artifact processing and analysis from several 19th century historic home sites and prehistoric base camps. M, W, F schedule -- set your time! Contact Carole (432-6864 or nashcl@jmu.edu) for parking information and directions to her new JMU lab space.

**2009 Field School and Volunteer Opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities available throughout the state for Certification members and Chapter volunteers. Check out the MCASV website at www.mcasv.org for a full listing of the programs, their websites, and contact information.

**Department of Historic Resources (DHR) Volunteer Program**

Volunteer days can be arranged during the week for anyone interested. Prehistoric and historic artifact processing, cataloguing, data entry, documentary research, and outreach activities are some examples of what work is available. Please contact Chief Curator Dee DeRoche at dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov or (804) 367-2323 x134 for an application and to set up day(s) to volunteer if you are interested.

**DHR Field School:** Chippokes Plantation State Park (Surry County) Oct. 26-Nov. 1, Contact Mike Barber at 540-857-6341 or mike.barber@dhr.virginia.gov.

**Other Opportunities**

**Mt. Vernon Field & Lab Work:** Oct. 10, 24 & Nov. 14. Contact Curt Breckinridge at (703) 799-6303 or cbreckenridge@mountvernon.org.

**Poplar Forest:** Nov. 14-20. Contact Eric Proebsting at (434) 534-8102 for more information.

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**MCASV October 7, 2009 Meeting Agenda**

The MCASV monthly meeting will commence at 7:00 p.m. at the Bridgewater Town Hall.

I. Call to Order
II. Welcome to Guests
III. Program: TBA
IV. Secretary’s Report
V. Treasurer’s Report
VI. Newsletter Editor’s Report
VII. New Business
VIII. Certification Program Report
IX. Morris Pottery Kiln
X. Announcements
XI. Adjournment
Upcoming Events

Oct 10, 24 & Nov. 14, 2009  Mt. Vernon Field School & Lab Work Opportunities

Oct. 9-11, 2009  ASV Annual Meeting, Fredericksburg, VA
Fredericksburg Hospitality House & Conference Center

Oct 26-Nov 1, 2009  Chippokes Plantation State Park Excavation, Surry County

Nov 4, 2009  MCASV Monthly Meeting, Bridgewater Town Hall, 7:00 p.m.
Program: TBA

Nov. 14-20, 2009  Poplar Forest Field School

Dec 4, 2009  MCASV Annual Christmas Dinner, Bridgewater Town Hall, 5:30 p.m.
Silent Auction will follow after dinner.

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References


Figures

![Fig. 1](image1.png)
![Fig. 2](image2.png)
![Fig. 3](image3.png)

![Fig. 4](image4.png)
![Fig. 5](image5.png)
![Fig. 6](image6.png)
![Fig. 7](image7.png)
The deadline for any information to be included in the newsletter will be the TWENTIETH of each month. Please have articles sent to Laura and Jeff by this time.

Your article could be here! Please help by contributing articles each month.

The deadline for any information to be included in the newsletter will be the TWENTIETH of each month. Please have articles sent to Laura and Jeff by this time.

Your article could be here! Please email the Newsletter Editors at roderla@aol.com (Laura Roder) and atlatlist@comcast.net (Jeff Good) if you are submitting an article to the MCASV Newsletter.

We Need Your Help in Contributing Articles!