

Captain Cook's ships at anchor in Kealahou Bay, Hawaii Island.

## POST-COOK DISCOVERY IN PETROGLYPHS

By Jean Charlot

IN NUUANU VALLEY on Oahu Island, certain petroglyphs date back to pre-discovery of the Hawaiian Islands by Captain Cook. Now enclosed behind bars, intended to discourage non-specialists, this was formerly an attractive spot, where my family combined picnicking with casual research into Hawaii's past.

While making muslin rubbings of these ancient rock designs one day, I discovered a pictograph different from the others. Ages ago, a large boulder had split clean into halves. Falling apart they opened a corridor some two feet wide, and despite cramped space, walls had tempted petroglyph makers to chip figures of humans and dogs.

One day at noon, a ray of sunlight, filtering between overhead boulders, brought into focus a few engraved lines. A complex image, it represents a ship anchored offshore, with a palm tree in the background. The figure of a man in outlandish uniform, firing a gun landwards, poses alongside. And, in uncertain scrawl is written *Discovery*.

The unobtrusive position and substantial weathering of incised lines preclude any idea of a hoax.

Can a date be assigned to this work? Can the ship be identified? Can we attempt an interpretation? I believe we can.

Two ships named *Discovery* are famous in Hawaii's history: Captain Cook's and Vancouver's. Both anchored off Oahu. Cook's stopped only briefly in March, 1779, for fresh water. Vancouver's anchored at length in March, 1793. Cook's ship was a collier, a type normally used for carrying coal. Sturdy, capacious, it resisted ice-flow pressure of the arctic Northwest. From Webber's engraving while the ship anchored at Kealahou Bay, we know she was a three-master with bulging hull. Her bowsprit entered the ship well abaft the stem, which adds to the sturdiness of her stocky silhouette. In the 1770's, functional fitness was slowly displacing carved mouldings and figures, lanterns and balustrades of gold galleons. Cook's

*Discovery* illustrates the trend toward the simplified stern gallery. Rising above the upper deck level scalloped pediment suggested a sea-going bit of Baroque architecture—only a reminder of the past.

The same ship is the subject of a romantic lithograph dated 1828, a beached carcass, disfigured by a shabby superstructure, become a Navy prison.

The streamlining of cumbersome features gathered speed at the close of the eighteenth century. Substantial differences exist between Cook's ship of the 1770's and the standard ship of the 1790's.

Vancouver's *Discovery* was not, contrary to popular belief, Cook's *Discovery*, remodeled. She was, in Vancouver's own words, "a sloop of war . . . copper-fastened, sheathed with planks and coppered over... (she) mounted ten four-pounders and ten swivels."

And Vancouver himself gives her pedigree: "In the yard of Mssrs. Randall and Brent on the banks of the Thames, a vessel of three hundred and forty tons burthens was nearly finished, and as she would demand but few alterations to make her in every respect fit for the purpose, she was purchased; and, on being launched, was named *The Discovery*."

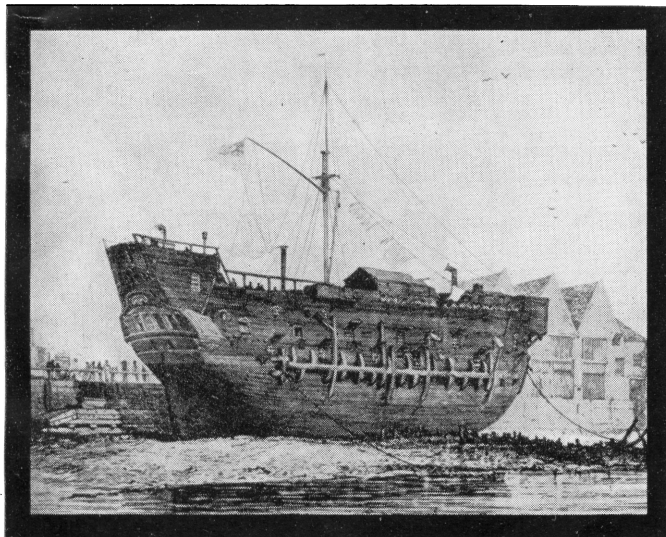
The shipbuilder's hull lines still exist, and there is also an engraving, published in Vancouver's official report, of the *Discovery* foundering on the shoals of Queen Charlotte's Sound. Unlike Cook's ship, Vancouver's was built for speed. Extending directly from stem, the bowsprit juts out boldly. Quarter galleries are but a shriveled token of the past.

A comparison of the petroglyph *Discovery* with the two ships points to more than casual conformity with Vancouver's. Even the figurehead of the engraved foundered ship is marked in the rock drawing by a few evocative curves.

What episode that included the firing of guns links Vancouver's *Discovery* with Oahu?

A chain of events points to this. In March, 1792, Vancouver anchored off Oahu for two uneventful days. After his departure, his storage boat, the "Daedalus," touched at Waimea. Her landing party was attacked there, while

**Dated 1828, this lithograph shows Englishman Cook's "Discovery" become a navy prison. A three-master with bulging hull, this collier had a simplified stern gallery. The bowsprit entered the ship well abaft the stem, adding sturdiness to the stocky vessel.**



reconnoitering for water, and two sailors, a lieutenant and astronomer were killed. The following March, Vancouver returned, this time in the guise of an avenging god. Oahu's ruler, *Kahekili*, volunteered human victims in appeasement. This was accepted pagan etiquette, and racial untouchables, political dissenters and *tabu* breakers were expendable when need arose. But Vancouver demanded legal proof of their guilt. Sighing, *Kahekili* provided it all. Confessions were recorded, thanks to political acumen of an interpreter. People at large were assembled to view the spectacle. Then the "chosen ones" were tied and thrust into canoes, where lesser chiefs, with borrowed firearms, blew their brains out.

Though this episode links Oahu, Vancouver's ship *Discovery*, and some bloody and notable events, details of the pictograph *Discovery* fit only loosely.

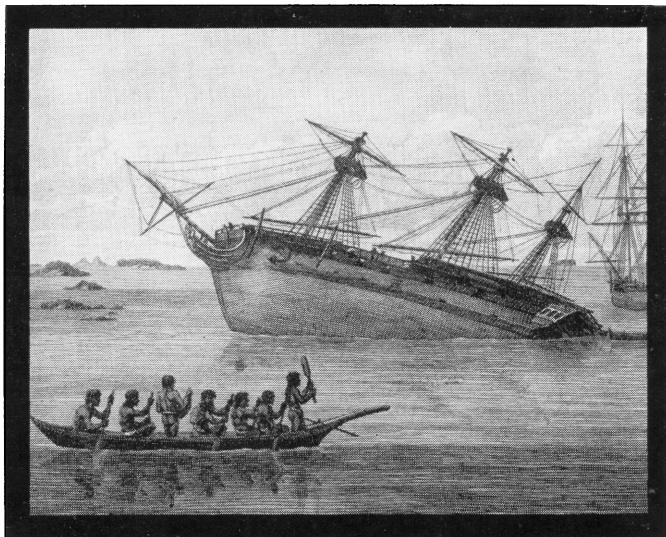
These men were sacrificed at sea; their executioners used pistols. They could hardly have been decked in the bizarre uniform combining English features with one dubiously native one: the cylindrical helmet, seemingly of basketry work, topped with plumes.

What, then, did the pictograph mean to its contemporaries?

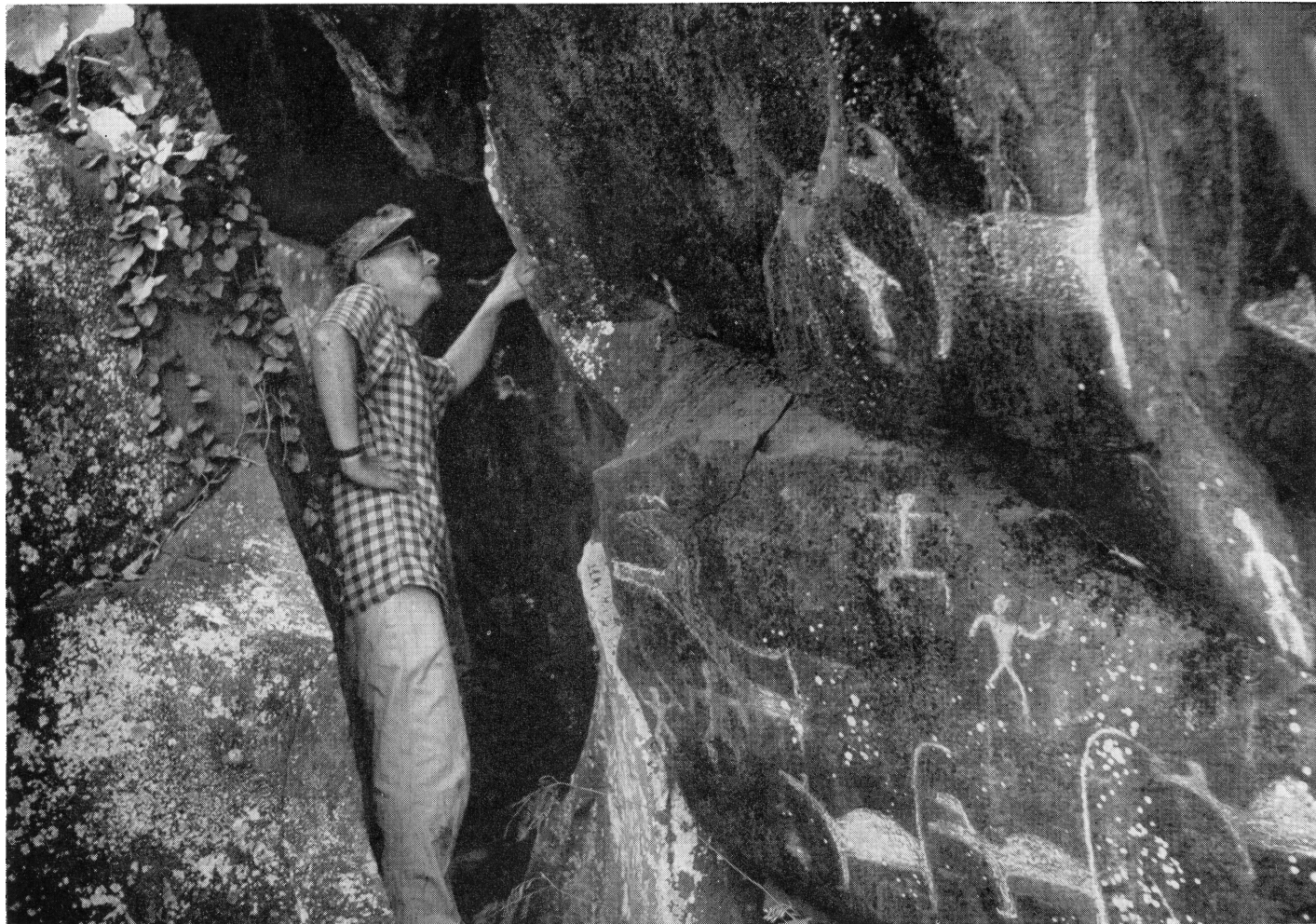
To Hawaiian chiefs, Cook's ships had been a terrifying revelation. Warfare between Islands was perforce a sea-going affair, involving vital logistics. Even giant war canoes were little more than scooped-out logs. In addition to oarsmen, they loaded only what could be lashed on the narrow bridge, between twin hulls. A *haole* ship, a floating island manned with guns, swift, capacious enough to hide an army, meant to warring Hawaiians much what the H-bomb means today—victory.

In this latter half of the eighteenth century, inter-island warfare engrossed Hawaii's chiefs. The Hawaiian universe was afire, forcefully racked into unity by the intolerable genius of Kamehameha the Great. And as foreign ships anchored near, warfare was held in abeyance. Offerings were piled upon ships' owners. At first, gifts in return were meager: an ax, a hammer, a handful of nails. Native awe soon wore off, and ships at anchor were intelligently scanned from native canoes. They were examined

**This lithograph of Vancouver's "Discovery" floundering on the shoals of Queen Charlotte's Sound appeared in Vancouver's official report. Contrary to the belief of some, Vancouver's ship was not Cook's "Discovery", remodeled. Vancouver's vessel was built for speed.**

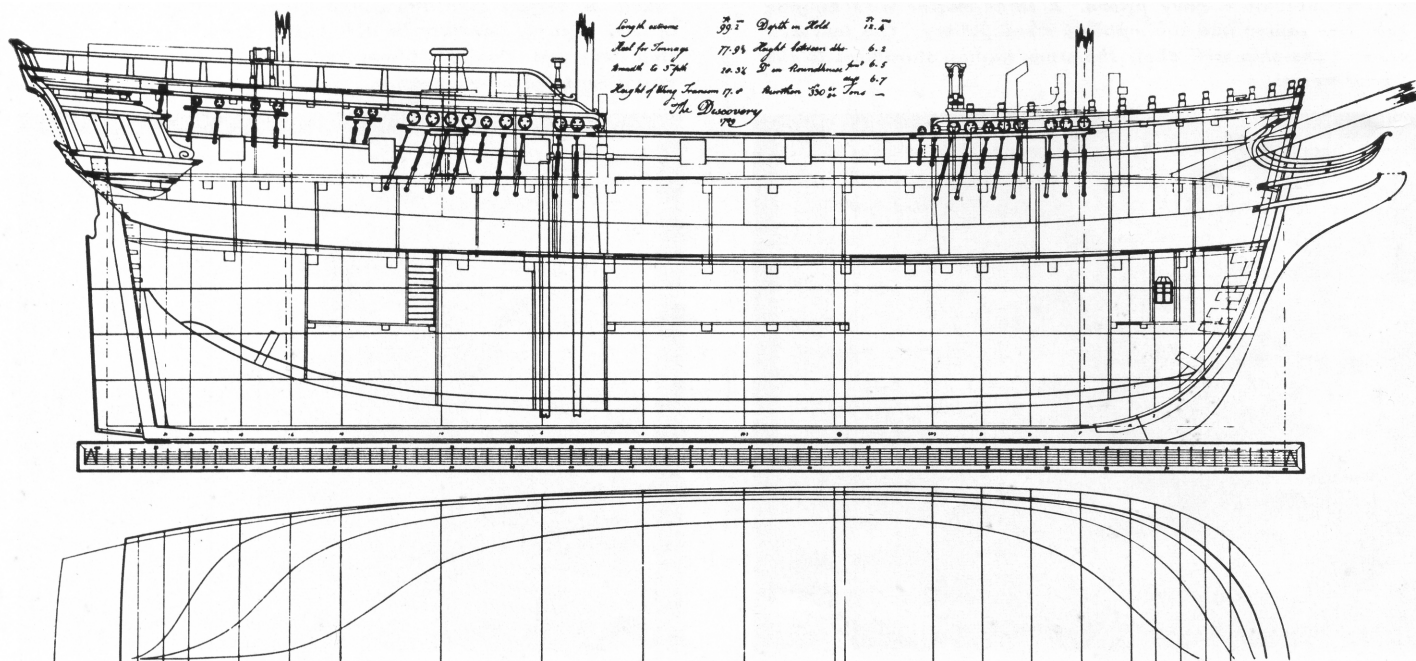






Author Jean Charlot examines petroglyphs made prior to Captain Cook's discovery of the Hawaiian Islands. It was while exploring this area one Sunday that he came across a pictograph of Vancouver's "Discovery" and the figure of a man, shown on opposite page.

The shipbuilder's diagram of the hull lines of Vancouver's "Discovery" reveals marked similarity between the ship and the petroglyph encased in its Nuuanu Valley hide-out. The rubbing, pictured on the next page, is from the collection of Mrs. Louise Judd.



even more closely when beached for repairs or caulking. Chiefs boldly asked for the loan of a seasoned carpenter, a trained smith and, finally, for lessons in shipbuilding. Craftiest of all *alii*, Kamehameha clamped a near exclusive on ship deals. For him, peace-loving Vancouver imprudently laid the keel of the first island-built ship, the thirty-six foot long "Britannia." A greed born of despair impelled rival chiefs to bloody deeds in order that they might own ships, as well.

When new, the *Discovery* drawing meant, to natives, the equivalent of our present-day blueprints of atomic gadgets—which perhaps accounts for the secret hiding place into which the record was tucked.

This unusual pictograph *Discovery* then, bears witness to a world in impetuous transition. Its subject matter is English and eighteenth century; its technique is prehistoric, of the stone age to which the Islands' culture still belonged. Its author may have been an Englishman or a native-born Hawaiian. That single English word scrawled beneath the man in uniform can hardly rule out a native artist.

At first glance, the style of the work is un-Hawaiian. Native esthetic achievements, generalized and abstract, shun the anecdotal. Yet, Hawaiians could at will dabble in realism. In 1817, de Chamisso observed, "We were very much surprised to see, at Titalua, some children drawing ships with a switch in the sand on the beach. Two and three masted vessels were drawn with the greatest accuracy, and provided with the most minute parts of tackling." If children could do this as a game, in more heroic times a spy, with quick eye and retentive memory, may well have jotted down the visual essentials of such a desirable prize as Vancouver's *Discovery*.

In comparing the plate of the foundering ship with its pictograph, a striking difference in approach is observed. Though not a work of supreme artistry, the book illustra-

tion is nevertheless by the hand of an artist: hull, sea and sky—mass and space—build up a unified composition. The work brings to mind ship's models, whittled or limned, by men who knew ships from the inside, having, for a lifetime, scrubbed decks and spliced rope, furled sails, climbed ladders, stood the look-out watch in crows' nests. Here, each mast, each sail, each rope is expressed singly, with careful record as to where it is attached, what it does, where it leads.

Simple as it is, the drawing of the ship appears sophisticated when compared with that of the man firing the gun. It would be but a childish scrawl if the finger action on gun barrel and trigger were not felt so keenly and if the one mechanical detail, the flintlock hammer, were not recorded with such sharp accuracy.

Summing up, the man who did this pictograph was no artist. But he knew this ship, intimately. He felt, in his own arm and fingers, the tension for firing a gun. A mechanic of sorts, and, judging from gun hammer detail, he may have been a smith.

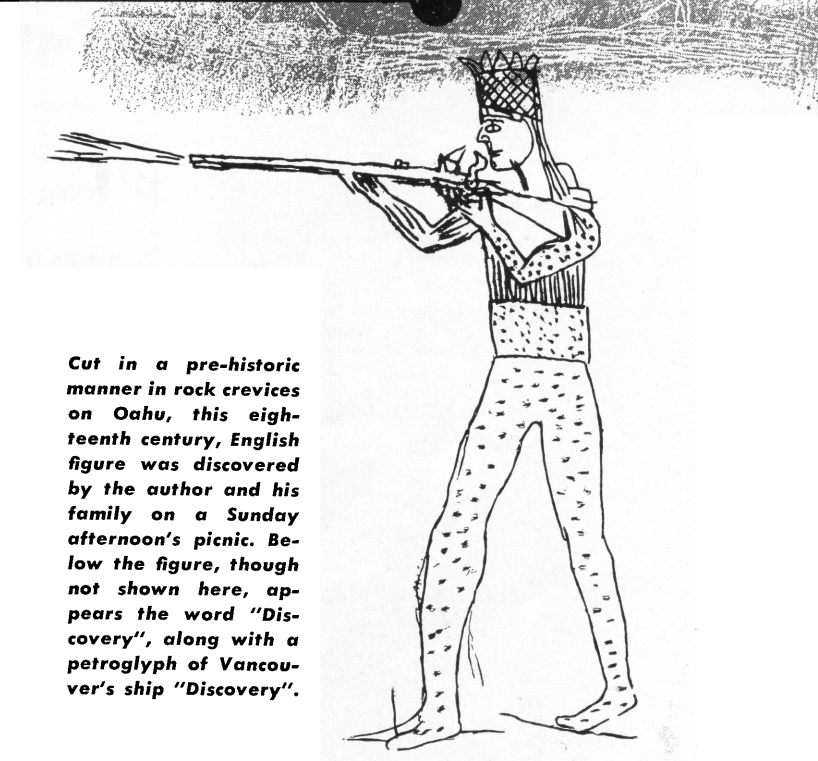
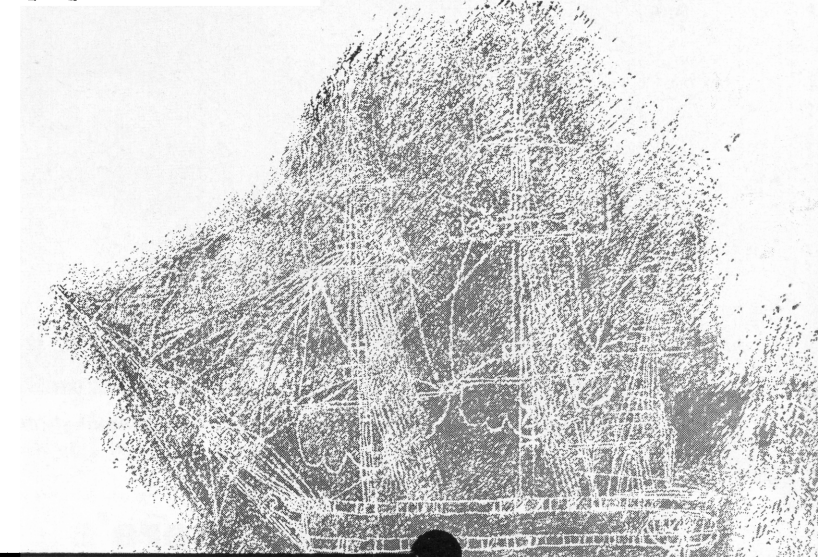
Now scales tip in favor of an English artist—familiar, by birthright, with ships and guns and equally aware of native ways.

We should look for him among specialists—gunsmiths, shipwrights, sailmakers—who were a crucial complement of the military machine of contending chiefs. Adventurers

of this type (Davis and Young) entered history with Kamehameha the Great. Others as loyal, and perhaps as able, followed *alii* of their choice.

One of the battle royal losers, sparked by Kamehameha, was Chief Kaeo. Claimant to Oahu, he was slain in battle soon after Vancouver's departure. It may be that Kaeo's men then hid in the rocky wilds of Nuuanu Valley, as *Kalanikupule's* were to do after the disastrous rout at the Pali. A plausible choice, for the petroglyph maker, would be Kaeo's Scottish smith, Murray, the armorer, who was known to Hawaiians as *Male Amole*.

Commodore F. G. Reinicke, U. S. Navy (Ret.), wholeheartedly endorses the theory of an English hand in the pictograph. In his opinion, only a sailor could have rigged this sketch with such professional competence. As he puts it, "Give this drawing to anyone for copying, today. Chances are he will go wrong somewhere. Every line, however slight, answers a set function and a defined purpose."



Cut in a pre-historic manner in rock crevices on Oahu, this eighteenth century, English figure was discovered by the author and his family on a Sunday afternoon's picnic. Below the figure, though not shown here, appears the word "Discovery", along with a petroglyph of Vancouver's ship "Discovery".