

Tahiti Research Paper

Tahiti is a beautiful chain of islands in the South Pacific archipelago known for their crystal blue waters, Tahitian pearls, and a true representation of paradise. Paradise is an ideal place comparing its features with heaven's unmatched grace in the sky. Many see Tahiti as a place for vacation, but rather seen by the natives as the "Heart of Polynesia". In 1976, Hōkūle'a sailed from Hawai'i back to her homeland in order to reconnect with their Polynesian 'ohana. This voyage brought hope to all island groups and how they felt about reviving lost cultural practices. This was the start of the revival of the Polynesian society.

French Polynesia consists of 121 islands separated by ocean 1,930,500 square miles apart. In the Pacific Ocean these islands would lie just between Australia and South America. Paradise was formed by volcanoes under the sea and includes very high peaks, coral reefs and large lagoons. These coral reefs and large lagoons are what attracts us as travelers. Tahiti is somewhat 28 miles long and 404 square miles wide. The highest peak of Tahiti is Mont Orohena which is 7,352 feet above sea level. The northwestern part of Tahiti is known as Tahiti Nui or "Big Tahiti" and the southern part is smaller than the other known as Tahiti Iti or "Small Tahiti". Tahiti Nui consists of Tahiti's capital, Papeete, where so many people gather and populate there.

The warmer and more of a rainy season is November through April. Temperature averages from 75 degrees fahrenheit to 88 degrees fahrenheit. In dry season, temperature ranges from 68 degrees fahrenheit to 82 degrees fahrenheit. There seasons were the opposite from ours. Because of how fertile the island was, land resources and fishing were the main production food for the people.

Mont Orohena is 7,352 ft near Arue, Tahiti. Mont Orohena is ranked as the first highest mountain in French Polynesia. Orohena is an extinct volcano near Mont Aorai, which is the

second highest peak of French Polynesia. These two highest peaks of French Polynesia show the product of several volcanoes under the sea and what they are able to create.

Samuel Wallis, captain of the HMS Dolphin, discovered Tahiti on June 18th 1767. Wallis gave Tahiti the name of “King George Island” in honor of the English King. But most people know Tahiti as a part of the “Society Islands”. Wallis and his crew had very hard times with the natives of Tahiti, therefore his crew fired his cannons destroying canoes laid on the shores and them. There were problems between the natives and Wallis but eventually resulted in relationships that allowed his crew to anchor their ship in one of the bays. Wallis was personally welcomed by Ohera, the queen of Tahiti, and was able to create a trade economy between the crews and Tahiti’s resources. When it was time for Wallis’s crew to sail back home, it was important that they had the proper things to go back home safely upon their ship. The resources traded with them between the Tahitians were mostly things that could help with nourishing their bodies until they have arrived to their destination. Therefore, they were able to exchange things such as clothing, food and water.

Wallis’s discovery of paradise encouraged him to return to England and tell everyone of his findings in the Pacific waters. Along his way back, he also discovered Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, and Indonesia which is known now as the Wallis Archipelago. Wallis and his crew returned to England on May 20, 1768. In the 19th century, Admiral Du Petit- Thouars arrived and proposed a treaty to the Pomare. Du Petit- Thouars represented Queen Pomare IV as consul in France. The Franco- Tahitian Treaty of 1838 demanded friendship and reciprocal freedom. Pleads such as religion had gone back and forth between Queen Pomare IV and France. However, as the framework of Tahiti had taken its course, Tahiti was seen sovereign by France. Du Petit- Thouars later created a relationship between himself (France) and those who disagreed with the

Pomare Monarchy. He needed people that would be easier to work with if they do not want a monarchy and want to be related to another country. With this relationship he was able to create a protectorate in 1842. After some years, Tahiti was then annexed by France in 1880. The monarchy was said to be gone but some still believe that the monarch still lived in their homes.

Tahitians had many ways on how to keep their traditions alive throughout the turmoil happening in the islands. Once the Europeans discovered the “Society Islands” some things and people’s perspective of things changed. Oral history or ‘orero was commonly used throughout the land. Oral history was something that natives could grab ahold of the stories of the gods and their adventures. Not only in their language did they carry their stories, but in order to become someone who transmits history through generations, they had to be well rounded in all aspects of their culture. With a uniting voice and infallible memory the speaker is able to hook the audience into wanting to listen to more and share the stories on their own. The other things that had to be present was mana of the ‘ike, the knowledge itself and a tapu or kapu. Since only some Tahitians were chosen to take ‘Orero as a profession it was necessary for a kapu to be put upon the information given and received by the people and future generations. Like many of the other island groups, tattooing originated in French Polynesia. Tohu, the god of tattoo describes it as patterns that tell a specific story or your genealogy. In their culture, tattoo’s were something beautiful and also used for ceremonial purposes.

Tahitians also used marae. Marae are open- air sanctuaries used to keep the eternity of Polynesia’s power. These marae were large, sacred and built so that when it was time, gods were worshipped. These times of worships were times that natives could build peace between kanaka and akua therefore creating a sense of honor for our kupuna. Other things such as celebrations of war and long distance voyages were done here.

Music and dance were also ways that Tahitians could connect to the aspects of their lives. Dances were often done to welcome a visitor, pray to a God, or to challenge an enemy as well. Tahitians have two styles of dancing that include many types of drumming that sound pleasing to one's ear. The first style of dance that is very known to a vast amount of people around the world is the Ote'a. This is the type of dance with quick beats on the drum with very rigorous movements on the hips. This dance is done with the Tahitian To'ere, or the Tahitian drums. This style of dancing is very traditional to Tahiti along with their other style of dancing known as Aparima. This style of dancing is very much like hula with soft motions and hand gestures usually done with the tahitian ukulele. Tahitian dance is very popular around the world and there are many schools that teach to people of all ages interested in learning. Two schools, Te Vaura Ori and Tahiti ora are two dance schools in Tahiti, and Nonosina is a very popular tahitian dance school here in Hawai'i.

Tahitian is the language considered to be used all the time there. This language belonged to the Eastern part of the Polynesian subgroup prior to the discovery of Tahiti by the Europeans. Their language was banned from them and they were taught French, but still our languages have survived and are still being spoken today.

In conclusion, Tahiti is not just a place where someone resides and goes to vacation. Its crystal blue seas and Tahitian pearls are more than just features of an island. It was a land in which our kūpuna sailed from to reside here in Hawaii. "Survival, rediscovery, and restoration of pride and dignity" is what holds us together and what provides Tahiti and Hawaii with a bond today. The rediscovery of knowledge that we are able to use today in order to show that we are moving forward and making our way back as a living culture, both Tahitian and Hawaiian.

Lastly, honoring our kūpuna and the ‘ike they have left for us, this everlasting hope and future will forever be lasting through all the generations.

Work Cited

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