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# Hawaii and Tahiti: a Comparison

**PAPEETE, Tahiti** — What turns fortune made Tahiti French and Tahiti American? In their early histories these two Pacific archipelagos had many similarities. Original inhabitants of both were Polynesians. Both were discovered by English explorers. Tahiti and Hawaii each became a regular supply point for traders and sailors. Protestant missionaries had years monopoly in both archipelagos before Catholic priests arrived. First priests ashore in both island

## Despite many similarities, Hawaii and Tahiti found up taking different political paths

groups were almost immediately defeated by native governments controlled by Protestant missionaries. Both Tahitians and Hawaiians looked to England for guidance and protection during the first decades of their discoveries. When Tahiti was discovered by Captain Samuel Wallis (1767) and later by De Bougainville (1768) and Captain James Cook (1769), the Society Islands had no "king." There were a number of districts among the several islands and each district had a chief. Wars between the dis-

tricts and islands were frequent. When Hawaii was discovered by Captain James Cook (1778) the Hawaiian Islands had no "king." There were a number of districts among the several islands and each district had a high chief. Wars between the districts and islands were frequent.

**WESTERN TRADERS** and missionaries wanted stable and central island governments to deal with. Small chiefdoms warring most of the time could not supply Western ships or pay much attention to Bible lessons.

Englishmen backed high chief Tu in Tahiti and high chief Kamehameha in Hawaii.

In Tahiti, Tu was high chief of the land adjacent to Matavai, the harbor preferred by English ships. Tu received the bulk of the gifts, the muskets and encouragement to consolidate districts under his rule. He did not need much encouragement. The high chief Tu as a Christian convert became Pomare I, the first king of Tahiti. Protestant missionaries came to Tahiti in 1797.

In the 1815 battle of Fepi, aided by 800 of his countrymen who were Christian converts and some multi-armed of the ship *Bounty*, a heavily armed congregation, his son, Pomare II, completed the founding of the kingdom.

In Hawaii, Kamehameha was high chief of the land adjacent to Kealahou, the harbor preferred by

testant missionaries first converted the chiefs, then the commoners. Tahitians and Hawaiians were taught to read their own languages so they could study the Bible. Tahiti had a mission press in 1817; Hawaii in 1822.

Now for the turns of fortune which sent Tahiti into the French sphere of influence and Hawaii into the American. They center on Catholic priests expelled from Tahiti and Hawaii in the period 1835 and 1840.

Those expelled priests protested to their headquarters in France, where at that time church and state were one. France felt that French citizens had a right to live and work where they pleased.

France backed this policy with warships. Captain A. Du Petit-Thomas received 2,000 Spanish dollars indemnity from Tahiti for the expelled priests and imposed a treaty on Tahiti.

Tahiti immediately appealed to London for protection, but England bowed out in favor of the French. By 1842, the gunboat diplomacy of Du Petit-Thomas forced a French protectorate on Tahiti. Protestant missionaries from London were replaced by those from France. Catholic priests took up residence. In 1880, King Pomare V ceded the Society Islands to France.

In Hawaii, Du Petit-Thomas signed a convention with Kamehameha III in 1837. Fathers Short, Bachelot and Maigret were expelled after this convention was signed. Hawaii's government also persecuted Catholic converts.



English ships. Kamehameha garnered the most arms and ammunition, added the best foreign advisors to his staff, and had a captured armed Hawaiian islands also traded for muskets and cannon.

In the 1795 battle of Nu'uanu, on O'ahu Island, Kamehameha founded the Kingdom of Hawaii and became Kamehameha I. Kaula Island joined it in 1810.

Instead of the Christian god, Kamehameha relied on his ancestral Polynesian gods. Kamehameha died in 1819 and Protestant missionaries from America arrived in 1820.

**IN BOTH ISLAND** groups, Pro-

**BUT THE PROTESTANT** missionaries behind Hawaii's throne were American. France handled Hawaii differently. Cap. C.P.T. Laplace in his French frigate anchored in Honolulu harbor in 1839, took aboard \$20,000 as bond from Hawaii to ensure fair treatment of Catholics, a site for a Catholic Church, and the same freedom for Catholics as for Protestants.

The French-Hawaii treaty of 1839 also opened up Hawaii to the import of French wines and brandy.

After 1840, France never seriously threatened the growing American domination of Hawaiian affairs.



A mountain stream in Fa'arumai Valley is so clear you can see the grains of sand at the bottom, like Nuuanu Stream at the turn of the century.

1976

# Tahiti Cook's tour lives up to promise

Second of eight articles



**bob krauss**

Advertiser columnist

Veterans of the 1973 Ellis II expedition around Hawaii on foot and by outrigger canoe have retraced the historic, 207-year-old route of Capt. James Cook around Tahiti. The six members of the expedition walked and traveled by boat as did Cook, used the map he drew in 1769 and camped where the great explorer did. Here is a report on last month's Cook II adventure.

**Capt. Cook Expedition**

Tahiti

TIAREI, Tahiti — At 8:20 a.m. we set out from our shady camp site on Point Venus to circle the island of Tahiti as Capt. James Cook had done 207 years before.

The first friendly native we encountered was Zulu, the Hawaiian TV and night club star, driving around the island with friends. Was this an example of the ancient Tahiti that lay ahead?

We waved goodbye to Zulu. Then I jumped out of my skin because a motorcycle roared by within six inches of my ear. We were 10 kilometers (six miles) from Papeete in the outlying suburbs.

IT LOOKED LIKE downtown Kalua on the Windward Side 25 years ago.

At the end of another 10 kilometers, the traffic had thinned to an occasional Renault pickup or a gaily painted bus with open sides and lively music pouring from the cab.

Our first contact with the Tahiti that Cook knew came when we turned off the two-lane, paved highway 22 kilometers from Papeete and headed up a dirt road among copra plantations.

The mountains closed in. It was like hiking to Sacred Falls in 1920.

There were no signs. No fences. No beer cans. This is Fa'arumai Valley.

We emerged in a grassy clearing, then explored a mountain stream tumbling over rocks.

JUNGLE-ROBED CLIFFS rose on three sides. I looked up in disbelief. The foliage I saw had the same delicate, lacy appearance I'd seen in sketches of Tahiti by artists who had sailed with Cook.

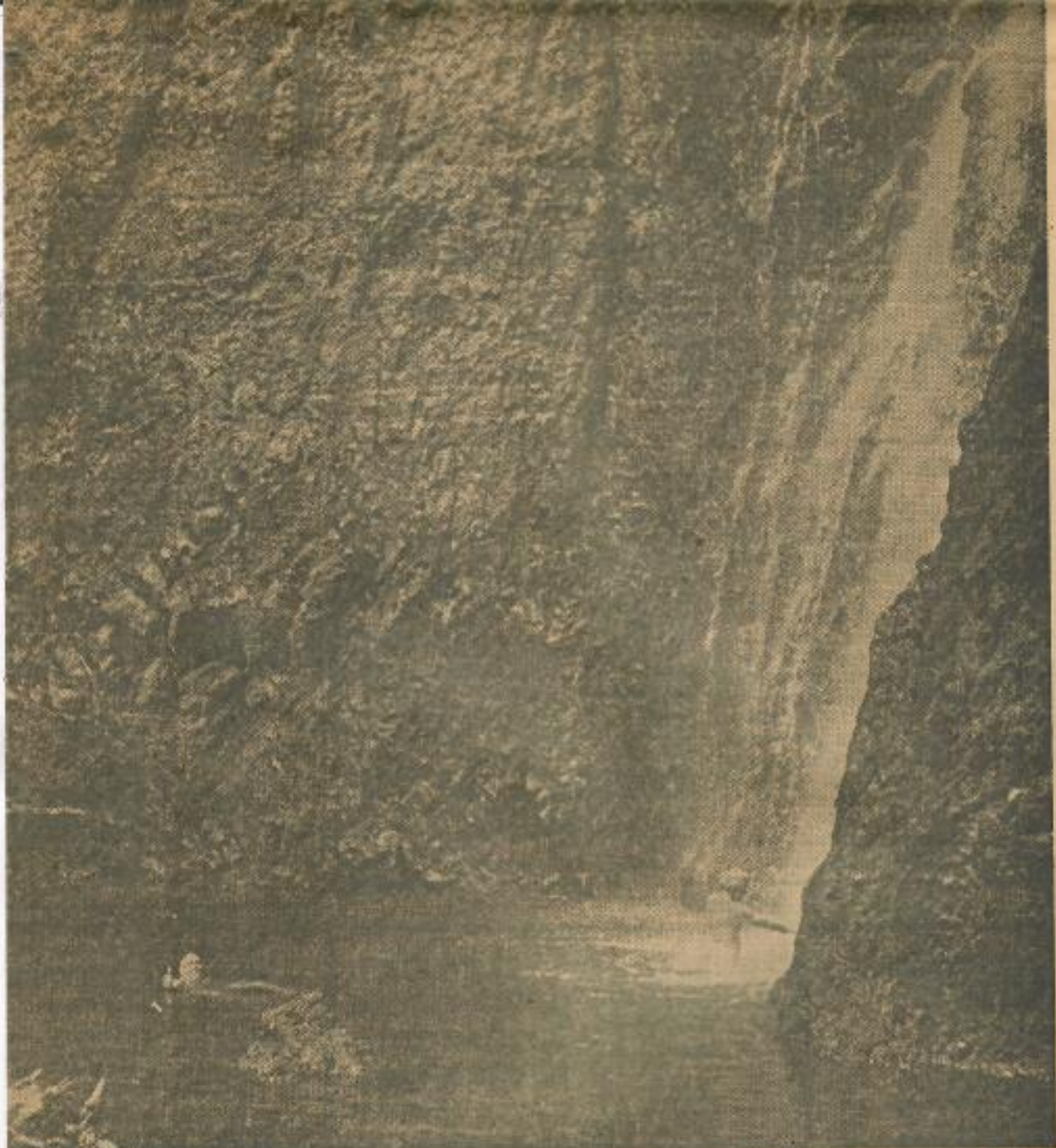
I'd always assumed that the fairy-like look of the foliage in the sketches had been the result of European romanticism. Here it was in real life.

We had lunch while we cooled our feet in the stream. Plump crayfish devoured the crumbs we dropped into the water. Sunlight and shadow dappled the stream, so clear you could count the grains of sand at the bottom.

I thought of the old photos I'd seen of Hawaiians splashing in Nuuanu Stream at the turn of the century. That's how it was, untended and unspoiled.

FARTHER ON, over an arched wooden bridge and at the end of a delightful jungle trail, there was a pool beneath a towering waterfall where we went swimming.

God, it was beautiful! We sat and



A towering cascade lured members of Cook II into the pool for a swim. It was like Sacred Falls in 1920.

watched the water cascading over thousands of tiny projections in the black cliff face. Green tufts of fern protruded from crevices in the cliff. Huge ape leaves crowded at its base.

The waterfall put us in a poetic mood. After Fa'arumai Valley we began composing Tahitian haiku about the scenes that unfolded round us. Advertiser Publisher Hurston Twigg-Smith started it.

We came upon a girl in a white undergarment bra and a blue pareu making breadfruit leaves beside the road. She did this with an air of equal nonchalance.

A plump, brown-skinned woman sat on a wheelbarrow in the sunlight. She held a plump-brown-skinned baby in her arms. I waved. The woman waved back and smiled down at her baby.

**A LINE OF LAUNDRY** hung under a huge breadfruit tree. The brilliant colors of freshly washed

Tahitian prints competed with hibiscus and plumeria blossoms in the yard.

A few houses were thatched. Most had tin roofs. The front door of each stood wide open behind well-tended croton, ti, hibiscus, tiare or rose bushes. We could hear roosters crowing.

Mango, banana, coconut and breadfruit trees made the road shady. It was like walking through a park adorned with flowers and inhabited by a proud and friendly people.

A wooden cottage with a red, tin roof made me stop. The gingerbread was white, the trim brown and the walls yellow. Crisp green flower-print-curtains hung at the windows.

A lanai extended across the entire front of the house. Four tables were placed at precise intervals across the lanai. A fresh green tablecloth covered each table. In the exact cen-

ter stood a vase containing fresh flowers.

**A FRESHLY MADE** iron bed, flanked by a wooden rocker, ranged against each side wall. A large lauhala hat adorned with a single spider lily blossom lay across the back of one rocker.

In the precise center of the back wall, exactly between the two open doors, hung a formal wall clock, vintage 1935. It was stopped at 16 minutes until 3.

I hurried on to catch up with the others.

We came to a village in the district of Tiarei; school, church, Chinese store. Suddenly the road was alive with kids. They grinned and shouted and pointed eagerly ahead.

The Gordon Morses were setting up tents in the yard of our first Tahitian host.

(Next: Tahitian hospitality.)

# Tahiti spells hospitality



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TIAREI, Tahiti — "I am Bob. What is your name?" I asked, pointing in pantomime as I sat with our muscular, dignified host at sunset outside his seaside bungalow.

The politely puzzled look on his face gave away to understanding. "Temaui," he said.

He spoke no English. I spoke no Tahitian or French. The best interpreter in our group was Frank Damon who had spent a year in France while attending college a quarter of a century ago.

TEMAURI'S FULL NAME turned out to be Temaui Itaata Taaroa. He wrote it out for me.

"HmMMM, Taaroa sounds like the Tahitian version of Kanaloa, an ancient Hawaiian god," I said. "Are Taaroa and Kanaloa the same?" Damon tried it in fractured French.

"Kanaloa, Hawaiian?" Temaui asked, immediately interested.

"Kanaloa is the Hawaiian god of the ocean," I said.

"Taaroa," answered Temaui firmly. His wife, leaning out of the window, beamed at our recognition of the name.

Our host was a Congregational minister. His father had been a minister and his father before him. I tried to ask if his great-grandfather had been a Tahitian priest of the old

religion. But my gestures and Damon's French weren't up to it.

WE HAD HOPED AT FIRST to find a Tahitian guide and interpreter.

But Capt. James Cook, whose historic route we were following, didn't have such an advantage. His Tahitian had been no better than Damon's French. So, like Cook, we did the best we could.

Temaui recognized the name of William Ellis, the English missionary who had served in Tahiti before coming to Hawaii. And the Tahitian minister seemed interested to discover that Thurston Twigg-Smith's great-great-grandfather Asa Thurston, had been a missionary contemporary of Ellis in Hawaii.

We got bogged down again when Temaui tried to explain that Taaroa is not his own family name but that of either his wife or his mother. I couldn't figure out which.

Most of our conversations as guests of this Tahitian family were less formal.

WHEN WE ARRIVED, hot and sweaty after a long hike, Temaui courteously took us inside to show us the large, family-size shower and to indicate that we might use it as well as his toilet.

The yardful of grinning, chattering

# in any language

kids watched with intense interest as we set up the tents.

When we pulled out air mattresses and began to inflate them with plastic foot pumps, they all wanted to try it. From then on we never had to pump up our air mattresses when there were Tahitian kids around.

At sunset I followed them out on the reef flat in front of the house. It was low tide. The mood had changed.

The kids stood around in languid poses, only their eyes alert. One carried a bait pail. Another wore a stocking cap. What a delightful, rag-tag crew.

**THEIR BROWN SKINS** glowed golden in the setting sun. Their unstudied poses reflected in the still water. Gauguin would have recognized that instinctive poise, that graceful positioning of the limbs.

After dinner the mood changed again. Témauri had to go across the road to teach a Bible class. We sat outside playing cards by the light of our gas lanterns.

The yard was alive with kids. They imitated everything we did. If I sang a snatch of a song, they immediately repeated it.

I sang a verse about the mocking bird in the lilac bush. Bob Dylan couldn't have created a greater

sensation. The kids turned my melody into a clapping song. They kept me at it until I was exhausted.

The two oldest girls leaned discreetly out of the windows above Tommy Holmes, an eligible member of our crew. Later, one of the girls found a Tahitian-English dictionary. She brought out the book and sat close to Tommy while they discussed linguistics.

**THE NEXT MORNING** another of the older girls carefully combed the snarls out of young Bill Twigg-Smith's long blond hair and braided it neatly.

Damon gave Témauri and his wife two cans of macadamia nuts as thank-you gifts. Then Thurston Twigg-Smith presented the minister with a donation for the church. Témauri at first seemed reluctant. He accepted only when he understood the money was not for him personally.

When we arrived at our next camp, we found that Témauri had sent ahead a big box of pamplemousse, the Tahitian grapefruit. They tasted great at breakfast the next morning.

(Tomorrow: Dance rehearsal at the end of the road.)



Photo by Bob Krauss

Tahiti coastline offers spectacular views as it did at the time of Capt. James Cook in 1769.