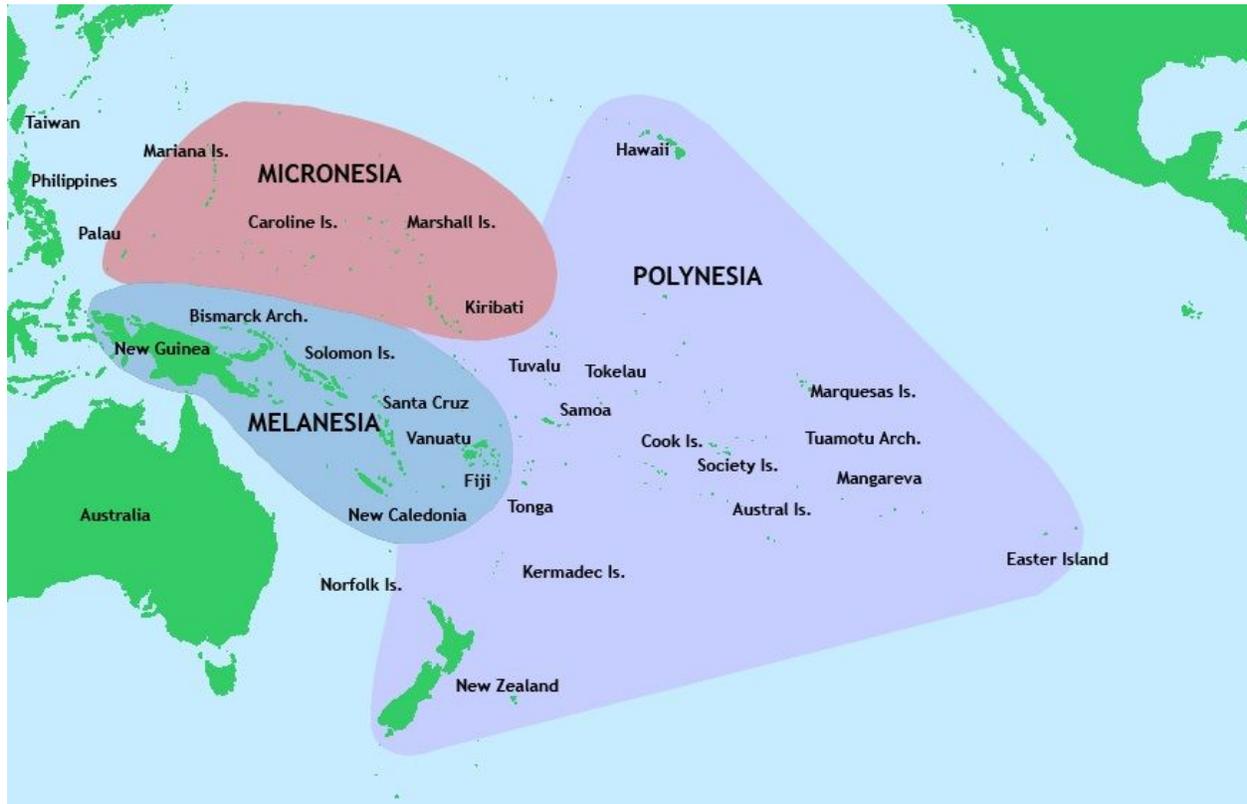


Polynesia: A Culture of Discovery



Polynesian Culture is a blend of seafaring island civilizations. Each of these cultures are similar because they were founded by the same ancestors. According to the University of Hawai'i, the following is the accepted account of how and when each of the following Polynesian civilizations was founded.

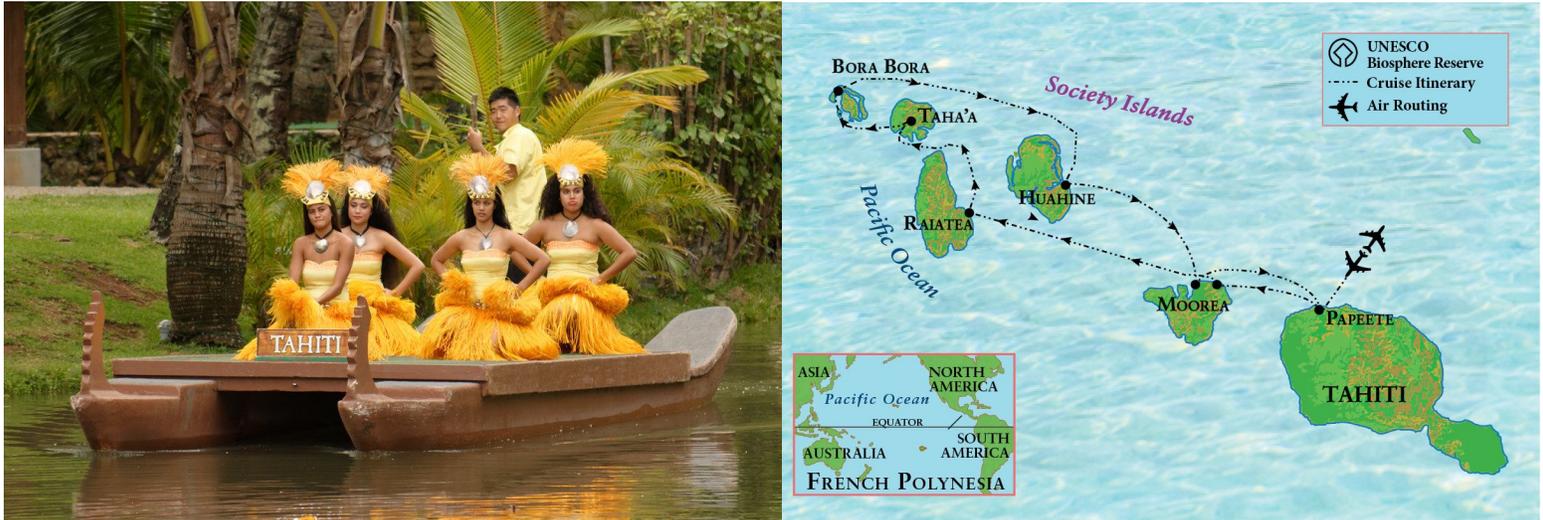
50,000 Years Ago: Hunter Gatherers settle New Guinea and Australia.

1600-1200 B.C.: A seafaring civilization called the Lapita spread from New Guinea (Middle left of the map) to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga (in the middle of the map).

300 B.C.: Settlers from Samoa and Tonga discover Tahiti-Nui and Hiva (the Marquesas Islands) (middle right of map).

400 A.D.: Settlers from Tahiti and Hiva (the Marquesas Islands) settle Hawai'i.

Tahiti: A Peaceful Island Paradise

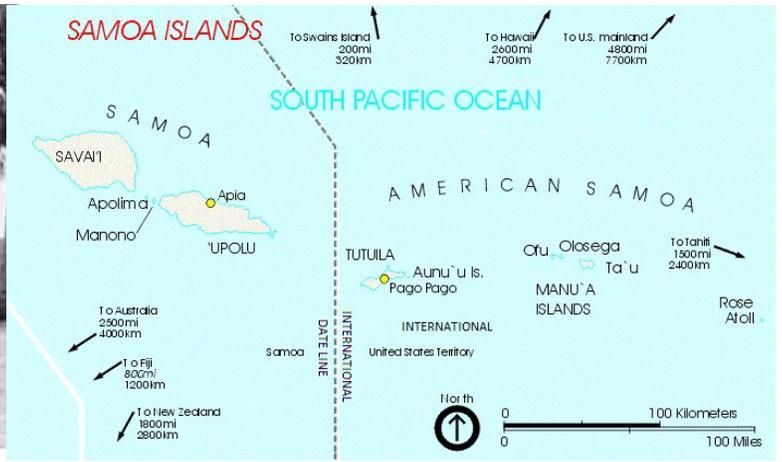


Founded in 300 A.D., the Tahitian people have established a culture of peaceful cooperation with themselves and the land. Their common greeting is the phrase “La orana” (pronounced “yow-rana” which translates to “may you live a thousand years.” According to the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Tahitian community seeks to accomplish peace at all costs because conflict can trigger the spirits of the offended party’s ancestors to kill the offender.

The defining spiritual characteristic in Tahitian culture is the concept of *Mana* or “a life force that connects all living things.” As such, *mana* can take many forms. It can represent health, strength and knowledge. If a person is sick, he/she/they is low on mana. If a person is struggling to remember how to build a house/canoe, he/she/they is also low on mana. The best way to resolve mana in Tahitian culture is to make peace with his/her/their living peers and ancestors.

In 1842, the island of Tahiti and its surrounding islands were added by the French as a protectorate (an informal colony). Although, the relationship has changed subtly between 1842 to the present, Tahiti has remained under French control. Since 2004, Tahiti’s official designation is an “overseas collectivity.” This indicates that they are still formally a French territory but the Tahitians mostly have the ability to self govern.

Samoa: Family Above All



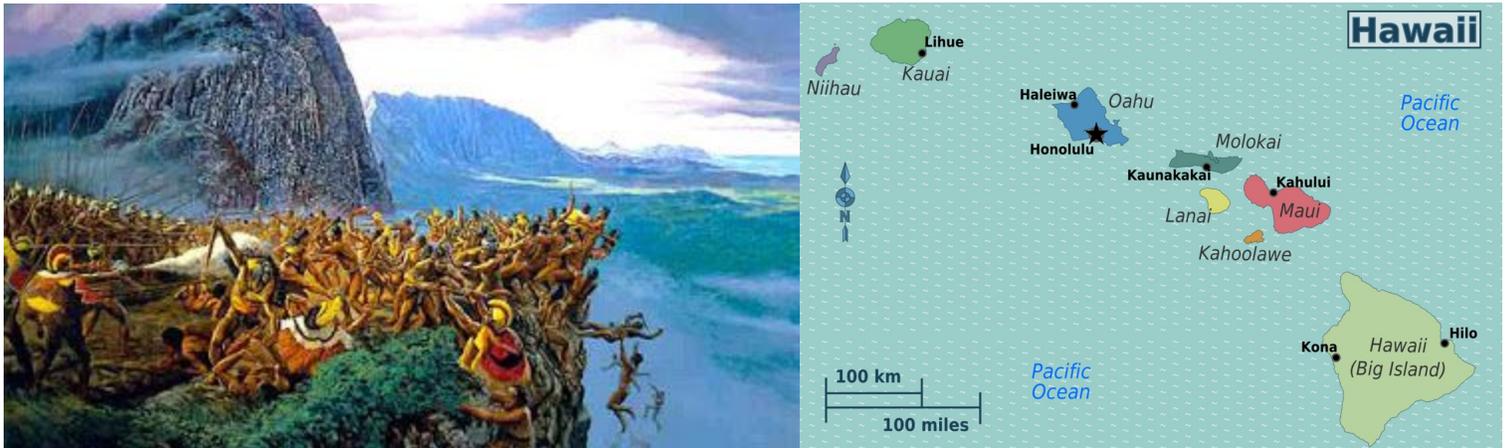
As one of the oldest Polynesian civilizations, Samoa has defined itself on its ability to prioritize family and tradition above all else. In Samoa, a family of 20 can commonly live in the same house. Elders, or Matais, are highly respected and are trusted with making decisions for the community.

Tattoos are a right of passage. When a member of the family -either male or female- accomplishes a task, it is commemorated in a tattoo on their body. Certain tattoos can bestow spiritual powers onto person who wears it. For example, a man wearing a spearhead pattern on his chest and arm symbolizes strength. In the case of women, a wing-like tattoo across the back can carry certain spiritual powers such as fertility.

Before 1830, the predominant religion was a form of ancestor worship where Samoans tried to make peace with their ancestors. When Christian missionaries came to Samoa, Samoans quickly adopted the new Western style of worship. However, the acts of prioritizing family and their ancestors continues to be important in modern Samoan life.

In the 20th Century, the islands that make up Samoan culture have been split along modern political lines. West Samoa has been claimed by Germany and New Zealand. Only in 1962 did Samoa achieve independence. Its formal name is the Independent State of Samoa. The Eastern cluster of islands are now known as American Samoa since the United States claimed the islands in 1929.

Hawai'i: Land of Discovery and Conquest



As one of the youngest members in Polynesian Culture, Hawai'i serves a blending of ancient traditions and modern aspirations. Much like their Tahitian ancestors, Hawaiians have promoted the idea of love and community through their common greeting of “aloha” which has four different meanings: “hello,” “goodbye,” “I love you,” and “love.” The context determines which of the four meanings is intended. Much like Samoan, family (known as Ohana) is extremely important. In Hawaiian culture, there are two types of family. An Ohana is family related by blood. Hanai Ohana is a family bond brought on by people who are not related by blood but are accepted in the family as if they were.

Unlike their ancestors, Hawai'i is marked by a much more violent history. In 1778, British Captain James Cook “discovered” the islands and named them “the Sandwich Islands” in honor of the Earl of Sandwich who funded his voyage. Originally Cook and his crew were greeted as gods. Then, after a disagreement over a rowboat, the Hawaiians killed Cook after he captured the village's chieftain. In 1810, King Kamehameha, the prophesized ruler of Hawai'i, united the Hawaiian islands. He did so by throwing King Kalanikupule and 400 of his followers off the cliff at Nu'uuanu Pali (in the picture). Accounts of this battle say the Oahu warriors had only two options: jump off the cliff voluntarily or be thrown off by Kamehameha.

From 1810 to 1893, Hawaii was a modern kingdom with goals of becoming a rich nation similar to the United States. Its capital building, Iolani Palace was electrified four years before the White House. By the 1880s, the Kingdom of Hawaii was hoping to establish a modern navy. In 1893, Sanford B. Dole of the Dole Produce Company, saw Hawai'i as a business opportunity and led a detachment of U.S. Marines on the capital to overthrow Queen Lilioukalani. Ever since that overthrow, Hawai'i has been under American control.