



The Ahau Chronicles



Volume 46

June 26, 2012

Subscribers: 471



6 Ahau 3 Sek

Long Count: 12.19.19.9.0

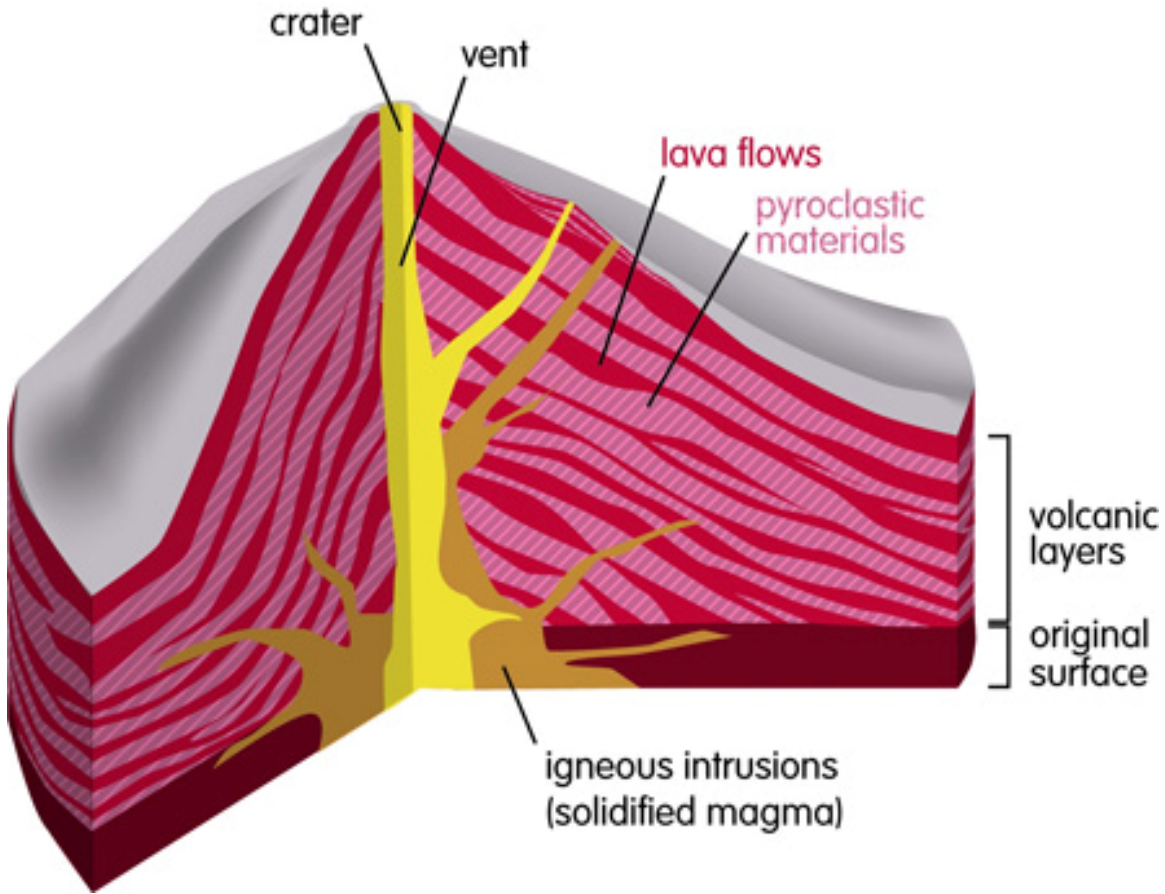


Lessons From Hawaii

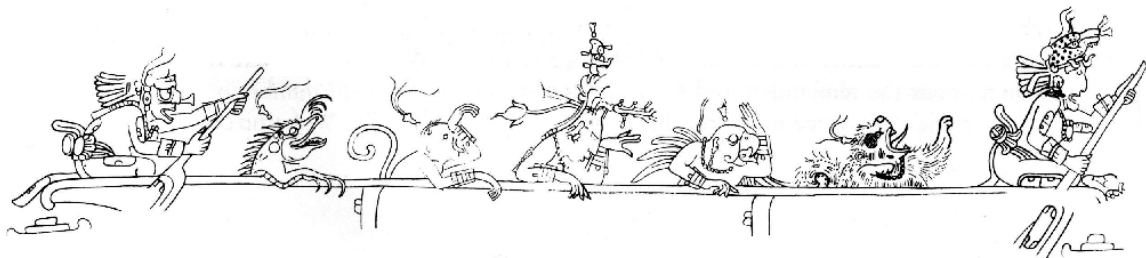
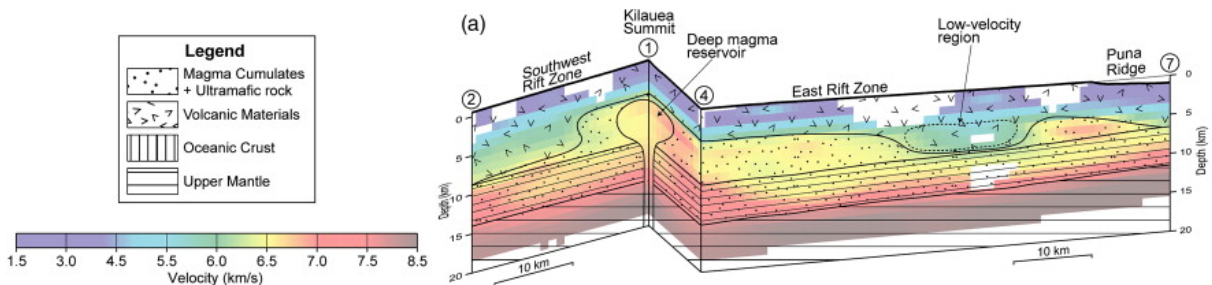


My recent trip to the Big Island of Hawaii continues to resonate with me and produce numerous insights into the nature of volcanic islands that I have been using to reimagine the mysteries of Robinson Crusoe Island. Below is an aerial view showing the Kona coast with the snow-capped Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa volcanoes looming on the horizon. We swam in the turquoise bay at center after visiting the adjacent Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historic Park, the Royal Grounds of the ancient Hawaiian kings. One of the last Hawaiian kings, King Kalakaua, welcomed British astronomers to his remote island paradise to witness the Transit of Venus of 1874.





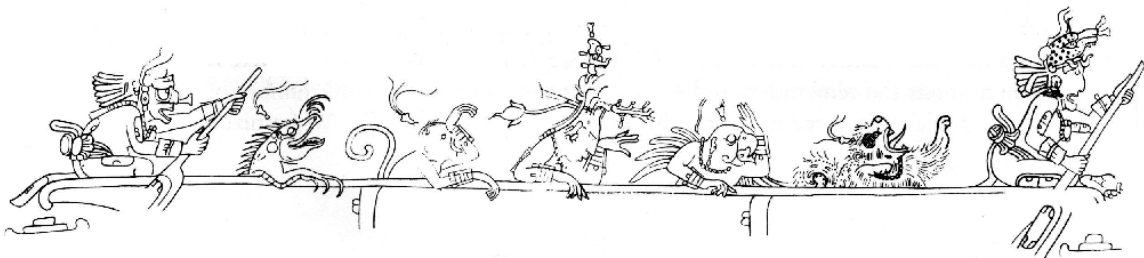
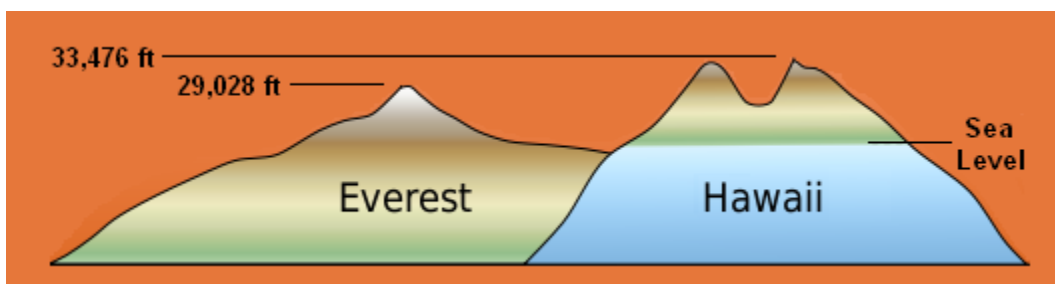
The Hawaiian Islands are a series of shield volcanoes, a type of volcano composed of layer upon layer of hardened lava. The chaotic forces that create this otherworldly landscape are violent and unpredictable. As a result, the stratigraphy of the underlying rock is complex and much harder to understand than other landscapes created by gentler forces such as erosion or water deposition. The graphic below shows a cross-section of the Kilauea Volcano near where we stayed, the most active volcano on earth. The upwelling magma bubbles and bursts, tearing the land apart and building new land out into the ocean. Robinson Crusoe Island is also a shield volcano, although a much older one, estimated at approximately 4-5 million years compared to the relatively young 800,000 years of Hawaii's Big Island. Seeing such a landscape in its relative infancy was quite educational.





One of the characteristics of volcanoes that bear directly on the potential for buried treasure on Robinson Crusoe Island is the natural formation of lava tubes. These tubes are conduits for molten lava which can then drain once the lava flow has stopped, leaving magnificent subterranean passages. They are known to exist on Easter Island and were used there in the past as hideouts for war parties. We visited the Thurston Lava Tube, shown above, near the Kilauea Caldera and were able to easily walk its entire length without difficulty. Imagine if similar tubes existed near the island monument allowing access into the heart of the volcano. A magical labyrinth may lie beneath the monument, its entrance ingeniously concealed but with the massive Sun God tower and crouching jaguar inviting admission for those with pure hearts and honorable intentions.

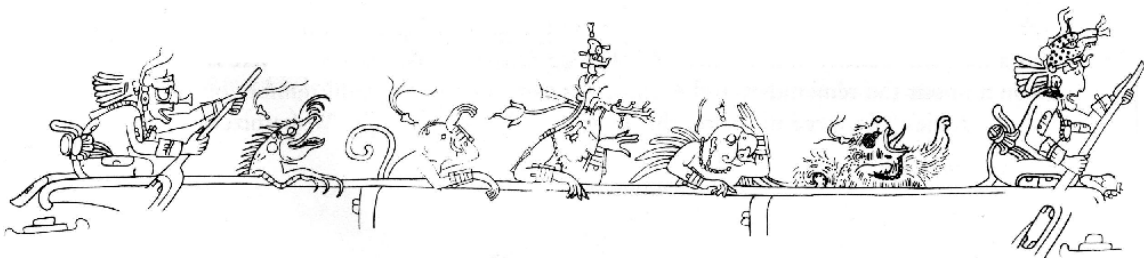
Another interesting fact about Hawaii is that, measured from the sea floor, it is actually the tallest mountain on earth, more than 4,000 feet higher than Mount Everest. I am pleased to add Hawaii to my list of sacred volcanic seamounts of the Pacific Ocean.



During my visit to the Imaloa Planetarium in the days before the Venus Transit, I was reminded of the mighty tradition of long-distance voyaging canoes that I have studied in the past. The immense expanses of the Pacific were explored and colonized by brave seafarers possessing an advanced navigational astronomy, a worldview of the cosmos that allowed them to sail thousands of miles over long months at sea and arrive safely at the tiny speck of land of their destination. Below is a photo of the canoe *Hokule'a*, built in 1975 to replicate a traditional double-hulled canoe and which has made many great voyages in honor of the ancient traditions. Currently the Polynesian Voyaging Society is planning a World Wide Voyage to “navigate toward a healthy and sustainable future.”



The prominence given within the planetarium to the voyaging canoes and the ancient ways of engaging with the sky brought back to me the memories I had of my earliest nights viewing the stars above Robinson Crusoe Island as well as Palenque, where I first fell in love with the grandeur of the cosmos and tried to find a firm anchor for my place in the universe. Immersed beneath the endless heavens, washed in starlight, one can achieve transcendence and catch a sidelong glimpse of eternity. But even eternity is punctuated with spectacles and with the Venus Transit now behind us we look forward to the Total Solar Eclipse of November 13th. Here is a postcard from the future:





In the introductory email to the last newsletter I requested photos from readers who had experienced any of the recent cosmic events. The photos at the top of the page are from my friend Ricardo Moyano Vasconcellos, shown at center with friends, who witnessed the Transit of Venus from the ancient site of Guanajuato to the northwest of Mexico City. Ricardo is a professional archaeoastronomer and was well equipped to view the transit. The photos below Ricardo's were sent to me by Andrea Nicholson who went to the Stardome in Auckland, New Zealand. Andrea reported observations at the beginning of the transit but clouds later on. She says she was ready to go to any lengths to rise above the clouds! I found it especially serendipitous that two observers separated by 7,000 miles would nevertheless send me transit photos taken at almost the exact same time. Venus appears in the same place in both photos and, although I don't have the photographic evidence, it seems similar to one of the few views I had through the clouds in Hawaii, perhaps the one and only view I had from the Green Sand Beach. Three observers spread across the vast Pacific Ocean, sharing the same moment of a rare cosmic spectacle never again to be seen in our lifetimes. Unforgettable!

