

SAILING SHIP AND DOG-PONI: HISTORIC PETROGLYPHS ON NUKU HIVA, THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS

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During the Marquesan Archaeological Rock Art Survey (1984 to 1989), over 6,000 petroglyphs, 110 pictographs, and 81 sculptured anthropomorphic figures (tiki) were located and recorded (e.g., Edwards and Millerstrom 1995; Millerstrom and Edwards 1998; Millerstrom 1997, 2001, 2003). Some forty-one valleys were visited on five of the presently six inhabited islands; Nuku Hiva, Ua Huka, Ua Pou, Hiva Oa, and Tahuata. The majority of the rock art occurs on Nuku Hiva (Table 1).

Despite the robust rock art inventory, few historic images are to be found. The reason for this is uncertain: perhaps

the 1890s. In his three volumes he discusses the material art in detail, but petroglyphs are mentioned in general terms only.

Regardless of the large number of petroglyphs documented in the archipelago, the archaeological images are not equally distributed in time and space. While several thousand images (3,186 as of 1997) have been recorded in Hatiheu Valley, few have been found in the Taipi Valley, located just to the southeast. In the valley floor of Taipi, one of the largest and well-watered valleys in the archipelago, only six boulders, each with a single figure, have been documented

(Edwards n.d.; Millerstrom n.d.). Except for several brief archaeological surveys in some sections of Taipi Valley in 1989 and later, a systematic archaeological rock art survey has yet to take place in the eastern region of Nuku Hiva. Although rock art research has focused on the northern part of Nuku Hiva, it is doubtful that Taipi proper will ever yield a great number of rock art images.

Marquesan petroglyphs depicting western objects and ideas are culturally significant but have not been previously analyzed. In this essay we discuss, for the first time, one of the few sites with historic motifs. It was found on a unique petroglyph boulder (333TPV 22). In 1989, on Vaihi Ridge just south of Taipi, Edmundo Edwards and several volunteers recorded thirty-one boulders with a total of 409 images (Table 2). On boulder 333TPV 22, a total of seventy-four figures are depicted on the south, east, and top faces of the stone (Table 3). The south-facing panel shows a sailing ship, two "poni", anthropomorphic and geometric figures, and western writing (Figure 1). The boulder measures 2.7 m in length, 2.6 m in width and is 2.1 m high. It is situated approximately two meters west of the trail that, in the past, connected Taipi Valley and Taiohae. Thus the figures are visible to everyone that ventures along on this ancient path. The remaining thirty boulders are located in the vicinity.

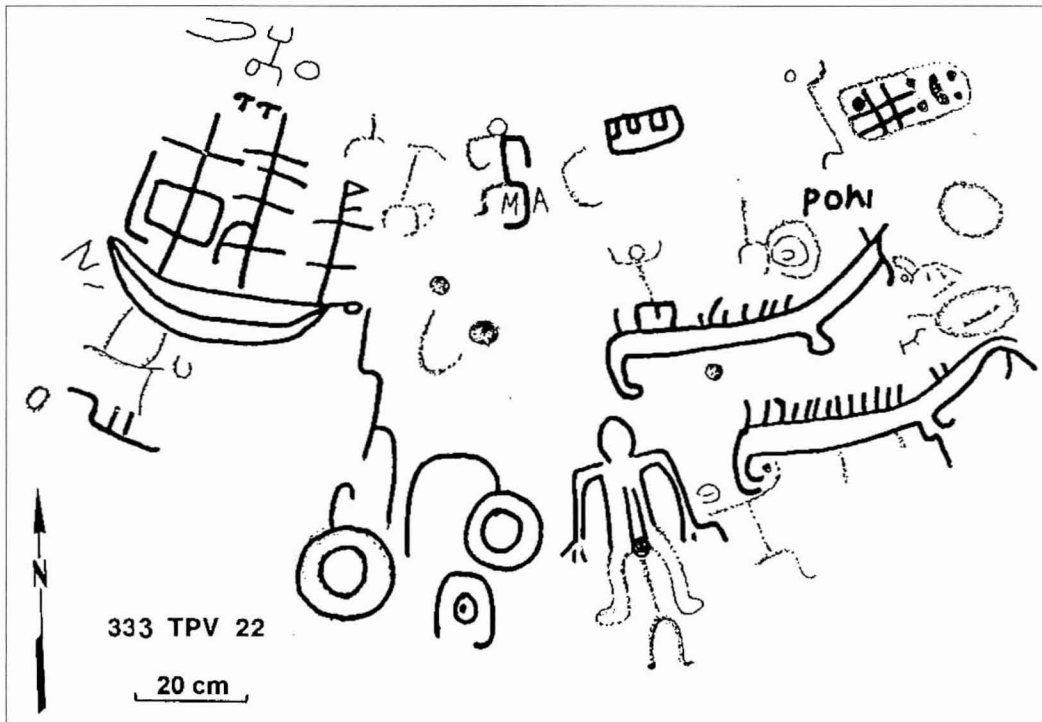


Figure 1. Petroglyph boulder 333TPV 22, Vaihi Ridge, Nuku Hiva.

the custom of pecking images on rocks was no longer practiced after the first westerners came to the islands, or the Marquesans did not include introduced foreign cultural objects or ideas into their rock art repertoire. It is also possible that western visitors pecked the historic petroglyphs. The extensive historic literature is largely silent in regard to petroglyphs.

Petroglyphs are often difficult to see and, to many people, they are not as dramatic as the more visible anthropomorphic sculpture. Van den Steinen (1969a-c), a German physician with an interest in ethnology, worked on the islands in

the 1890s. In his three volumes he discusses the material art in detail, but petroglyphs are mentioned in general terms only.

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THE “PONI”

Carved above the two quadrupeds is the word “poni”. The letter “y” does not occur in the Polynesia alphabet thus “poni” is a Marquesan adaptation of “pony”. We believe that these quadrupeds depict horses and that this is confirmed by the word “poni” incised above them. But when and how did the word “poni” enter the Marquesan spoken vocabulary without becoming part of the Marquesan written record? The word “pony” or “poni” does not occur in the Marquesan-French/French-Marquesan dictionaries (Dordillon 1931, 1932; Le Cléac’h 1997; Hughes and Fischer 1998) but “poney” is the French version of the British word “pony”. Why was not “cheval,” the French word, or the English word “horse,” used? It is possible that the introduced words ‘cheval,’ and “horse’ were too difficult for the Marquesans to pronounce. The French word “poney” only came into the language in 1828, and “ponni” (an alternate spelling) in 1801 (both borrowed from the English). This means that, at the time of introduction, these words were still new words in the French language (C. Nickelsen, personal communication 9/1/05). That leads us to suggest that the Marquesan “poni” would not have come from French. Perhaps “poni” was adopted for a short period until they developed their own term for horse? The Marquesan words for horse have changed over time; *buakka hekke una* or *hekkeuna* were used in the 1790s (Hughes and Fischer 1998:15,93); today a horse is called *ihovare*, *soare*, or *ihorave* (Le Cléac’h 1997:241).

In 1842, the French Rear Admiral DuPetit-Thouars introduced the first horses, bringing them from Chile. One was presented to Iotete, chief of Tahuata, (Deschamps and Laudon 1994:13). We can only imagine what the Marquesans thought when they saw or heard about this strange, large quadruped. Herman Melville, in his famous account of his stay on Nuku Hiva in the month of July 1842 had this to say about a horse that was kept in Rear Admiral DuPetit-Thouars’ camp on Nuku Hiva:

But nothing gained so large a share of admiration as a horse, which had been brought from Valparaiso by the *Achille*, one of the vessels of the squadron. The animal, a remarkably fine one, had been taken ashore and stabled in a hut of coconut boughs within the fortified enclosure. Occasionally it was brought out, and being gaily caparisoned,

was ridden by one of the officers at full speed over the hard sand. This performance was sure to be hailed with loud plaudits, and the *puarkee nuee* (big hog) was unanimously pronounced by the islanders to be the most extraordinary specimen of zoology that had ever come under their observation (Melville 1964:30).

Table 1. Relationships between the number of individual boulder figures (as of 1997).

Island	Sites	Figures	Area in km ²	Population in 1842*	Sources and Comments
Nuku Hiva	603	4,358	330	8,000	Linton (1925); Suggs (1961); Millerstrom (1997)
Hiva Oa	73	488	320	6,000	Millerstrom (1985)
Ua Huka	45	651	77	2,000	Kellum-Ottino (1970); Edwards (1984); Millerstrom (1985)
Ua Pou	17	112	105	2,000	Linton (1925); Millerstrom (1985)
Fatu Hiva	2	50±	80	1,500	Millerstrom (1997); Ollier n.d.
Tahuata	4	52	50	700	Linton (1925); Millerstrom (1985)
Eiao	1	1+?	52	uninhabited	sites reported by yacht visitors but not documented
Hatutu	?		18	uninhabited	none reported
Motane	?		15	uninhabited	none reported
Fatu Hutu	?		1.3	uninhabited	none reported
Geographic and population data from R. Brousse					
* First official census in the Marquesas					

Despite Melville’s generous use of a literary license in his book *Typee*, he writes that the Marquesans compared the horse to a large pig (*puaka nui*), a reasonable comparison since pigs were an important part of their cultural practices and the largest animal on the islands. However, *puaka* or *pua’a* also can mean animal in general (Le Cléac’h 1997). It is interesting to note that the “poni” figures on the boulder are in the same style as the pecked dog petroglyphs, only hatch marks are added to define hair. The “poni” however, lacks the dramatic, long, and curved tail of the prehistoric Marquesan dog petroglyph.

ANTHROPOMORPH

The Marquesan petroglyphs of anthropomorphic figures depict the same form on all the six islands. While most Marquesan petroglyphs are pecked, similar to the majority of the islands’ petroglyphs, historic figures are incised with a metal tool. The same person(s) that carved the “poni”, the ship and the Western letters has re-carved some of the anthropomorphs and the geometric figures. Thus two different events took place on the boulder, but the time difference between them is uncertain. Based on archaeological survey and excavation in Hatiheu Valley, it is likely that the majority of the Marquesan images are from the late prehistoric to early historic period (Millerstrom 2001). However, in some areas, the petroglyphs go much further back in time. For instance, the face or *Mata komoe* figure, so common in the islands, is also depicted on the top surface of the boulder. A similar face on a stone slab

Image classification	Number	%
I. ANTHROPOMORPHS		
1. Anthropomorphic stick figure	26	
2. Square-bodied anthropomorphic figure	1	
3. Double outline anthropomorphic figure		
4. Open body anthropomorphic figure		
5. Naturalistic human figure	6	
6. Profile squatting human figure		
7. Human and dog combination		
8. Human and bird combination		
9. Human and fish combination		
10. Human-lizard		
11. Humanoid		
12. <i>Tiki</i>	1	
13. Anthropomorphic body part	83	
Subtotal	117	28.6
II. ZOOMORPHS		
1. Dog	1	
2. Lizard		
3. Turtle		
4. Fish		
5. Octopus		
6. Bird		
7. Horse	2	
8. Unidentified creature		
Subtotal	3	0.7
III. MATERIAL OBJECT		
1. Watercraft	1	
Subtotal	1	0.2
IV. GEOMETRIC MOTIF		
1. Curvilinear motif	268	
2. Linear motif	12	
3. Cupule		
4. Geometric, exotic figures		
Subtotal	280	68.5
V. Historic letter	8	2.0
Total	409	100

Image classification	Number	%
I. ANTHROPOMORPHS		
1. Anthropomorphic stick figure	13	17.6
2. Square-bodied anthropomorphic figure		
3. Double outline anthropomorphic figure		
4. Open body anthropomorphic figure		
5. Naturalistic human figure	1	1.6
6. Profile squatting human figure		
7. Human and dog combination		
8. Human and bird combination		
9. Human and fish combination		
10. Human-lizard		
11. Humanoid		
12. <i>Tiki</i>		
13. Anthropomorphic body part	9	12.2
Subtotal	23	31.4
II. ZOOMORPHS		
1. Dog		
2. Lizard		
3. Turtle		
4. Fish		
5. Octopus		
6. Bird		
7. Horse	2	
Subtotal	2	2.7
III. MATERIAL OBJECT		
1. Ship	1	
Subtotal	1	1.4
IV. GEOMETRIC MOTIF		
1. Curvilinear motif	38	51.4
2. Linear motif	7	9.5
3. Cupule		
4. Geometric, exotic figures		
5. Historic letter	3 sets	4.0
Subtotal		64.9
Total	74	100

was found in an archaeological context on Ha'ataive'a beach (Nuku Hiva). The petroglyph slab was located between two earth-ovens at the bottom of an excavation test pit. It appears that the site was first used from approximately AD 1100 (Suggs 1961 66:182-184). The anthropomorphic stick figures and the circular geometrics are similar to many of the petroglyphs found on the Hawaiian Islands (Lee and Stasack 1999:31; Millerstrom 2001). Indeed, the close cultural connection between the Marquesas and the Hawaiian islands is demonstrated, not only in rock art research, but also through DNA analysis of rat bones (Matisoo-Smith et. al. 1998), and other cultural traits (e.g., Kirch 2000).

THE SHIP

The vessel depicted in the petroglyph at Nuku Hiva appears to be sailing to the left as the viewer faces the image. It is shown with three masts, each with horizontal yards, the forward mast seems to have her fore-topsail set. There is a triangular "flag" set on the rear-most or mizzen mast. A line runs laterally through the hull and there is what appears to be a flag hanging from a staff at the stern (Figure 2).

The artist included a number of lines above the hull. These may represent distinct items of rigging. The lines depicted above the hull are consistent with rigging, while the diagonal lines may represent some of the cables woven together to form the standing rigging, used to support the mast and the running rigging, which would have been used to set and manipulate the various sails. The horizontal lines accurately depict the proper placement of the yards from which the sails were hung.

Three-mast vessels with horizontal yards are considered to be "ship-rigged". Vessels with the mizzen (furthest aft) mast rigged with a boom and fore and aft sails was considered a bark (sometimes spelled *barque*). If both the mizzen and the main (center) mast rigged with fore and aft sails were set on booms, she would have been a Barkentine. Brigs and brigantines had two masts. Vessels with all fore and aft rigged sails were called schooners, regardless of their size and the number of masts (*Webster Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* 1967). Generally speaking, the ship-

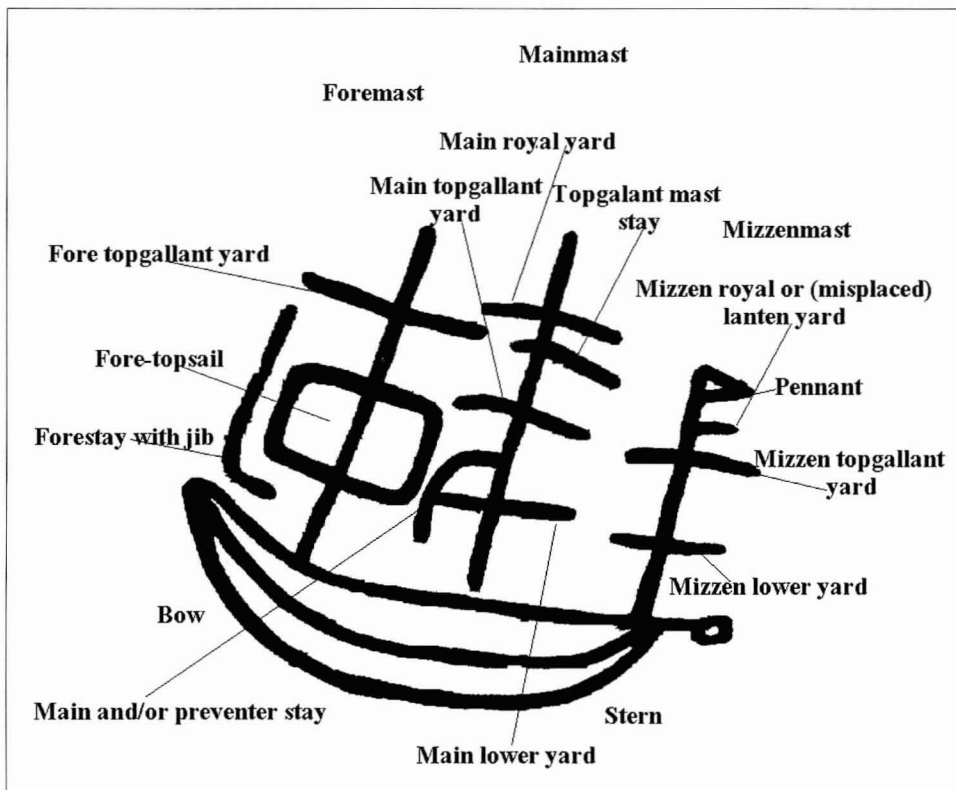


Figure 2. The Ship petroglyph with the features labeled.

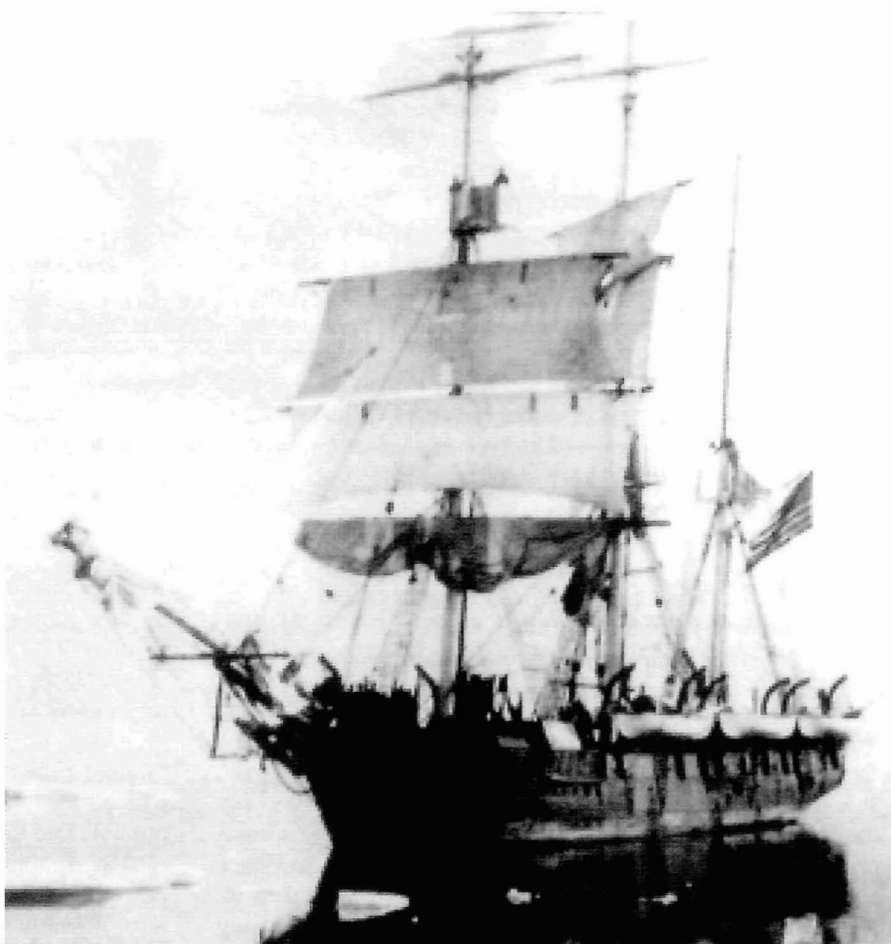


Figure 3. *John P. West* in Arctic waters. Denver Natural History Museum.

rigged vessel was more popular in the earlier periods, with vessels transitioning to bark, then schooner rigging as the 19th century progressed. From a seaman's point of view, the more square rigging a ship carried, the more men were required to man her. Conversely, the more fore and aft rigging a vessel carried, the less number of men were required to sail her.

A good example of this can be seen by comparing the number of American whaling vessels cataloged as "ship" with those listed as "bark: rigged. Referencing Starbuck (1964), we find that in 1830, 128 ships sailed in the fleet along with only seven barks. In 1845 there were 198 ship-rigged vessels and 59 barks. By 1860, ships became outnumbered 43 to 59. Towards the end of the whaling era in 1876, there were but four ships sailing with thirty-nine bark-rigged whaling vessels. The vessels mentioned by Starbuck are all New England whalers. All are of American registry, but they are fairly representative of the international fleet as well. We might interpret the fact that the petroglyph depicts a ship, rather than a bark, to indicate it was likely made during some earlier part of the 19th century, or is a rendering of an older vessel later on.

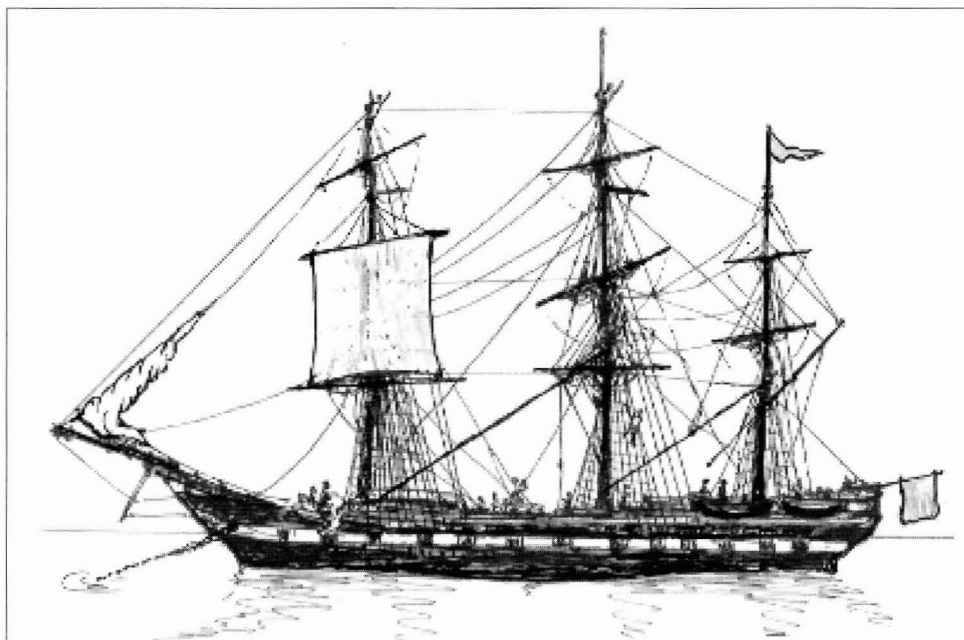


Figure 4. A ship facing in the same direction as the petroglyph ship. Drawing by Captain Rick Rogers.

Having determined that the vessel is a "ship", we can begin to look at some of the details to make further determinations. It appears that the ship is "sailing" right to left; we immediately discern a sail set on her foremast. The sail is set on the lower half of the mast and does not reach to the deck. We also see that the mast is depicted either in front of, or through the sail as it is being viewed from the left, or port, side of the ship. We might therefore state that she has only the fore-topsail set (Harland 1984:15). This would be a common configuration for a ship that was entering or leaving a harbor, as the fore-topsail was usually the last sail taken in, and the first to be put out into the wind. Also, a ship cruising offshore at a slow sailing speed and trading with local people might only use this sail as it was the easiest of the large sails

to maneuver. Any singular sail gave the ship the most maneuverability in light wind. An example might be a photograph of the whale-ship *John P. West*, becalmed in the arctic (Figure 3).

Above the fore-topsail is another horizontal line. This would be the topgallant yard, from which would be hung another sail while at sea. Forward of the sail is an angular line which seems to show the forestay, from which the jib-sail may be shown ready to be deployed.

The main, or center, mast shows four horizontal lines, which seem to be the various yards from which sails would be hung while under way. These would be the main lower yard, main topsail yard, and the main topgallant yard, with the main royal yard not shown. That second from the top line pointing aft may be the topgallant stay, one of the cables that secured the masts together, it may have been secured at the "cross-trees", where parts of the masts were connected and a "crow's nest" would have been on some ships, especially whalers. The curved line bending down between the lower two yards appear to be the lower mast stay and/or the preventer stay, which might have been "snaked" together, appearing as one thick cable.

The third, or mizzenmast, has two horizontal yards as well as a third rising up at an angle towards the stern. This upper line might be half of a royal yard or, although it is depicted higher than most, it may represent the yard for the fore and aft rigged mizzen sail (Morris 1987:20). A pennant or small flag is atop the mizzenmast, waving towards the back of the ship. This may be an indication that the wind is from the "starboard" side of the boat. If that were the case, then the sail would be "aback" with the wind on the bow. That is, with the wind in front, rather than in back, of the canvas. This maneuver would be used to bring the vessel to a stop, as when anchoring or wishing to drift slowly with the wind and current while trading with slower-moving canoes.

There appears to be a horizontal flag-staff with a flag hanging off the stern.

Another feature of the ship petroglyph, which is noticeable, is the line running through the length of the hull from the bow to stern. This might be an indication of a larger vessel with two decks or rows of gun-ports. A popular motif on 19th century sailing vessels, particularly American whaling ships, was the strip of white paint banding the vessel about the "waist" (Shapiro 1959:38-39). Often false gun ports were painted along this stripe to "bluff" unshipped ordnance. It is possible that the line in question points in that direction.

It is amusing to speculate if the human-like symbols carved into the rock above the ship might refer to men in the tops, possibly the artist himself. In considering the choice of lines used by the artist in this ship's petroglyph, I would assume he had some first-hand experience aboard ships, either

as a crewmember or passenger, rather than as a passive observer. This drawing is the author's interpretation of what the rock artist might have been depicting in his rendering (Figure 4).

Having discussed the appearance of the petroglyph in question, it might be instructive to review what the historical record has to offer about ships that visited the two harbors near the petroglyph. We might ponder the possibilities of their activities as the impetus for that portion of the rock art.

Although the Marquesas Islands had been "discovered" by the Spanish in 1595 (Dunmore 1991) and visited by Captain Cook in 1774 (Villiers 1967:219), the first ship-rigged vessel to visit Nuku Hiva was George Vancouver's supply vessel, the 312-ton *Daedalus*, under the command of Richard Hergest (Denning 1995:49). Thereafter, a steady stream of ships visited Nuku Hiva, each visit with an interesting story that goes beyond the scope of this paper. Briefly, American and European ships often stopped at Nuku Hiva to re-supply on their way up to the Pacific Northwest, the Sandwich Islands and/or Canton, China. Sandalwood was collected after 1811 until its depletion in the 1830s (Strauss 1963:11).

The war of 1812 brought the U.S.S. *Essex* and three British prizes, the *Greenwich*, *Sir Andrew Hammond*, and *Seringapatam* to Taiohae (Ireland 2000:213). After that war, Americans returned to the Pacific in increasing numbers (Starbuck 1964). By 1815 some one hundred and seventy ships had visited the Marquesas (Denning 1980:122); seventeen were naval vessels and the rest were on whaling and trading voyages (Langdon 1984). About two thirds of the ships were American and most of the rest were British. Three French ships had paid visits to the islands, as did two Russian and one Polish ship. In 1828 U.S.S. *Vincennes* paid a visit.

During 1833, the first three white women came ashore at Nuku Hiva with the American Missionaries. Fourteen vessels visited Taiohae during the nine months they stayed there (Denning 1980:184). Three Hawaiian servants arrived with the American missionaries at Nuku Hiva. Their names were Ione, Davida and Kalama (Alexander 1935:138). Two seem to have remained on the island serving as advisors to some of the Marquesans. Between 1853 and 1905, fourteen Hawaiian families served as missionaries to the Marquesas Islands (Mission Children Society Archives 1831-1909).

Larger vessels soon began to visit Nuku Hiva. One was the French man-of-war *Reine Blanche* which brought an admiral who convinced the natives to cede their island to the French in May of 1842. By 1854, the Marquesas, usually Taiohae, had been visited by a number of warships. Twenty-four were British naval vessels; seven were from the United States; and thirty-five were French men-of-war (Denning 1980:225).

One of the last of the three-mast square-rigged ships to visit Nuku Hiva was the 312-ton frigate *Empersa* that left Callao, Peru, on November 22, 1862. She failed in her attempt to gather forced laborers in the Marquesas, but was more successful elsewhere in the Pacific (Maude 1986:32-38).

There may have been a few more ship-rigged vessels to visit Nuku Hiva, but as stated earlier, fewer and fewer owners chose that rigging. Steam-powered vessels became more common, while shipping in and around the Marquesas began a decline.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Few petroglyphs depicting historic images occur in the Marquesas. The details shown of the sailing ship suggest that a sailor or someone familiar with the construction of the vessel made the petroglyph. The two "dog-poni", we believe, were made by a Marquesan. It is likely that only a Marquesan would be familiar with the cultural traits and features surrounding the dog images. He or she was taking a familiar figure and transforming it into a new representation of an unfamiliar animal.

The time-period is uncertain, but it is likely that the Marquesan anthropomorphic figures were made in the prehistoric or early historic, while the lettering that spells out "poni" and the ship were made sometime after the horse was introduced to the islands.

Could it be that the Hawaiian missionaries, Ione, Davida and Kalama, two of which remained on Nuku Hiva and served as advisors to some of the Marquesans, had something to do with them? It is possible that they, or some Hawaiian beachcombers, had some influence on the petroglyph in question? They were all literate men and women who could have been exposed to Hawaiian petroglyph art. Was it made by a Marquesan who had learned to write in English? The pair of incised letters "TT" above the sailing ship and the "MA" on a stick figure are perhaps the initials of the 'artists'. But this, unfortunately, we will never know.

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