Credits

Julianne Walsh, Founding and Managing Editor.
Design and composition by Teora Morris.

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Preface

The Teaching Oceania series is an initiative by the Center for Pacific Islands Studies (CPIS) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to produce teaching and learning resources for undergraduate students in Pacific Islands Studies here in Hawai‘i and across the region. In collaboration with colleagues from universities in the Pacific Islands, Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the continental US, the series seeks to fill a gap in accessible teaching materials addressing the contemporary region. This fifth volume of the series focuses on the French speaking islands of the Pacific (which include French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and Vanuatu) and is the result of collaborations between CPIS, the University of New Caledonia and the University of French Polynesia.

In the past two decades, there has been a growth of Pacific Islands-related courses and programs at universities in the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Hawai‘i, the continental US, Japan and in various universities in Europe. More recently, there are similar trends in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The content, emphasis and nature of Pacific Islands Studies programs in these universities varies. CPIS is dedicated to promoting Pacific Islands Studies as a field of study that is decolonizing and empowering, especially for Pacific Islanders. And the Center works to foreground indigenous epistemologies, interests and perceptions, and ensure that our courses are regional, comparative, interdisciplinary, grounded, and creative. For this to occur, there is a need for sustained and dynamic discussion about teaching and learning.

Because of these needs CPIS established the Teaching Oceania project. Spearheaded by CPIS Associate Specialist, Dr. Julie Walsh, the project is designed to create materials suitable for interdisciplinary undergraduate classes in Pacific Islands Studies and make them widely available. Produced by Pacific Islands Studies instructors working together collectively on broad topics for which existing resources are sparse or inadequate, these Open Source materials are made accessible in digital form, allowing for visual media to supplement and enrich written components, for interactive elements to be included, and to facilitate periodic updates as well as wide circulation. Making the material available in digital form has the added value of appealing to a generation of students well versed in digital media of all types, although the debate among educational specialists about learning styles among “digital natives” or “digital residents” is by no means resolved.
In the wake of prior volumes which focused on broad topics such as Gender or Militarism and Nuclear Testing and Health and the Environment, this fifth volume focuses on the French speaking Pacific islander where the language divide between Anglophone and Francophone communities has made it difficult for English speaking scholars and students in the region to access introductory teaching and learning material from French speaking neighbors. Conversations between scholars from the two sides of the language divide are also limited which has led to other sorts of gaps. For Pacific Islands Studies to be regional, there is a need to transcend the divisions created by the historical legacies of the regional establishment of colonial languages. Although not the goal of this current volume, to be truly decolonizing and empowering, teaching and learning material needs to be translated into Pacific Islands languages.

In the spring of 2018, Dr. Alexander Mawyer pitched the idea of this volume to the founding editor, Dr. Julie Walsh, and Terence Wesley-Smith, CPIS Director at the time. With their support Alex sought out collaborators from the University of French Polynesia (UPF) and University of New Caledonia (UNC), and colleagues from UH. Together with Dr. Louis Bousquet of the French Language Program at UH Mānoa, he organized a three-day gathering at UH Mānoa which included an all-day writing workshop with the ambitious goal of developing a working draft of the materials that would become this volume. He was assisted by the Teaching Oceania's series editor, Dr. Monica C. LaBriola (UH Mānoa), and CPIS GA, Patricia Tupou. Dr. Mawyer led the production, media selections and translation of a draft manuscript. It was edited by Dr. LaBriola (UH Mānoa) and Dr. Alex Mawyer (UH Mānoa), and the layout was designed and completed by Teora Morris, a CPIS BA and MA alumna who significantly contributed to the media rich character of the volume.

This volume on the French Pacific is an invaluable contribution to undergraduate teaching and learning and to making Pacific Islands Studies truly regional. CPIS values the collaboration and contributions by all the co-authors. I hope that the volumes produced by the Teaching Oceania series will one day be translated to French and other languages to make them even more widely accessible.

Tarcisius Kabutaulaka
Associate Professor and Director
Center for Pacific Islands Studies
Authors’ Preface

This volume is the product of efforts to develop an active collaboration between three universities across Oceania’s French and English speaking communities. Colleagues from the University of French Polynesia, the University of New Caledonia, and the University of Hawai‘i worked on this volume in an attempt to exemplify how we can together support our students in better understanding themselves, their neighbors, and to see our region as a whole within its differences.

We embraced the opportunity of developing a volume for CPIS’ Teaching Oceania publication series which was intended for this kind of cross-regional collaboration and to address the need for appropriate literature for undergraduate Pacific Islands Studies students throughout Oceania. Together the authors represent a notable diversity in expertise, positionality, and experience living in, researching, and writing and teaching about French speaking Oceania. Nevertheless, we found that it was difficult to shake a persistent feeling that we were challenged to address the historical, cultural, or political depths and vitalities of specific communities. Between insider and outsider perspectives, and between historical and contemporary approaches, we sought to avoid marginalizing the diversity in the French speaking Pacific and of indigenous experiences and histories. However, at its heart, this volume is a student-centered introductory text for an undergraduate English-speaking audience. With this in mind, we hope to clarify some editorial points regarding the representation, translation, and writing process for this iBook on the French Speaking Islands of Oceania.

Reflected in the title of this volume itself, authors consciously struggled to give equal attention to the various French speaking islands of Oceania during the process of creation. Part of this challenge rested in the way that some islands like Tahiti occupy an immense place in Anglophone literature and film while other communities, like Wallis (‘Uvea) and Futuna, may never have been previously encountered by students. We were conscious that, while the authors included some prominent indigenous scholars, not all the communities discussed in this book were equally represented amongst the authors. This book was not written to replace the voices of indigenous experts and we hope students will explore further. For instance, Section 3 on “Literature, Arts and Culture” draws attention to some extraordinary literary works emerging from within these communities. We hope their inclusion will inspire readers to read more deeply and broadly across the region. Additionally, Pacific peoples' deep histories deserve more space
than is allotted here and these stories also deserve to be told by those to whom they belong.

Considerable attention was given to managing a text that included French terms, English terms, indigenous terms, and translations. Many of the book’s authors are native French speakers. Their participation and perspectives were essential. However, this also meant that the editorial process included some challenging and rewarding cross-cultural and cross-lingual difficulties. Significant time and thought went into the editing process which sought to maintain the text’s accessibility. Moreover, the French speaking Pacific islands have numerous indigenous languages, and a surprising diversity of orthographic conventions (sometimes within the same language) which are challenging to serve. For example, there are over eleven indigenous languages spoken in French Polynesia and, even for the largest of these, Reo Tahiti, more than one current orthography. In this volume, when Reo Tahiti appears, we made the conscious choice to use the orthography of the Tahitian Academy. However, this does not reflect a lack of respect for the passionate supporters of the other major orthography of contemporary Tahitian. For the many other languages spoken across New Caledonia and Vanuatu and in Wallis and Futuna, some of these orthographies may be unfamiliar to Anglophone readers. Students should be encouraged to investigate the politics of orthography in the French Pacific further. However, such discussions are not touched upon here.

Topics such as decolonization, cultural revivals, militarism, and environmental issues appear in this volume because they are relevant, frequently encountered by students in Pacific Islands Studies across disciplines, and are a lived reality across Oceania. Students may be surprised to discover significant differences in the historical, cultural, and political dynamics around these issues evident in different parts of Oceania including in the French speaking islands of the region. We believe engaging with these topics and acknowledging the diversity of perspectives and even significant disagreements may lead to more fruitful discussion. Connecting contemporary issues across linguistic divides and bringing experiences in and of French speaking Oceania into view for students, aligns with the goals of the Teaching Oceania series to help readers perceive our region as a complex, living, integral whole. We hope this volume will serve as a launching pad into an open-ended conversation fostering better understanding. We welcome any and all ongoing dialogue that acknowledges and further supports the relationship between Francophone and Anglophone Pacific.
Teaching Oceania Series

The Teaching Oceania series is designed to serve the needs of undergraduate students of Pacific Islands Studies across Oceania and elsewhere. The Center for Pacific Islands Studies invites collaborative proposals for additional volumes in this series. Monica C. LaBriola (UH - West O'ahu) serves as Series Editor to ensure consistency of style, accessibility, and organization of the series.

The Teaching Oceania series is defined by:

- a regional perspective
- a collaborative process. The current texts have been written by teams of 4 or more scholars with an aim of regional representation to appeal to a broad audience through diverse examples
- a theme or topic that is not yet accessible to undergraduate students through current literature
- a Pacific Islands Studies approach, that is: interdisciplinary, creative, comparative and grounded
- attractive, relevant images, video, audio, and interactive features
- accessibility in multiple formats, interactively as iBooks, EPUBs, and broadly as PDF files
- free access to the texts at permanent links on the University of Hawai‘i Scholar Space Center for Pacific Islands Studies Community

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Other Volumes
1. Militarism and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific
2. Gender in the Pacific
3. Health and Environment in the Pacific
4. Oceanic Arts: Continuity and Innovation
5. Islands of French Speaking Oceania
Contributors and Acknowledgments

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Alexander Mawyer.

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Louis Bousquet is an associate professor of French and the Chair of the French and Italian division at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He is a specialist of 20th and 21st century French literature with an emphasis on the Pacific. His research focuses on disenchantment and the rise of the homunculus. He is co-organizing with Alexander Mawyer the second triennial Oceania Ensemble Colloquium titled “Rereading Classics: France and Oceania”.

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Terava Ka’anapu Casey is a Ph.D. History student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa studying Pacific and Hawaiian History. Her research focuses on the mobilities of Mā‘ōhi and their cross-cultural encounters throughout history as a way of understanding contemporary island communities.

William Matt Cavert

William Matt Cavert is a doctoral student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa where he is wrapping up a dissertation examining types of environmental change on the islands of France’s Pacific Empire during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. His research highlights the connected nature of colonial projects for reshaping the environment of Pacific Islands. He has published articles on epidemic disease and naturalists in the Pacific.

Patrice Godin

Patrice Godin is Associate Professor in Social Anthropology at the University of New Caledonia (Nouméa). He has lived and worked in New Caledonia since 1982. His long term ethnographic research has been among the kanak communities of Hienghène, in the Northeast area of the island.

Lorenz Gonschor

Lorenz Gonschor studied anthropology in Germany before coming to UH Mānoa, where he earned a MA in Pacific Islands studies in 2008 and a PhD in political science in 2016. After teaching for several years at the UH Department of LLEA, he is now a senior lecturer in Pacific Studies at Atenisi University in Nuku’alofa, Tonga, where he also serves as associate dean and librarian. He has a wide range of research interests, including the Hawaiian Kingdom’s role in wider Oceania, current decolonization struggles and polytheistic revival movements in Polynesia.

Alexander Mawyer

Alexander Mawyer is an Associate Professor at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, Editor of The Contemporary Pacific: A Journal of Island Affairs, and Co-Director of the University of Hawai‘i’s Biocultural Initiative of the Pacific. He has conducted fieldwork with the Mangarevan community in the Gambier and Society Islands of French Polynesia.

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Teora Morris is a graduate student at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa where she focuses on shared cultural pasts and contemporaries of Mā‘ōhi and Maoli worlds. She worked as iBook designer in the Teaching Oceania series’ first three volumes produced between 2016 and 2018.
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Mirose Paia is a research professor at the UPF, EASTCO laboratory (EA 4241). Her research fields (and her publications) focus on the descriptive work of the Polynesian languages Reo Mā’ohi, Tahitian in particular, as part of the problems of teaching in a multilingual context and the conditions for revitalizing and transmitting these languages in a diglossic context. For 8 years, she has coordinated three experimental bilingual teaching schemes in Tahiti and one on the practice of public speaking at the first level. The work of linguistic description finds its extension in the comparative analysis of Polynesian literature texts. She is also the award-winning author of the heiva theme for 2018.

Titaua Porcher

Titaua Porcher is associate professor at UPF. She published in 2011 a book about the French author Pierre Jean Jouve (*Pierre Jean Jouve: Mystère et sens dans l’œuvre Romanesque*) and she has been working on Oceanian literatures for ten years now. She worked at UH in 2011 and kept very strong links with this university. She co-directed with Andreas Pfersmann a special issue on francophone literature in 2017 in *Interculturel Francophonies* and a special issue of the *New Zealand Journal of French Studies* on “literature and politics” which should be published very soon. She also published in October a play called *Hina, Maui and company*.

Bernard Rigo

Bernard Rigo is a philosopher and anthropologist and is Professor in Pacific studies at the University of New Caledonia.

Bruno Saura

Bruno Saura is a Professor of Polynesian Civilization at the Université de la Polynésie française (Tahiti). He has a background in anthropology and political science. He is now director of a multi-disciplinary research group - EASTCO, Équipe d’Accueil Sociétés Traditionnelles et Contemporaines en Océanie - working on Pacific societies of the past and the present. Bruno Saura has written extensively on ethnic, linguistic and religious issues in today’s Polynesia, authoring several books (recently: *tahiti mā’ohi*, 2008; *Mythes et usages des mythes: autochtonie et idéologie de la Terre Mère en Polynésie*, 2013; *Histoire et mémoire des temps coloniaux en Polynésie française*, 2015) and contributed articles to scholarly journals (*The Contemporary Pacific, Pacific Studies, The Journal of Pacific History, Journal of the Polynesian Society, Journal of Pacific Studies, International Journal of Research Into Island Cultures*). He is now working on Polynesian oral tradition and mythology in a comparative and diachronic perspective.

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Serge Tcherkézoff is Professor (emeritus) in Anthropology and Pacific Studies (EHESS University, France where he is Chercheur Titulaire of the CREDO), Professor (Hon.) in ANU, Australia, at the School Culture History and Language of the College of Asia & the Pacific, and Chercheur Associé at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme du Pacifique (UPF), his works bring together results of fieldwork in Samoa during the 1980-1990s with a critique of European narratives of “Polynesia”, in 18th century and again today.

Jacques Vernaudon

Jacques Vernaudon was born in Tahiti. He began his career in 1999 at the University of New Caledonia where he participated in the promotion of Kanak languages teaching at the university and in the New Caledonian educational system. Since 2013, he has joined the University of French Polynesia where he continues his work which revolves around two complementary axes, one centered on the description of the Oceanic languages, now more particularly the East Polynesian languages, the other dedicated to the transmission of these languages in a multilingual context.

Further Acknowledgments

As with many collaborative projects, this volume would not be possible without the contributions of many. The authors are particularly grateful to Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, Director of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, and Terence Wesley-Smith, also of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, for supporting this project. Thanks are also due to James Perez Viernes, Jennifer Mercado, and Austin Haleyalpy for logistical support, to Julie Walsh, Monica LaBriola, and Trish Toupou as series editors and staff, and to Matt Cavet and Teora Morris for their contributions to the vision, direction, and organization of this volume. The authors acknowledge the financial support of the US Department of Education, through a National Resource Center Grant, and the Center for Pacific Islands Studies. Additionally, this project could not have been realized without the support of the Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie research institute TROCA (Trajectoires d’OCéAnie) and the Université de la Polynésie Française office of International Relations and research institute EASTCO. The authors also extend a hearty *māuru ruaroa* (thank you) to Tiana Rey as an early outside reader.

The editors would also like to acknowledge the diligent and generous efforts of Rusty Keele (Webber State University), who identified errors and corrections for this current volume (2020).
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

1. Locate and describe the islands of Oceania where French is an important language.
2. Discuss the complex long-distance relationship between France and Oceania.
3. Identify and analyze contemporary issues in the French speaking islands of Oceania.
Introduction and Overview
Islands of French Speaking Oceania

Oceania is made up of thousands of islands, dozens of archipelagos, hundreds of peoples, societies, and cultures, and the world's largest ocean. Long perceived by outsiders as "islands in a far sea," Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa has argued that Oceania is better understood as a "sea of islands." From this perspective, the ocean is not a barrier, but instead connects and bridges the distances between the region's islands and peoples.

When considering more recent relationships between Oceania's French and English speaking islands, the urgency and potential of Hau'ofa's vision are clear. While colonization led to transformations in virtually every domain of cultural and social life for many Pacific Island communities, the imposition of colonial languages that have diminished many historical and genealogical relationships is among the most significant. Over time, island communities with long histories of affiliation found themselves in different spheres of colonial and linguistic influence, making it difficult to maintain close ties. Even as the French and English languages created new bonds between colonized territories and metropolitan centers in Europe and the Americas, their role as official languages in different parts of the region led to a profound separation of Oceania's neighbors, particularly in the part of Oceania referred to as Polynesia. As a result, little is taught about the French speaking Pacific in English speaking parts of the region. This volume aims to minimize this distance by offering a space for dialogue and understanding across the regional Francophone-Anglophone divide.

To do this, Section 1 offers a brief overview of the geography, languages, and current political statuses of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna, the French speaking islands of Oceania. Section 2 introduces the region's history and politics, and Section 3 particularly focuses on literature of this region as a means of engaging with issues in art, culture, and representation. Section 4 outlines some of the contemporary concerns and social and political dynamics that are notable in this region, including environmental and economic issues. The conclusion explores potential political futures for the French speaking Pacific. Throughout, the volume highlights the experiences, visions, and contributions of Indigenous scholars, artists, activities, and communities.
Map 2.
Map of the Political Entities of the Pacific highlighting the French speaking islands of Oceania. Courtesy of Lorenz Gonschor.
Located in the southwest and eastern Pacific, French speaking Oceania includes four main political entities known today as New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, and Vanuatu. With the exception of Vanuatu, which achieved independence in 1980, the French speaking islands of Oceania are non-sovereign entities with different political statuses within the French Ministère des Outre-Mer (Ministry of Overseas Territories). French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna are Collectivité d’outre-mer (Overseas Collectivity or COM), whereas New Caledonia has a unique position as a Collectivity of Special Status, sometimes called a Sui Generis Collectivity. In May 2013, French Polynesia was placed on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing territories for the first time since 1947, against the wishes of France. Reinscribed on the list in 1986, New Caledonia’s residents voted on the question of independence in a historic referendum in November 2018. Despite various degrees of local governance and political autonomy, and a burgeoning sovereignty movement in some areas, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna remain non-self-governing French territories.

Language

For reasons outlined in the introduction, this volume focuses on the islands of Oceania where, as a legacy of colonialism, French is either the official language, as in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, or one of several official languages, as in Vanuatu (together with English and Bislama). This means French has a special legal status and is used by the governing bodies of these areas. That said, these island groups evidence a rich linguistic diversity that reflects shared origins and settlement patterns, ancient ties to the Austronesian expansion which began out of Taiwan between 3,500 and 1,500 years BCE. This ultimately led to the remarkable settlement of near and remote Oceania, subsequent cultural and social developments within particular
island groups, vast networks of exchange across the region. Deep Indigenous histories are complicated by complex colonial and post-colonial histories after the arrival of European powers in the region. What’s more, people continue to speak Indigenous languages despite the ongoing prevalence of French.

With approximately 100 Indigenous languages for 275,000 residents, Vanuatu is one of the most linguistically dense and diverse places in the world. Vanuatu’s Indigenous languages belong to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family, connecting the islands to neighbors across Oceania and beyond, from Rapa Nui in the east and as far west as the island of Madagascar island off the east coast of Africa. New Caledonia is home to almost 30 Indigenous languages, known today as the Kanak languages, which also have Austronesian origins. These linguistic linkages are one of many types of evidence used to trace ancient Pacific Islander origins and settlement patterns.

The Indigenous languages of French Polynesia, known in Tahitian as Reo Māʻohi (Indigenous languages), also have Austronesian origins. The most common among these are Tahitian, Marquesan, Paʻumotu (i.e., Tuamotuan), Mangarevan, and several Austral languages, including Rapan. Several of these languages have dialects or internal varieties; for example, Northern Marquesan and Southern Marquesan differ slightly, allowing speakers to express meaningful connections to home islands and communities. Two languages, Lea Fakaʻuvea and Leo Fakafutuna, are spoken in Wallis and Futuna. Like Reo Māʻohi, Lea Fakaʻuvea and Leo Fakafutuna belong to the Polynesian subgrouping of the Austronesian language family.

**Language and Cultural Revitalization**

Since the arrival of the first Europeans to Oceania, various social upheavals including the severe demographic and cultural impacts of foreign diseases, foreign immigration and displacement, and the prohibition against speaking and teaching Indigenous languages in schools, have threatened the preservation and transmission of Indigenous languages and cultures. Since the late 1960s, a strong feeling of cultural...
dispossession, together with poor educational outcomes among Indigenous students, prompted the resurgence of Indigenous identity in French Polynesia and New Caledonia in particular. Early on, activists asserted their opposition to the dominant policy of assimilation and demanded that schools adapt to local linguistic and cultural realities.

Today, language and cultural revitalization remain important to the peoples of French speaking Oceania. Questions about how Indigenous groups self identify through their language use and cultural practices have resonated around the Pacific. In French Polynesia, Turo a Raapoto and Henri Hiro were two political activists in the 1970s who believed that Mā'ohi, a label used to describe the Indigenous peoples of French Polynesia, should embrace, use, and teach their Indigenous languages. Encouraging teaching of Reo Mā'ohi embraces ancestral beliefs and identities as Indigenous people who belong to their islands. The push for Reo Mā'ohi to be used in schools, churches, homes, and politics speaks to Raapoto’s and Hiro’s belief that language and culture are important marks of identity that distinguish Indigenous Tahitians and other Indigenous people of French Polynesia from their French counterparts. These efforts energized and promoted a cultural renaissance emphasizing the revitalization of language, arts, and cultural practices long subverted by the French language and Western lifestyles. They have also inspired many people to become more politically engaged in French Polynesia’s contemporary sovereignty movement and related efforts.

Language and cultural revitalization are also strongly linked to political activism in New Caledonia. Jean-Marie Tjibaou advocated for a cultural revival as a form of political activism. In 1975, his efforts to host the large cultural celebration Melanesia 2000 in Nouméa brought out important yet controversial views on issues important to Indigenous Melanesians. In addition to celebrating Kanak language, music, dance, and other arts, the festival promoted representation in government, equal rights, and decolonization, and thus marked a critical movement in the struggle for Kanak independence in New Caledonia. In 1984, the newly elected territorial majority led by Tjibaou repealed all legal provisions inherited from the colonial period prohibiting the use of Kanak languages in schools and publications.

Following a series of violent political confrontations in New Caledonia in 1988 known as Les Événements, a consensus on the need to restore civil peace was embodied in the Matignon-Oudinot Agreements, which also incorporated institutional responses to the cultural and linguistic demands of Kanak nationalists. In 1992, the Deixonne Act was extended to New Caledonia, providing for Indigenous languages to be taught in schools. Since then,
provisions in the 1998 **Nouméa Accord** have offered opportunities for even more ambitious educational reform, including the gradual transfer of jurisdiction over elementary and secondary education to the local New Caledonian government. The 1999 **Organic Law** recognizes Kanak languages as “languages of instruction and cultural expression” (1999). Since 2005, New Caledonian primary school curriculum allows families to elect for their children to be taught in Kanak languages for up to seven hours in preschool and five hours in elementary school.

The limited **Autonomy Statute** granted to French Polynesia in 1977 gave the local government jurisdiction over teaching Indigenous languages. In 1980, the Government Council recognized Tahitian as an official language of French Polynesia, along with French. The Deixonne Act was extended to French Polynesia in 1981 and Tahitian and other Polynesian languages were gradually introduced in the schools. Today, Indigenous languages are offered for up to two and a half hours per week in preschool and elementary school, and as an optional subject at the lower secondary school level. Despite these efforts, a 1992 amendment to the French Constitution and the insertion of the clause “the language of the Republic is French” in Article 2 has resulted in the invalidation of Tahitian as an official language.

The role and place of various languages in political, civil, and especially educational contexts is also notable in Wallis and Futuna and Vanuatu. In Wallis and Futuna, the local Catholic diocese oversees primary education as part of its public mission. Starting with kindergarten, students come into the educational system speaking and learning in their Indigenous language. From there, they are gradually transitioned to an “all French” curriculum. In middle school, Indigenous languages are taught as an option for one hour per week. Somewhat differently, in Vanuatu, which became independent in 1980, the constitution establishes three official languages for the new nation: English, French, and Bislama (Melanesian pidgin). Despite constitutional protection guaranteed for the 105 Oceanic vernacular languages spoken by ni-Vanuatu communities, English and French remain the primary languages of education. However, recent years have seen ongoing initiatives to promote the ‘observance of multilingualism’ and ‘measures likely to ensure its respect’ which are required under the constitution including a popular UNESCO supported campaign to encourage “sustainable futures through multilingual education.”
Henri Hiro (1944-1990) is considered the leading figure in French Polynesia's cultural renaissance during the 1970s and 1980s. Born to a Protestant family in Moorea and raised in suburban Tahiti, he studied theology in France and returned to Tahiti in 1972. Not being acceptable as a Protestant minister due to his radical political and social positions, he instead found employment as the director of the newly created local cultural center (Fare Tauhiti Nui). In that capacity he worked mainly as a poet, theater director and filmmaker. At the same time, he was active as a co-founder of the environmental protection organization La Ora Te Natura and the left-wing pro-Independence party La Mana Te Nunaa. Disappointed with the lack of resonance of his activism in wider society, in the mid-1980s he moved with his family to an isolated valley on the island of Huahine. Many contemporary Tahitian writers and artists see him as an inspiration.

Image 1.
Cover of the 30th edition of the magazine Hiro’a, "Henri Hiro, la pensée en actes" (2010).
Contemporary Political Statuses

French Polynesia/Polynésie Française

Located in southeastern Oceania, French Polynesia is a semi-autonomous French Overseas Collectivity with a complicated political status including the right to identify as a Pays d’Outre Mer (Overseas Country), but without this title indicating any particular executive or legislative rights. Its territory comprises five island groups spread across a sea-space approximately equivalent to the size of Europe (about 1.85 million square miles of Exclusive Economic Zone, but with a land mass of only 1,609 square miles), each with a distinct geography, language, culture, and history.

Tahitian homelands, the Society Islands (Tahitian: Te mau fenua Tōtaiete; French: Îles de la Société) are the regional center, comparatively larger in land area and population. Most of the Society Islands are high and lush with large lagoons that separate their main islands from the barrier reefs that encircle them. The archipelago is divided into two groups: Raro mata‘i (Leeward Society Islands) to the northwest and Ni‘a mata‘i (Windward Society Islands) to the southeast and home to the territory's capital, Pape‘ete on the island of Tahiti. Today, Tahiti is home to the vast majority of the territory's population, which reached 275,918 people in 2017 (ISPF 2017).

The Tuamotu Archipelago (Tahitian: Tuāmotu; French: Îles Tuamotu), once called “The Dangerous Archipelago” for its treacherous currents and submerged reefs, is the largest group by number of islands with nearly 80 atolls. Seen from the sky, these are circles of low coral islets on reefs surrounding large lagoons with exceptional biodiversity.

The widely dispersed Austral Islands (Tahitian: Tuha’a Pae; French: Îles Australes) are located to the far south of the region and lie partly outside the tropical zone—that is, below

Image 2. At the end of the 18th century, Pape‘ete's large bay (Pape‘ete could possibly be translated as meaning “water basket”) made it an attractive port town for such Western industries as whaling. With the arrival of foreign Christian missionaries and government representatives, Pape‘ete would become French Polynesia's political and religious center and later the center of the French colonial administration.
the Tropic of Capricorn at 23°26'12.4". The Australs are famous for their handicraft production and village settlements built with defensive fortifications on ridge and cliff tops.

The Marquesas Islands (Southern Marquesan: *Matuita* or *Te Fenua ‘Enata*; Northern Marquesan: *Te Henua ‘Enana*; French: *Îles Marquises*) lie further to the northeast and north of the Tuamotus. The Marquesas are high islands with sheer, rugged coastlines, but without the coral reef structures found elsewhere in French Polynesia. This geography promoted a high degree of isolationism and intervalley conflict among Indigenous communities prior to the era of European arrivals.

To the southeast of the Tuamotus are the Gambier Islands (Mangarevan: ‘*Enua Magareva*; French: *Îles Gambier*). Once an articulated volcanic structure, the Gambiers are now several fragmented islands within a single large reef structure notable for numerous low coral islets at different points along the reef. Of the high islands inside the lagoon, Mangareva Island is the largest and, today, home to nearly the entire population.

French Polynesia has one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) at approximately 1.85 million square miles (4.8 million square kilometers). The area includes significant natural resources including fish stocks, phosphates, perliculture, and deep sea mineral deposits. In the 20th century, French Polynesia played minor roles in both world wars and was a primary site of French nuclear testing on Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls from 1966 to 1996. Recent activism in the region has largely focused on gaining reparations for nuclear test workers and affected community members and the possibility of political independence or autonomy from France. Other efforts have resulted in protections for marine resources including nearshore reefs, coastal waters, and open ocean fisheries in large- and small scale marine protected areas (MPAs)—the latter drawing on traditional natural resource management systems called rāhui.

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Map 3.
Map of French Polynesia’s five archipelagos bordered by the Pitcairn Islands, the Cook Islands and Kiribati (of the Line Islands).
Image 3.
This satellite image of the Tuamotu Archipelago faintly shows these atolls thin, low-lying land areas with enormous lagoons at their center (Left).

Image 4.
In contrast to the low-lying atolls of the Tuamotus, Ua Pou in the Marquesas Islands, with its enormous mountain peaks and deep valleys, is an example of a high island formation found in French Polynesia (Right).
The French Pacific territories of New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna have undergone a remarkable history of official political statuses and labels since the mid-19th century. The whole region was administered as "Etablissements français d'Océanie" (EFO) from 1842 until 1862. After 1862 only the future French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna were part of the EFO, as New Caledonia took on a separate status as a Penal Colony.

In 1946, both New Caledonia and the EFO became Overseas Territories (Territoire d'outre-mer or TOM) and all "indigenous subjects" residing in the territories became citizens of France. In 1958, the two territories voted to remain part of the French Community, and their assemblies subsequently voted to retain TOM status. At the time, the other two options presented to the assemblies were total independence or total assimilation in the French nation as Départements (administrative units of metropolitan France). Several French colonies had previously become Départements d'outre mer (DOM) in 1946, such as Réunion in the Indian Ocean or French Guiana in South America, while Guinea in West Africa chose immediate independence in 1958 and most other former colonies in Africa achieved independence in 1960s. In 1959, voters in the protectorate of Wallis and Futuna voted to become a TOM.

With a 2003 constitutional amendment, each TOM became an "Overseas Collectivity" (Collectivité d'Outre-Mer or COM), allowing for gradually increased autonomy and control over local laws. After the passing of various “Organic Laws” (Loi organique) which altered the political constitution of these territories, the labels and political statuses used to identify the three territories continues to change. Today, New Caledonia is an "Overseas Collectivity Sui Generis" or "Overseas Collectivity with a particular status," while French Polynesia remains an “Overseas Country” (Pays d'Outre-Mer). The fundamental question in the territories continues to be whether to pursue sovereignty or negotiate and legislate for greater autonomy within France.

Whereas sovereignty would mean full independence, autonomy refers today, in local discussions, to a variety of schemes of association with France, where matters related to citizenship, defense, foreign affairs, justice, public order, higher education and currency either remain with France or are entirely or partly transferred under local authority. For instance, in New Caledonia a local citizenship registry has been added to the national one, and there is a partial sharing of foreign affairs, with NC government delegates serving in French Embassies of the Pacific region.
New Caledonia or Kanaky (French: Nouvelle-Calédonie) is comprised of a large continental island, known as Grande Terre, and neighboring islands including the Loyalty Islands archipelago (French: Îles Loyauté). With an estimated 278,500 residents in 2017, New Caledonia is among the largest Pacific Island territories by population. Today, this population is made up primarily of Indigenous Kanak communities, whose ancestors have inhabited the islands since the arrival of the Lapita cultural complex in approximately 1,500 BCE, and descendants of French settlers, who arrived as convicts or colonial guards or administrators in the late 19th to early 20th century, when New Caledonia was used by France as a penal colony. More recent immigrants from metropolitan France, Algeria and other former French colonies, together with significant communities of ‘Uveans and Futunans, ni-Vanuatu, and Tahitians have also contributed to a diverse population.

New Caledonia’s tremendous social diversity has significant political implications, particularly with regard to the possibilities for its future political status and relationship with France (i.e., dependence, interdependence, or independence). In recent years, the issue of “community belonging” has become so politically significant that it has been included as a question on the official government census: “À quelle communauté considérez-vous appartenir? (To what community do you belong?).” As an example of the significance of this question, the very name of the island group is understood as a political act. Referring to these islands as Kanaky or as Kanak/New Caledonia indicates a stance on and sensitivity to the history and place of the Kanak people in their homelands.

As a result of the 1988 Matignon-Oudinot Agreements and 1998 Nouméa Accord, New Caledonia has undergone various political transformations aimed at rebalancing socioeconomic inequality, advancing decolonization, and
creating an authentic "community of destiny" among its people, a popular phrase suggesting all of New Caledonia's distinct communities could share a social and political future. While this process has resulted in broad political autonomy in relation to the French state, a referendum of independence from France on November 4, 2018 demonstrated that the territory is still coming to terms with the political legacy of colonization and showed that the voting population is very closely split between those who wish to remain a part of France and those who wish to forge a new independent nation. Although 56 percent of the general referendum electorate rejected independence, Kanak, who are classified as a colonized people under international law, voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence. This reality will require the French government and local leaders to negotiate new political arrangements moving forward.

New Caledonia Demographics
In the most recent New Caledonia census at the time of this writing, Kanak represented 39% of the total population, Europeans 27%, ‘Uveans and Futunans 8%, and other communities (Tahitians, Indonesians, Ni-Vanuatu, Vietnamese, and other Asians) 6%. Ten percent declared themselves “mixed” or “belonging to several communities.” Another 10% said they do not identify with any of the categories listed. Of these, 7% said they belong to the category “Caledonian” which was not actually listed as an option (and presumably implying a rejection of all other categories). Of the remaining 3%, 1% declared “Another category than all these” and 2% did not answer. Data retrieved from the French National Institute for Statistics and Economics (Insee, Broustet and Rivoilan 2015).

France and Ethnic Identity
Policies of the French Government do not allow for the collection of census data related to race or ethnic identity. This is in stark contrast to the United States, where census polls emphasize national origin and “race.” This is both the outcome and imposition of France’s particular cultural and political ideologies regarding French national identity which, in principle, establishes that all French citizens are “French” without exception or qualification. This makes the French government’s census question about “community belonging” in New Caledonia so unusual.
Wallis and Futuna/Territoire des îles Wallis-et-Futuna (WF)

Wallis and Futuna (‘Uvean and Futunan: ‘Uvea mo Futuna; French: Wallis-et-Futuna) is a French Overseas Collectivity in the south-central Pacific. Comprised of two kingdoms on Futuna and one on ‘Uvea and their communities, ‘Uvea and Futuna are bound together as a single administrative and governmental French territory. With a total land area between the two largest high islands of approximately 35 square miles (90.6 square kilometers) and a total population of about 12,000 people, Wallis and Futuna is the smallest of the French territories in Oceania and is often overlooked in regional histories and surveys. Originally settled by Polynesian voyagers during the Lapita period in approximately 1,500 BCE, Wallis and Futuna has a deep and rich Indigenous history including close and sometimes complicated economic, social, and political relationships with Fiji, Samoa, and especially Tonga which exerted significant and lasting political, social, and military influence over these islands in the 15th and 16th centuries. After an early period of European encounters, the French established a foothold in the 1840s in the wake of a French-Catholic missionary project. Increasing foreign influence led to the establishment of a French Protectorate in 1887. In 1917, France incorporated the three kingdoms as a dependency of the Colony of New Caledonia, and the kingdoms became a Territoire d’outre-mer (Overseas Territory or TOM) in 1961 following a referendum two years earlier. While Wallis and Futuna’s constitutional status changed from an Overseas Territory to a Collectivité d’outre-mer (Overseas Collectivity or COM) with the 2003 French constitutional reform, its political system continues according to the 1961 organic statute.

Partly due to its continuing customary systems of governance and land tenure and a more limited administrative bureaucracy relative to New Caledonia and French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna has only sparse economic development. In a pattern similar to the remittance economies of such neighboring independent states as Tonga and Sāmoa, more than half of ‘Uveans and Futunans have migrated to work overseas. The majority now live in New Caledonia, where they form the third largest community after Kanak and Europeans.

Map 5.
While Wallis and Futuna is the smallest of the island territories this book discusses, it should not be overlooked. Particularly notable is its situation between various island neighbors with whom it likely maintained varying degrees of historical and cultural exchange and influence over time.

Wallis and Futuna Governance
Unlike French Polynesia and New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna does not have a locally elected chief executive (i.e., president). Instead, the territory has a Paris-appointed superior administrator called a Prefect and an elected Territorial Assembly. Together, the prefect, Wallis and Futuna’s three kings, and three members appointed by the Assembly form the executive Territorial Council. Internally, however, the three kingdoms still operate as administrative units. Unlike all other French territories, Wallis and Futuna does not have city or town governments.
“The Feast of the Assumption (August 15) is also the parish feast of Hahake District in Wallis. It takes place in Mata’Utu, on the Sagato Soane Square, opposite the Royal Palace. It begins traditionally with a Mass, followed by the Kava Ceremony, offerings, lunch and concludes with traditional dances.” Photo and caption by Anna Vinet (2016).
Vanuatu is a large independent island nation in the southwestern Pacific region also known as Melanesia. Referred to as the New Hebrides during the colonial era, Vanuatu consists primarily of high volcanic islands, several of which are active, with a land area of approximately 4,700 square miles (12,000 square kilometers) and population of 272,459 in 2016. First settled during the Lapita period circa 1500 BCE, the islands are peopled by communities speaking more than one hundred different Austronesian languages, including several Polynesian outlier communities established in approximately 1500 CE.

Although sighted by Spanish navigators in the 1600s, Vanuatu remained unexplored by Europeans until the mid-1800s, when the islands became a focus of sandalwood harvesting and labor recruitment involving voluntary labor and forced enslavement previously known as blackbirding.

Map 6.
Bathymetric and topographic map of New Caledonia and Vanuatu, Oceania (Eric Gaba 2009). Modified by Lorenz Gonschor.
Vanuatu is located between New Caledonia to the southwest and Fiji to the southeast. By the late 19th century, these two islands groups had been colonized by France and Britain, respectively. Unable to agree on how to divide their spheres of influence in what was by then the New Hebrides, the two colonial powers opted in 1887 for a loose co-administration through a “mixed naval commission.” In 1906, France and Britain agreed to co-administer the New Hebrides as a **condominium** or dual colony of both nations. The two colonial powers established parallel administrations and education systems while the Indigenous population remained stateless. This arrangement was unique among Oceania’s diverse colonial histories.

When the tide of decolonization swept Oceania in the 1970s, a powerful independence movement emerged in the New Hebrides. Fearing a domino effect in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, France initially refused to take steps toward decolonization. After a long struggle that included violent separatist movements in parts of the archipelago, some of which were covertly supported by France in an effort to maintain its political foothold, Vanuatu achieved independence in 1980. Since then, Vanuatu has remained committed to reviving and maintaining cultural practices including those referred to as **Kastom**, support for which is enshrined in the constitution. Meanwhile, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is widely respected for its commitment to Indigenous representation, curation, and conservation practices and values, with Vanuatu’s policies among the most progressive in the region and internationally.

While contemporary Vanuatu is less developed economically than New Caledonia, it has achieved a higher level of integration into international trade and banking than neighboring Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. While its per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is moderate in global comparison, Vanuatu has made headlines as one of the leading nations in “Gross National Happiness,” an indicator measuring economic stability, preservation of culture, and the overall contentment of its citizens. Among many initiatives which speak directly to its role as a regional innovator, Vanuatu also has plans to rely solely on sustainable energy in the near future.

**Vanuatu’s Firsts**
Since independence, Vanuatu has been consistently progressive in civil and political life, notable for many firsts: the first Pacific Island state to join the non-aligned movement and declare itself opposed to any form of nuclear energy; constant support for decolonization of New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and West Papua; domestically land reform restoring settler estates to customary ownership; first Pacific island to legalize Marijuana; first government to make a strong commitment to

**Image 6.** Kastom dancer at the 2011 annual Fest Napuan. Photo by Graham Crumb.
Ni-Vanuatu on Tafea Island.

Photo by Thomas Ballandras (2013).
Indigenous Peoples of Francophone Oceania: Diversity and Plurality

Archaeologists date human settlement of the Grande Terre, the Loyalty Islands, and Vanuatu from at least 1600 BCE though many Indigenous histories stress a presence since times immemorial today reflected in numerous oral traditions and traditional histories. These island groups constituted a geographical and cultural area connected by intense social, political, and material culture evidenced by the presence of Lapita pottery (see Teaching Oceania, Volume 4: “Oceanic Arts: Change and Continuity”) and other archeological and linguistic evidence of shared pasts. Between 1600 BCE to 500 BCE Lapita trade networks stretched from Papua New Guinea in the west and reached as far east as Mulifanua, Sāmoa. Archaeological excavations of obsidian carried out on Grande Terre have provided further evidence of the kinds of ancient commercial networks that existed, extending to Talasea, New Guinea and other sites throughout the Bismarck Archipelago. After the Lapita period, connections between communities across the western Pacific remained strong and through the 18th century, these communities were also linked with others in parts of central Polynesia, including several clans and chiefdoms on ‘Uvea. Similarly, the islands of Lifou and Maré in New Caledonia maintained diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Tonga. Though these western Pacific Islands have a long shared history of voyaging, intertwined genealogies, marriages, exchanges, and migrations, there is enormous diversity between island groups, islands, or even regions on the same island. This is represented in the great linguistic diversity found between these island groups. For instance, there are at least 105 Indigenous languages spoken across the island archipelago of Vanuatu and 28 distinct Kanak languages on the Grande Terre of New Caledonia. Linguistic diversity is mirrored by a diversity of different political bodies, oral traditions, cultural practices, and patterns of customary land tenure.

The five archipelagos of what is known today as French Polynesia were settled by Polynesian navigators mostly likely via Sāmoa potentially as early as 100 CE although archeologists regularly revise such dates. Early arrivals brought canoe crops such as coconut, breadfruit, sugarcane, and animals such as
pigs and dogs to transform these island landscapes into inhabitable places. After initial settlement, new island communities maintained broad exchange networks with neighbors in many directions across the vast ocean. These networks were memorialized in oral traditions and other Indigenous knowledge forms sometimes recorded during British navigator Captain James Cook’s first voyage in Oceania (1768-1771) and sometimes passed down to the present within families and communities. Extraordinary maps drawn by Tupaia, a Tahitian chief from Ra‘iātea who sailed with Captain James Cook on his first voyage through Oceania (1768-1771), reflect some of the immensity and depth of history and geographical knowledge among Pacific peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans. Tupaia sailed with Cook to Aotearoa acting as a cultural and linguistic intermediary before passing away at Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia). Genealogical ties linked political bodies including the chiefdoms of the Leeward Society Islands, Windward Society Islands, the Tuamotu archipelago, as well as the Austral and Cook Islands. Linguistic data, widespread oral histories, and numerous commonalities in cultural practice and traditional social organization suggest that navigators from the island region of contemporary French Polynesia sailed further over the horizon to settle Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, and Rapa Nui.

Rapa Nui Connections to French Polynesia
While the islands and communities of French Polynesia have deep and lasting ties to many neighboring island groups, the relationship between Rapa Nui and French Polynesia (especially Mangareva and Tahiti) is particularly close and spans many centuries.

Firstly, linguists and archeologists are increasingly confident that the first Polynesians to settle Rapa Nui approximately one thousand years ago were voyagers from Mangareva. Centuries later, in the late 19th century, European and Polynesian Catholic missionaries established in Mangareva and Tahiti, along with European and Tahitian business and plantation owners who were established in Tahiti went to Rapa Nui. From there, missionaries organized the transfer of the Rapa Nui mission and its converts to Mangareva, and the business owners recruited Rapanui for plantation work in Tahiti. Both displacements happened in 1871 and involved hundreds of people. In 1887, Rapanui living in Tahiti bought land from the mission. Decades later in the 1920s, Rapanui traveled to Tahiti hoping to sell their ancestors’ land. Rapanui also went to Tahiti in the 1970s to look for work during the height of the economic boom resulting from the expansion of the CEP. Recently, French Polynesia’s economic crisis and Rapa Nui’s tourism boom have inspired some Rapanui to make their way home. In recent years, these linkages have led some Rapanui intellectuals and leaders to advocate publicly and petition the United Nations for Rapa Nui to be formally associated with French Polynesia. For the detailed story of French Polynesia/Rapa Nui links see Diego Munoz Azocar, Diaspora Rapanui (1871-2015), EHESS-CREDO Ph.D., 2017.
How does a focus on Tupaia’s earliest map deepen our understanding of these places as interconnected “sea of islands” rather than “islands in a far sea”? (see Hau’ofa 1994)

Tupaia was a Ra’iātea chief and expert navigator who joined the crew of Captain Cook’s ship Endeavor in 1769 and travelled with them until his death in Batavia, Indonesia in 1770. Unlike Ahutoru and Mai (Omai), who also travelled with early European navigators all the way to Europe, where their perceived exoticism gave rise to much commentary, Tupaia was not the subject of entertainment. Instead, Captain Cook and his crew admired and respected Tupaia for his vast knowledge of traditional navigation. Tupaia’s expertise was a testament to the strength of Tahitian geographical and regional knowledge including the ability to sail without instruments or written maps. Tupaia’s understanding of Polynesian and European cultures also allowed him to become an early cross-cultural mediator notably when he worked with others aboard Cook’s ship to compose detailed and rich maps of the Pacific Islands including many he had never himself previously visited. Click here to read Eckstein and Schwartz (2019), The Making of Tupaia’s Map.
Early European Arrivals

Colonialism is the imposition of foreign political, military, economic, and sociocultural structures, institutions, and ideologies on Indigenous communities and land- and seascapes. Since the mid-18th century, French colonialism in Oceania has taken several forms, including informal political and economic influence, settler colonialism, military and political violence, the seizure of political power, and the formal annexation of territory. In the now French speaking Pacific, informal and formal colonial processes and institutions have had profound consequences for Indigenous and settler communities in the realms of politics, economics, religious beliefs, cultural practice, and representation, among others.

Beginning with Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan’s passage across the Pacific Ocean in 1521, the 16th century marked the start of the era of European exploration in Oceania. Although France would eventually make formal claims in parts of the southern Pacific, the French were not the first or only Europeans to encounter or have an influence in these areas.

Alvaro de Mendaña was a Spanish explorer who led two 16th century voyages of exploration (1567-69 and 1595-96) across Oceania in search of the presumed Terra Australis Incognita or unknown southern continent. While unsuccessful in this quest, de Mendaña's second voyage located and mapped the Marquesas Islands accurately enough for the British explorer Captain James Cook and his crew to locate them two centuries later. The 1595 encounter was so violent that it resulted in the deaths of many Indigenous Marquesans.

In 1606, Portuguese navigator Pedro de Quérois, who had previously sailed to the Pacific as part of de Mendaña's 1595 expedition, returned to the region and became the first European to land at Vanuatu. Believing he had reached the much sought Terra Australis, de Quérois claimed the islands for Spain and named them La Australia del Espíritu Santo (“The Southern Land of the Holy Spirit”). The largest island in Vanuatu is still called Espiritu Santo today.

The Era of Enlightenment and scientific inquiry in western Europe inspired further European exploration in Oceania and more frequent encounters between Europeans and Pacific Islanders between the late 17th to early 18th century. During this time, the search for the unknown southern continent remained an important objective for British explorers in particular. During one expedition in 1767, British naval officer and explorer Samuel Wallis and the crew of the HMS Dolphin landed briefly at the Tuamotus, but soon sailed west to Tahiti. The Dolphin arrived at Matavai Bay on 18 June 1767, and the captain named Tahiti “King George the Third's Island” in honor of the king of England. The crew stayed at Matavai Bay for more than a month, where they documented the location, climate, vegetation, and people. Tahitians were eager to trade with the Europeans, especially for iron nails. Their encounters with Europeans soon grew violent, however, with Tahitians throwing...
rocks at the ship and crew. Although some Tahitian women tried to appease the outsiders with sexual gestures and invitations, the British responded with gun and cannon fire, killing many. Historian Greg Dening reflects on the ethnographic context for these encounters in his 1986 essay “Possessing Tahiti.”

Within the realm of astronomy, a push to compute the distance between the earth and the sun by observing the transit of Venus across the sun, an event that occurs only twice every 113 years, was a key factor behind the British Captain James Cook’s first expedition to Oceania aboard the *HMS Endeavour* in 1768-1771. In 1769, the *Endeavour* landed at the northern tip of Tahiti, which Cook named “Point Venus.” After recording their observations, Cook and his crew continued on in search of the southern continent, which they located in 1770 and is today known as Australia.

Almost two decades later, in 1789, British Captain William Bligh of the *HMS Bounty* led an expedition to Tahiti to collect breadfruit saplings to be taken to Jamaica for use as a food source for African slaves. After a couple of months on Tahiti, where crew members became involved with Tahitian women and adopted aspects of Tahitian culture, the *Bounty* set sail for the next leg of its journey. Not long after, crew member Fletcher Christian led a mutiny, ousting Bligh and others. Several mutineers, along with their Tahitian companions, eventually settled on Pitcairn Island southeast of Mangareva. Today, Pitcairn is a British Overseas Territory with approximately 50 residents descended from the *Bounty* mutineers and their Tahitian partners. Many more descendants live on Norfolk Island in the Southwestern Pacific, a colonial territory of Australia.

**Early Europeans and Representations of Tahiti**

Tahiti has taken on a multitude of identities throughout its history, first as a political and spiritual epicenter for Polynesians and, following early chance arrivals by European explorers, a controversial site of European desires. In 1767, Samuel Wallis became the first documented European to land at Tahiti. After several violent encounters and many casualties on the Tahitian side, the British described the “peaceful” hospitality they were afforded during the second part of their stay, with gifts of food and presentations of young women. Much of the misunderstandings that arose between these exchanges had to do with a total misalignment of cultural values and ideologies.

While the Tahitians sought to understand and trade for some of the technologies carried by the newcomers, the Europeans were entranced by their own interpretations of Tahitian female sexual hospitality. Just a year later, the French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville arrived in Tahiti. He and his crewmates experienced a similar hospitality and went on to contribute to the European narrative about the welcoming customs of Tahiti. Bougainville’s interpretations of his experiences in what he called “Eden” and the publication of his *Voyage around the World* (1771) inspired European fantasies about and representations of Tahiti as a “Paradise” and “Garden of Eden” where “every woman is as Eve before the Sin.” Subsequent narratives, including those of Captain James Cook who visited Tahiti in 1769 and many others, perpetuated this kind of imagery, which continue to be used today to promote tourism and other industries in Tahiti and other parts of Oceania.

**Image 10.** Portrait of British Navigator Captain James Cook.
The Emergence of French Colonialism in Oceania

French exploration and influence in Oceania began in the first decades of the 19th century within the context of competition with Britain and other European powers for control of trade routes, provisioning stations, and, eventually, colonial territory. For the French, the Pacific offered an opportunity to expand with little risk because the British were unlikely to oppose their efforts there as they might in Asia and other regions where potential land claims were much larger and political stakes much greater.

French ventures into the Pacific also started in the late 18th century with exploratory and scientific research expeditions led by Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1763-69), Louis de Freycinet (1817-20), Louis Isidore Duperrey (1822-25), and Jules Dumont D’Urville (1820s-1830s), among others. Dumont D’Urville, who promoted the terms Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, created the first maps of the Loyalty Islands in New Caledonia and reported extensively on Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas.

Mutiny on the Bounty

Few stories have circulated as widely and across as many media as those surrounding the mutiny aboard His Majesty’s Armed Vessel Bounty. Navigated by the English Captain William Bligh, who had previously sailed with Captain James Cook, the Bounty sailed to Tahiti in 1787 to collect and transport breadfruit saplings to the Caribbean as part of Britain’s global imperial project. Due to the seasonality of breadfruit’s reproductive cycle, the crew of the Bounty was forced to rest at Tahiti for almost six months.

When it was finally time to set sail, many crewmembers, including Bligh’s wildly charismatic Lieutenant Fletcher Christian, were loath to return to England. Not long after departing Tahiti, a significant portion of the crew rebelled against the captain, threw more than a thousand breadfruit seedlings overboard, and cast Bligh and those loyal to him adrift in an open long boat with few instruments and little expectation of their survival. The Bounty returned to Tahiti and, after several months, sailed to the Australas and then to Pitcairn Island in 1790 where, after burning the Bounty at anchor, some of the mutineers and their Tahitian and Austral Islander companions forged a new community. The group experienced various upheavals including the deaths by murder, suicide, or suspicious accident of all but one of its men before it was “rediscovered” by a passing ship in the early 19th century. Meanwhile, Bligh managed to navigate his small boat across the Pacific Ocean to Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia). The story was the subject of immense interest in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and gained renewed acclaim through a series of novels by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall in the 1920s and 1930s and no less than five films in the 20th century three of which were by major Hollywood studios.
In the future French Polynesia, the Pōmare dynasty ruled the Kingdom of Tahiti from 1815 to 1880. Its founder, Pōmare II, centralized power in Tahiti under the title Ari'i Nui, abandoned polytheism, and established Christianity as the faith of the kingdom. The first Protestant Christian mission in Oceania had been established in Tahiti in 1797 by the London Missionary Society (LMS). After 1815, the ari'i of the multiple chieftaincies of Tahiti and Mo'orea became tāvana (from the English word “governor”), and in this role were administrators of a portion of Pōmare's kingdom. After Pōmare II's death in 1821, his son Pōmare III (1820-1827) and daughter Pōmare IV (1813-1877) succeeded him. By the 1840s, England's influence in the Society Islands had been greatly diminished. In the wake of failed attempts to establish a French Catholic mission, France began to move to force the Tahitian Kingdom to become a protectorate of the French Empire. After the French threatened annexation in 1843, ari'i loyal to Queen Pōmare fought against the forces of French occupation. Known as the Franco-Tahitian War, the battles were centered in Tahiti and some of the Leeward Society Islands from 1844-1847. At the conclusion of the conflict, Queen Pomare IV recognized the French protectorate over her Kingdom in exchange for the protection of traditional and pre-existing land tenure.

However France gradually imposed elements of the French judicial system and metropolitan French laws over the Tahitian Kingdom. In the area of land tenure, practices relating to land ownership by families, their occupation, exploitation, and transmission continued to function according to Tahitian customary practices. These largely conflicted with the French Civil Code, formally enacted in the Tahitian Protectorate in 1866, which was based on different values including individual ownership of land, descent of property, etc. King Pōmare V (1839-1891), who succeeded his mother in 1877, was the last monarch of Tahiti. He accompanied the treaty of cession of his kingdom to France with significant reservations, demanding that the Tahitian courts and traditional property rights continue. In practice, however, these courts disappeared and subsequent French administrators challenged traditional land rights. In the wake of voids left open through these processes of change, France set up a cadastral office in order to survey the colony's population and land holdings.

The Annexation War of 1896-1897 in the Leeward Islands was the final act of resistance, however the war led to the French annexation of the Leeward Islands, including Ra'iātea and its neighbors, and the forced exile of remaining rebel leaders.

New Caledonia and Tahiti: Reservations versus Abdication

In New Caledonia, lasting contacts between Kanak and Europeans began in earnest in the mid-19th century. In 1840-1841, Rarotongan and Sāmoan teachers sent by the London Missionary Society (LMS) landed at Maré, the Isle of Pines and the
southern end of Grand Terre. In December 1843, Marist (Catholic) missionaries set up their first mission at Balade on Grande Terre’s northern end. At the same time, whaling and other European commercial vessels began to engage in trade with Kanak and ni-Vanuatu chiefdoms. Although these new relationships benefited Indigenous communities in certain respects, they also created tensions and led to deep political transformations and wars in some places.

By the mid-19th century, France saw its combined naval and missionary presence and desire for ports of call in the Pacific as enough to justify the pursuit of territorial annexation. It was argued that formal military and governmental institutions were necessary to keep ports of call and missionaries safe and well supplied. Formal French colonization began in 1842 with Admiral Abel Aubert Dupetit Thouars’s claim of the Marquesas Islands. This assertion was followed with the imposition in 1847 of a French Protectorate in the Windward Society Islands centered on Tahiti, formally annexed as a French colony in 1880. From then, colonial France expanded across neighboring island chains, completing its annexation of the kingdoms of the Austral Islands between 1880 and 1901 and the Leeward Society Islands in the 1890s.

France had additional motives for pursuing territorial expansion in other parts of Oceania, including competition with the British and the search for a site for a penal colony for French convicts and political prisoners. In 1853, under orders of self-proclaimed French Emperor Napoleon III, Admiral Febvrier Despointes went ashore at Grande Terre and read a decree in French proclaiming New Caledonia as French possession. No Kanak knew the content of or signed the document, but this did not matter to the French, for their true target audience was Britain. France wanted to make it known that it was taking possession of New Caledonia, and that Britain should step aside.

France formally annexed New Caledonia in 1853, and within a decade chose the territory as the site of a penal colony for French convicts and political prisoners. Between 1864 and 1897, France sent upwards of 30,000 convicts and exiles to New Caledonia. A smaller number of free French migrants also settled in New Caledonia during this period with the goal of creating a “little France,” with most settling in rural areas as coffee farmers. France also started extracting nickel and other mineral resources during this period.

By the time France took possession of New Caledonia in 1853, an estimated 70 violent conflicts had taken place between Europeans and Kanak. Over time, formal colonization and the French government’s desire to transform what had been conceived as a penal colony into a settlement colony intensified these conflicts. In 1855, Governor Joseph Bouzet’s Declaration No. 18 made all land on Grande Terre property of France. To make room for convicts and settlers, France claimed ownership of all New Caledonia land. In 1859, the French administration created
Image 12.
December 1985 mourning ceremony at Tiédanite (Hienghène), New Caledonia for 10 kanak independentists murdered a year earlier during an ambush by “loyalist” people in the Valley. Photo by Patrice Godin.
the first of several native reserves, which were made up of only 10 percent of the land on Grand Terre. Between 1859 and 1935, several decrees aimed at opening land for settlers led to massive land alienation and the displacement of Kanak from their traditional lands and on to increasingly smaller reservations.

At the same time, the French colonial government introduced an administrative order that had no real connection to Indigenous forms of social organization. This involved the organization of native reserves into units called “tribes” and districts assimilated into larger chiefdoms. Within this system, tribes were required to take collective responsibility for crimes committed by individuals, the payment of colonial headtaxes, and compulsory communal labor, among others. Throughout the second half of the 19th and into the 20th century, the French administration used a system known as the Indigénat to rule New Caledonia. Under this order, which was enforced using a primarily Indigenous police force comprised of chiefs, Kanak were assigned an inferior legal status and forced into uncompensated labor. At the same time, the French administration meddled with Kanak traditions, gave almost free reign to cattle ranchers who allowed their cattle to trample Kanak sacred sites, and permitted colonists to kidnap Kanak women into forced marriage and sexual servitude.

In the 1880s, France consolidated its power in Oceania within the context of the global “scramble for colonies.” In 1880, France formally annexed Tahiti and during the two following decades extended its colonial domain to include the Gambier Islands, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotus, forming what remains French Polynesia today. In 1886, France declared a Protectorate in Wallis and Futuna, which was formally attached as dependencies of the colony of New Caledonia in 1917.

French and other colonial claims in the 19th century reorganized communities and relationships across Oceania. In some cases, exchange and other networks that had historically connected island groups including the Austral Islands and the Cook Islands were severed by boundaries established by competing colonial empires. The French colonial empire also brought together previously disjointed island groups including the five archipelagos that became French Polynesia. This new grouping was separated from such neighboring island chains as Pitcairn and the Cook Islands, which were absorbed into the Anglophone Pacific through corresponding British colonial projects. In an effort to strengthen its claims in the region, France drew French Polynesia closer to New Caledonia, although the two island groups had little, if any, previous direct contact.

Demographic Decline and Sociocultural and Religious Change

Beginning in the late 18th century, islands in what is now French speaking Oceania experienced a demographic decline that
affected many parts of the region soon after European contact. Some islands lost upwards of 90 percent of their population in just a few decades. For example, conservative estimates indicate that, between 1760 and 1850, Tahiti’s population plummeted from approximately 80,000 to 8,000 people. This precipitous decline was the result of several forces brought about by foreign explorers, traders, whalers, and others. These included introduced epidemics including smallpox, tuberculosis, and influenza, as well as declines in fertility resulting from such venereal diseases as syphilis. The intensity and rapidity of this human tragedy defies understanding.

In addition to the loss of human life, depopulation had a myriad social, cultural, political, and other impacts that continue today. For example, rapid and widespread illness and death partly explain the conversion of some communities to Christianity, as people turned to a new god for divine aid and protection from the devastation they were experiencing.

The roles of the Protestant and Catholic churches extend far beyond orthodox religious roles in society. First, it is important to recognize the distinctive positionalities of church clergy and other leadership and of various Indigenous congregations. For example, in French Polynesia, in the mid-20th century, church leadership generally did not support the independence struggle of early independence activists such as Pouvanaa a Oopa, although many Protestant communities in the region recognized themselves in Oopa and his message of liberation.

During the era of nuclear testing in French Polynesia (1966-1996), leaders of the Catholic and Protestant churches protested, but did not go as far as to support the independence struggle of Pouvanaa a Oopa’s heirs. However, the 1980s saw the appearance of a cultural liberation theology in French Polynesia's Protestant Church, promoting the revitalization of Indigenous cultural practices as language and land cultivation as expressions of God’s will and generally aligned with a vision of autonomy or independence from France. Similarly, the Catholic Church in French Polynesia went from spurning independence in the 1950s and 1960s to a more open position thereafter. Oscar Temaru, a practicing Catholic and the most important leader of French Polynesia’s independence movement from the 1980s to the present, helped shift the views of some Church leaders and members with respect to independence and future of the territory.

Catholicism and Protestantism came to New Caledonia in the early 1840s and soon inspired a number of conversions. Throughout the colonial period, churches in both denominations offered some recourse to Kanak whose lives were being severely affected by the injustices of the Indigénat and other impositions by settler colonists. Several churches participated in efforts to transcribe and preserve Indigenous languages and introduce western schooling among Indigenous communities. From the end
of World War II through the 1960s, churches provided the framework for training the first contemporary Kanak elite. Today, the Catholic Church in New Caledonia has approximately 110,000 members and continues to assert its political neutrality. The Protestant Church of Kanaky New Caledonia (EPKNC), which has Calvinist roots and approximately 40,000 members, has taken up the independence cause.

In addition to the Catholic and Protestant churches, several other churches have followings in the French speaking Pacific. These include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon church), Seventh Day Adventists, Assembly of God, several Independent (IEE) or Free Evangelical (EEL) Churches, and Jehovah’s Witness. With respect to politics, these churches generally remain neutral and disengaged.

Historical, religious, political, and other processes in French speaking Oceania reveal that these island societies share many common features but are also unique. Even as ancestral networks connect cultures and communities in many ways across time and space, they also give them their many distinctive features. Similarly, colonialism has manifested in diverse yet interconnected ways across the region, and the region’s political entities will likely chart distinct yet interconnected cultural, political, and socioeconomic courses moving forward. These processes have contributed to and will continue to affect important artistic and cultural movements that rely on a message of endurance despite ongoing colonialism. **Section 3** explores these efforts more in depth.

**Political Revivals and Cultural Renaissance: Indigenous Struggles in the 20th Century**

While French speaking Oceania is separated from other Pacific places by its colonial language, the islands were not so isolated when, in the 1960s, renewed opposition to colonialism emerged around the world and across the region. The period after World War II saw new movements with Indigenous political leaders seeking to reimagine their people’s political sovereignty in relation to colonial powers. As in other Pacific places including Aotearoa and Hawai‘i, these political struggles were often accompanied by the revival of traditional art forms and Indigenous languages framed by a new awareness of cultural autonomy and identity. The lives and work of three important political figures in French speaking Oceania draw attention to some of the cross-cutting dynamics of political revivals and cultural renaissance across these communities: Pouvanaa a Oopa and Oscar Manutahi Temaru of French Polynesia and Jean-Marie Tjibaou of New Caledonia. Along with numerous other activists and leading voices, these three have played a crucial role in reframing the political discourses of their time, and earned central positions in the political memory, legacy, and future of their island home islands as a result.
Pouvanaa a Oopa (1895-1977) is often considered the father of French Polynesian nationalism. Like a number of other well known 20th century leaders of independence movements in French colonies across the globe, Pouvanaa fought voluntarily in the French army during World War I. We can understand his commitment as that towards a Nation whose motto is Freedom, Equality, Fraternity/that claims the values of “freedom, equality, and fraternity.” Pouvanaa became a prominent political leader at the end of the 1940s. Pouvanaa’s rise to leadership was also a response to a host of injustices imposed by the French colonial regime in French Polynesia in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite his mixed European and Tahitian heritage, Pouvanaa was a man of the people, and was particularly devoted to those who identified as non-elite and indigenous.

His broad, grounded base of supporters was drawn to Pouvanaa’s political courage and extraordinary use of a Tahitian language and biblical references. Elected to a national office in 1949 and again in 1951 and 1956, he was a key figure in the Referendum of 1958 to determine the future relationship of the territory—which had just been renamed from the “Établissements Français de l’Océanie” to French Polynesia—with France. When the results showed that a majority of 64 percent had voted to reject immediate independence, Pouvanaa was accused of trying to start a riot in Pape’ete. He was arrested and imprisoned first in Tahiti and later in France where he stayed for many years. In 1968, Pouvanaa returned to Tahiti politics and was elected senator in 1971—a post he held until his death in 1977.

In 2013, Marie-Hélène Villierme directed the film, L’élu du peuple, A People’s Voice: Pouvanaa Te Metua, a documentary about Pouvanaa’s life and political legacy. It received a number of distinctions including the Public Prize in the Oceanic Film Festival in 2012. Click here to view the movie trailer.
Oscar Manutahi Temaru emerged as a vocal campaigner against French nuclear testing at Moruroa and Fangataufa in the 1970s. Temaru formally entered politics in 1977 when he formed the political party the Front for the Liberation of Polynesia (FLP), which later changed its name to Tavini Huiraatira (“Servant of the People”). In the 1980s, Temaru’s party began to play a significant role in the territorial assembly. Over time, his force of character and unwavering commitment to Tahitian independence made him the most notable face of opposition to Gaston Flosse, who had served as French Polynesia’s president for decades, and was decidedly and powerfully pro-France and anti-sovereignty. Since that time, Temaru has remained a strong and vocal proponent for independence. Although some in France and French Polynesia would portray Temaru and other pro-independence leaders as dreamers or extremists, Temaru has consistently advocated for the maintenance of civic peace and stability as fundamental to the decolonization struggle. Since 2004, Temaru has been elected president of French Polynesia on five occasions, and was a primary force behind French Polynesia’s reinscription on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories in 2013.
Connected on his mother's side to the Great Bwaarhat Chiefdom in the lower Hienghène Valley, in the northeast of New Caledonia, and on his father's side to one of the pillar clans of the Great Goa Chiefdom of the Upper Valley, Jean-Marie Tjibaou was born in 1936 in Tiédanite, a village particularly hardened by the repression of the Kanak uprising of 1917. At the instigation of Father Rouel, the local Catholic missionary, Tjibaou studied at the seminary of Canala and was ordained a priest in 1965. Five years later, in 1970 and with the agreement of the Church, he abandoned this ministry after studying sociology and anthropology in France. In the wake of his studies, Tjibaou committed himself to the improvement of the living conditions of his people. At the same time, drawing on his rich scholarly and professional training, he forged a sustained cultural dialogue with local and metropolitan officials present in New Caledonia, with the hope of eventually obtaining profound reforms of the colonial order. In 1975, he was the main organizer of the first large-scale Kanak cultural event, *Melanesia 2000*, which was held in Nouméa from September 3rd to 7th in 1975. In 1976, confronted with the rise of the independence movement and the Kanak's growing rejection of French colonial power, Tjibaou fully entered into politics and joined the old autonomist party, the Union Calédonienne, alongside Eloi Machoro, Yeweine Yeweine and Pierre Declercq.

In 1977, Tjibaou and his colleagues recommitted the party to a vision and agenda focused on independence. With the help of the center-right party, the *Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne* (FNSC), Tjibaou became vice president of the Council of Government in 1981. In that role, he and the newly elected socialist government in France worked to bring about important reforms. However, faced with the refusal of François Mitterrand to engage a real policy of decolonization, he played a major role in the creation of the FLKS (Front of Liberation Kanak Socialist) in which he became president and advocated an active boycott of territorial elections. For Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the aim of the political struggle was not to conquer his adversary (France), but to compel France to engage in dialogue, and he believed there could be no real dialogue unless his interlocutor were recognized for his identity and his full freedom to be himself. This is the reason why throughout his political life Tjibaou sought to negotiate with representatives of the French government who were open to Kanak claims: Edgar Pisani in 1985 and Michel Rocard in 1988. Guided by this same vision, he became the representative of the Kanak nationalist cause in the Pacific Forum and to the UN. Jean-Marie Tjibaou paid for his opening of Kanak politics with his life. He was assassinated by an activist for immediate independence, Djubelly Wea, on May 4, 1989.
Image 15. Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre.
European visual and literary arts have played a striking role in representing French speaking Oceania, and particularly French Polynesia. European visions of Pacific places and peoples have been recorded in paintings, postcards, short stories, novels and films, contributing to persistent outsider visions of the region and its people that have circulated globally for centuries. Europeans who travelled with French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1767-1769) and British navigator James Cook (1768-1771, 1772-1775, and 1776-1779) produced and circulated lasting visions of Pacific worlds based primarily on their experiences in Tahiti. Over time, these visions became central to how the world has perceived, represented, and engaged with islands and communities from French Polynesia to Hawai‘i and beyond.

More recently, culturally rooted artistic and poetic traditions have played a key role in the resurgence and empowerment of Indigenous identities and politics. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw powerful social and cultural revivals and political movements articulating desires for increased autonomy and independence from metropolitan France, frequently expressed through the passionate celebration of Indigenous artistic traditions. In French Polynesia, tattooing, canoe paddling (ho‘era’a va’a), quilting (ti‘afai), carving, weaving, and public oratory (‘ōrero) have all contributed to a resurgent sense of the potency of Indigenous agency and cultural identity. These revived traditions have inspired the cultural festival Te Heiva (also known as Te Tiurai) held every July, and played a key role in strengthening local aspirations for political autonomy and even independence from France. While attention to each of these distinct art and cultural practices would be valuable for revealing Indigenous and local experiences and understandings, the remainder of this section focuses on literature as a key expressive and representational domain that reveals much about the nature of colonial and settler-colonial histories and practices and about the moves towards resistance, renewal, refusal, and survivance of Indigenous communities.

Representation and Oceania
This text focuses on the literary representations of French Polynesia and New Caledonia, dominated by Euro-American writers in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and powerfully transformed by a critical indigenous turn in literary production in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in which local writers across Oceania seized the pen and began to recast, reframe, and reimagine Oceania’s pasts, present, and future. For more on the role of arts and culture in contemporary Oceania, see Teaching Oceania, Volume 4: “Oceanic Arts: Continuity and Innovation.”
**Western Literary and Artistic Representations**

Even in the current age of ongoing decolonization and Indigenous empowerment in the Pacific, it is difficult to escape the lasting legacy of early European depictions of the now French speaking Pacific. Early works by outsiders have long dominated the art and literature of French Polynesia and New Caledonia, and shaped how these island places have been represented to the West over time.

In the wake of Louis Antoine de Bougainville’s trip to Tahiti and the publication of his *Voyage* (1791), French Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot wrote a dialogue entitled *Supplement to Bougainville’s Voyage* (1796) where Orou, a fictional Tahitian man, spoke about France. Although the text does deliver a sharp criticism of Western society, it also employs an early idealized representation of Tahiti and exotic primitivism whose misrepresentations and distortions of local cultures and societies have been echoed in subsequent works for centuries. Comparable representations of different Pacific Islands and their peoples appeared in the writings published by Cook and other Europeans who accompanied his navigations. Over time these Eurocentric perspectives were sometimes used as a justification for missionization and French colonialism. Today, they play a role in promoting certain problematic modes of tourism in the region.

**Noble and Ignoble Savage, an Enduring Pacific Trope**

The trope of the noble and ignoble savage is among the most prevailing literary representation of indigenous people and cultures, with a long genealogy and ongoing legacies in Western literature and epistemology and often associated with some of the writings of French philosopher and novelist Jean-Jacques Rousseau who suggested that European society and “civilization” had led to a corruption of the freedom and liberty of the natural state of human affairs and that some non-European peoples could be seen to represent this earlier human condition as “noble savages.” Meanwhile, some other non-European and supposedly “primitive” peoples failed to achieve or maintain this happy condition and appeared as “ignoble savages” whose cultural practices, values, or beliefs were belittled, disparaged, and generally misunderstood. These representations have been reproduced and applied differently across Pacific places, often taking on new extremes. Such scholars as Edward Said, Margaret Jolly, Patty O’Brien, and Serge Tcherkézoff, among others, have explored some of the ways these two dichotomous and complementary themes work together.

**Activity**

*Can you think of any examples of the noble or ignoble savage in contemporary pop culture, literature, or film? How does the perpetuation of these stereotypes continue to impact indigenous communities and well-being in French speaking Oceania and the region as a whole?*
In the late 19th century, earlier representations were reverberated in the work of Julien Viaud, also known as Pierre Loti, who expanded on Bougainville’s and Diderot’s exotic fantasies about Tahiti in *The Marriage of Loti* (1880). The novel expounds several problematic themes present in the work of Diderot including the fatal impact theory, which presumes Polynesians were doomed to extinction after contact with the West. The novel’s male character searches for a lost, idyllic Tahiti and sees his time on the island as a temporary escape from what he regards as “real world” life in France. Meanwhile, Rarahu, the female Tahitian protagonist and hero-narrator’s young lover, is strongly racialized. Rarahu dies when her lover leaves her, and thus becomes a self-fulfilling illustration of the fatal impact of colonialism on Tahiti and throughout the region. This and similar works provided a superficial yet seductive vision of an idyllic and erotic paradise fantasy that promoted and perpetuated colonialism and, later, tourism, in the region.

Nineteenth century French painter Paul Gauguin echoed Loti’s perspective even as he transformed it into a personal spiritual and artistic quest to rediscover a mythical origin within Polynesian culture. Unlike Loti, Gauguin lived and died in French Polynesia, and his vision and artistic genius continues to influence contemporary arts and visions of the region. Through the power of his art and literature, Gauguin shared idealized images of Oceania and himself that have remained iconic yet highly controversial for their overt sexualization of minors and exoticism of island communities.

French writers and artists were not the only outsiders to produce potent representations of Tahitian and Marquesan worlds for global audiences. American novelist Herman Melville’s *Typee* was a sensation among Western audiences.

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**Image 17.**
Drawing by Pierre Loti entitled *Rarahu* (date unknown).

**Image 18.**
Oil painting by Paul Gauguin entitled *Tahitian Women on the Beach* (1891).
following its publication in 1846. Melville’s autobiographical narrative represented the Marquesas as an ambivalent place replete with hospitable “tribes,” romantic lovers, fierce warriors, and dangerous captors. *Typee* inspired Western fantasies and the caricatural division between Europeans and Pacific Islanders and helped cultivate what would become French Polynesia as a colonized space.

The turn of the 20th century saw a shift in perspective as seen in the work of Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson and French writer Victor Segalen. Stevenson’s writing on Sāmoa, Hawai’i, Tahiti, and the Tuamotus range from grimly realistic to fantastic and highly comical (e.g., *South Sea Tales*, 1894). Stevenson’s prose reveals careful observations resulting from significant lived experience in the islands. Throughout, Stevenson tries to discard, or at least reform, typical Western stereotypes of the “South Seas” with writing that promotes Oceania’s Indigenous past and present, and calls for a sovereign future. Published only a few years later, Segalen’s novel *Les Immémoriaux* (1907) offers a harsh critic of mainstream 19th century literary clichés. Inspired by Gauguin, Segalen attempts to free himself from Western religious and cultural constraints by employing what he understands to be an Indigenous worldview. His philosophical and political writing reflects an effort to restore dignity to and account for Tahitian perspectives. By abandoning clichés and celebrating...
Polynesian culture, Segalen’s writing would become influential many decades later for Tahitian activists and leaders including Henri Hiro in their movement toward Tahitian cultural revival and sovereignty.

In the 1930s, Americans Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall wrote the Trilogy of the Bounty (1932-1934) based on the events of Lieutenant William Bligh’s mission to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies as a food source for enslaved people. The historical novels revived many tropes and clichés in their representations of Pacific places and people including sensual vahine (women), Noble Savages, and idyllic lands. The series also inspired numerous films throughout the 20th century. The films’ resounding success continue to play a significant role in portraying the islands as little more than exotic tropical paradise.

Contemporary Mā’ohi Literature

Although Polynesian and other Pacific cultures are customarily oral, French Polynesia has also had a strong written tradition since the start of Christian missionization. Early writing includes transcriptions of myths, legends, songs, recipes, and Puta tupuna (“books of the old ones”), which preserve the names and genealogies of large families.

Even as one of the characteristics of contemporary literature in Tahiti and across French Polynesia has been to question the necessity and value of writing within oral cultures, a Mā’ohi written literature has emerged in recent decades as a form of political activism and protest. Tahiti’s contemporary literary movement was largely inspired by Tahitian writer Henri Hiro (see above), who called for Mā’ohi to “seize the pen” in order to represent themselves and their experiences. In The Source: an interview with Henri Hiro, Hiro proclaims: “For this renewal to continue, Polynesians must write. However, that’s actually the second step. They’ve already taken the first step by building and living in Polynesian-style homes. Having done this, they now must write and express themselves. It doesn’t matter what language they use, whether it’s Reo Mā’ohi, French, or English. The important thing is that they write, that they do it!”

In the 1960s and 1970s, Tahiti’s literary movement was largely marked by protests against consumer society and the events of May 1968 in metropolitan France. Beginning with the cultural renaissance of the 1970s, Mā’ohi authors and artists focused on bringing such Pacific themes including the search for identity, language, colonization, religious acculturation, the loss of Indigenous values, and others to the forefront of local arts and politics.
While the themes addressed are similar, the impetus for this movement in Tahiti differed from neighboring island groups. As western Polynesian communities progressively gained independence starting with (Western) Sāmoa in 1962, the people of French Polynesia experienced some of the most violent and destructive impacts of colonialism as France used their islands for nuclear weapons testing. As a result, late 20th century Tahitian literature initially emerged as a form of Indigenous resistance to the Centre d’expérimentation du Pacifique (Pacific Experimentation Center or CEP), which was active on Hao, Moruroa, and Fangataufa in the Tuamotu Archipelago from 1966 to 1996. (For more on the CEP and its impacts, see Section 4: Land, Environment, and Economy.) By that time, Tahitian desires to represent themselves and their histories in culturally appropriate ways had been simmering for decades and quickly began to emerge to displace outsider interpretations.

Tahitian protest literature was spearheaded by Henri Hiro, who used writing to denounce French nuclear testing, affirm Indigenous identities, and inspire others to do the same. Hiro’s efforts were realized with the publication of his work in Tahitian and translation into French, and as Indigenous authors answered his call with the publication of their own work.

First published in 1991, Chantal Spitz’s novel Island of the Shattered Dreams is an anti-colonialist reinterpretation of the official French history of Tahiti. By tracing a family history over several generations and recounting the many untold sides of nuclear testing, the novel challenges long-standing colonial tropes and interpretations of history. Hiro and Spitz also inspired other authors including Titaua Peu, whose Mutisms (2002) and Pina (2016) make important contributions to the ongoing decolonization of Tahitian literature. Poet Turo a Raapoto is one of several Indigenous Tahitian authors writing in Reo Mā‘ohi who emerged in the late 20th century. Much like the work of Henri Hiro, Raapoto’s poetry focuses on Mā‘ohi culture and identity.

The writings of Louise Peltzer and Flora Devatine speaks to the authors’ mixed Indigenous and settler ancestry, and to the many issues current and future generations must face as a result of ongoing colonialism in the region. Flora Devatine’s Les Tablettes: te hiapo (1992-2001), were the first bilingual books published in Reo Mā‘ohi and French under the pseudonym Vaitiare. Her literary style reflects a Tahitian cultural emphasis on orality and spoken word and attempts to combine artistic elements of written and oral expression. For instance in Tergiversations et rêveries de l’écriture orale, Devatine’s poetry aims to “tame” the art of writing and to revive ancestral orality. To do this, she welcomes and “plaits” orality and writing, Tahitian language, French, tradition and modernity into hybrid poetry.
In the 21st century, Tahitian writers have used a variety of genres to grapple with issues of culture, identity, and colonialism, among others. Stéphanie Ari’irau Richard-Vivi explores issues of identity in her autobiographical novel *Matamimi: ou la vie nous attend* and in her biography of Sunny Moana’ura Walker, a cultural activist, entitled *Le Païen*. John Mairai uses theatrical performance to embody and promote the revival of Tahitian language and culture, directing his own plays and classical European works in *Reo Mā’ohi*. Moetai Brotherson offers a broad vision of Tahitian origins in his novel *The Missing King* (2007), and Titaua Porcher re-appropriates Polynesian myths in the play *Hina, Maui et Compagnie* (2018). Prominent *Heiva Festival* contributor Patrick Amaru won a significant national award called the *President’s Award* for *Te Oho nō te tau ‘auhunera’a* (“The Premises of Abundance”) in 2001 drawing attention to the rich possibilities for literary expression in Tahitian. Amaru was one of the only remaining authors publishing in *Reo Mā’ohi* when he died in 2018. His last book, *Vaianu* (2009), chronicles the life of a young man, Tinomana, preoccupied with questions of identity, culture, and life in a continually changing world.

The publication of Tahitian literature in *Reo Mā’ohi* has also faced challenges, largely due to the continuing prevalence of French as the dominant language in Tahiti and the ongoing decline of spoken Tahitian despite revival efforts. Over the past several decades, Tahitian literature as an “art of words” has largely emerged in French, with texts in *Reo Mā’ohi* remaining sparse. Efforts have been hampered by publisher claims that work in *Reo Mā’ohi* cannot be profitable because it does not have a large enough audience, although Tahitian is now taught at several universities beyond French Polynesia. As a result, the majority of literature in *Reo Mā’ohi* is translated from French or other languages. *Littérامā’ohi*, a literary magazine edited by a group of Indigenous writers, is one of the only media to offer written texts in *Reo Mā’ohi*. Children’s and youth literature in *Reo Mā’ohi* is also thriving and making important contributions to the preservation and promotion of the Tahitian language. These efforts and the ongoing revival of *Reo Mā’ohi* will continue to depend on the government’s political will to teach and support Indigenous languages in local schools.
French Polynesian society is roused every year by Heiva i Tahiti, a month-long cultural celebration with festivities that bring together traditional dances, songs, games, and competitions, with 2019 marking the 132nd annual event. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Heiva referred to games played on water or land as a hobby or entertainment. These and other practices were banned by King Pomare II under the influence of missionaries in 1819 with the enactment of the Pomare Code, which decried activities missionaries perceived as indecent or licentious. The 1881 celebration of the French national holiday known as Bastille Day on 14 July marked the cautious return of singing to celebrations known as Tiurai, which included military parades and other institutional demonstrations. Communities in French Polynesia gradually began to use the Tiurai festivities in Tahiti as opportunities to stage dances, traditional games, and canoe races. When French Polynesia gained internal autonomy in 1984, the Tiurai was renamed Heiva i Tahiti. The Heiva has been so successful that it is now synonymous with Polynesian cultural, literary, and artistic expression. Today, the Heiva fosters French Polynesia's cultural and linguistic heritage with a range of festivities across the five archipelagos during the month of July. Each year, a growing number of dance and song groups work together with indigenous authors and composers to revive aspects of their cultural and linguistic heritage, including myths, epics, legends, songs, and dances. The majority of participants use technical choreography, costume design, oration, and performance executed in accordance with a yearly theme to explore and maintain links with the past and with their cultural heritage.
New Caledonia

In French speaking Oceania, New Caledonia has arguably attracted some of the most odious stereotypes and clichés in the realm of European literature and beyond—emphasizing the agency and authority and historical destiny of European and especially French settlers and belittling, denigrating, and diminishing the dignity and rights of Indigenous Kanak persons and communities. Due to its history as a French penal colony, contemporary New Caledonia is home to a white settler community, also known as Caldoche (Caledonian), who perceive themselves as neither European nor Indigenous to the islands. Their predecessors were largely sentenced to prison or forced labor in New Caledonia for their participation in the Paris Commune in the 1870s, and became the first to produce a New Caledonian written literature.

Early writing out of New Caledonia reached a narrow audience relative to French Polynesia, with such works as Louise Michel's *Legends and songs of canaque gestures* (1885) being among the few to stand out. Nineteenth and 20th century colonial literature largely relied on the European tropes which framed Kanak as primitive, disorganized, dangerous, cannibalistic. After the closure of the penal colony, the trope of the worthy, pioneering Caldoche became more widespread in the work of authors such as Charles Nething and Marc Le Goupils among others. At the start of the 20th century, Jean Mariotti wrote about the ambiguity of the Caledonian identity as neither French nor Kanak. In *Poindi’s Tales*, Mariotti also revealed a new Caldoche fascination with Kanak culture, further exposed by Georges Baudoux in *The Old Men Knew Everything and White Men Came* published in the 1920s.

In 2008, Kanak artist Paul Wamo released an album of slam poetry entitled *J’aime les mots*, published by La Maison du Livre de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
**Kanak Writers**

Much like their neighbors across Oceania, New Caledonia’s Indigenous communities are historically oral cultures with rich oral literatures that include genealogies, stories, songs, chants, and other performative and artistic traditions. Kanak writing began to emerge at the start of the 20th century, notably with the work of Waia Gorodey and Apollinaire Ataba Anova.

Contemporary Kanak literature largely grew out of the cultural revival inspired by Jean-Marie Tjibaou in the 1970s and the Melanesia 2000 festival held in Nouméa in 1975. As a result, Kanak literature is frequently at once a form of both artistic and political expression. The work of poet-novelist Déwé Gorodé is a good example. A politician and prominent figure in the independence struggle, Gorodé has been a member of the New Caledonian government since the late 1990s. Her collection of poetry, *Sous les cendres des conques* (1984), explores Kanak culture and contemporary political struggles. Gorodé also became the first Kanak novelist with *L’Epave* (2005). Pierre Gope is a Kanak playwright whose *Où est le droit?* (1994), *Okorenetit?* (1997) and *Le Dernier crépuscule* (2001) critically examines New Caledonia’s current political context.

In a symbolic gesture of intercultural dialogue, Gorodé and Gope have co-authored several works with Nicolas Kurtovitch, a New Caledonian writer of European origin.

Kurtovitch is one of the first Caledonian authors to engage directly with Kanak issues and experiences. In his collection of poetry *Avec le masque* (1997), Kurtovitch explores the period in New Caledonia’s history known as Les Événements. In her novels, Claudine Jacques offers a look at New Caledonia’s diverse cultures and communities. More recently, new generation writers influenced by urban culture including Paul Wamo, Vincent Vuibert, and Noëlla Poemate are using slam, romance, novellas, and other literary forms to promote a renewed expression of Oceanian identity.

**Ni-Vanuatu Writing/Writers**

Francophone literature has been emerging in Vanuatu in recent years, starting with Marcel Meltherorong and his first novel *Toghăn* and the poetry and prose of Paul Tavo in *L’âme du kava* and *Quand le cannibale ricane*. These works from the only independent French-speaking archipelago focus closely on issues, dynamics, and personal and collective challenges related to identity, indigeneity, and globalization.

**Image 30.**
As should be clear in this section, a growing number of impassioned Indigenous and local writers in French Polynesia and New Caledonia have taken up the pen, forging a new Oceanian literature that speaks truth to power and rejects, transforms, and subverts the tropes and stereotypes that have been part and parcel to Euro-American literary and artistic representations of the Pacific for centuries. For these authors, writing represents a political act and a crucial way to break the silence on the legacies and continuities of French colonialism. At the same time, Indigenous authors have been playing a key role in cultural revitalization and the transmission of cultural practices and values between generations. While an increasing number of contemporary authors in French speaking Oceania are creating work in Indigenous languages, the majority of literature continues to be in French. That said, many are finding ways to creatively appropriate and indigenize literary genres whose very form was imposed from beyond their shores.
Catholicism plays a key role in everyday life in many parts of French speaking Oceania. For instance, in Wallis and Futuna, Saint Pierre Chanel Day is a key celebration held on April 28th during which pigs are roasted and placed in the sun and dancing performances are held. A Catholic priest and missionary, Pierre Chanel joined the Society of Mary (also known as the Marist Fathers or simply as the Marists) in 1831. Sent to Oceania in 1836, he arrived on the island of Futuna in November 1837. He was initially well received. However, once Chanel had learned enough Futunan to began to preach, Niuliki, the King at the time, became afraid that Christianity would undermine his authority. When Niuliki’s son Meitala decided to be baptized, the King ordered his son-in-law Musumusu to kill Chanel and, on April 28, 1841, Chanel was clubbed to death with an axe. Later, Musumusu himself converted and, as he lay dying, is said to have expressed the desire to be buried outside the church at Poi so that those who came to revere Chanel would walk over his grave to reach it. In 1889, Chanel was declared a martyr and beatified and, in 1954, canonized by Pope Pius XII. Today, Saint Peter Chanel is recognized as patron saint of Futuna and Oceania and his feast day is celebrated as a public holiday in Wallis and Futuna.
As one could have observed in numerous passages in the text above, this colonial history of the region is visible in a contest over land and resources which was sometimes reflected in military violence between French and Indigenous parties and sometimes reflected in the violence of imposed law. The stakes and potential traumas of the loss of land over time, are particularly contextualized by many Pacific Islander deeply held understandings of the relationship between land, sea, and people as genealogical and reciprocal. Such sentiments are visible in the writings and thoughts of many Pacific Island scholars and activists as when Hawaiian scholar Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua argues that “land is sovereignty” or contemporary regional conservation activists take stances that echo Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's transformative claim, “We are the Ocean!” This section seeks to illuminate some of the history of land alienation and resistance and restoration in this part of Oceania alongside the issue of contemporary complex engagements with various natural resources for purposes of development, commerce, or conservation.

Land Alienation

Colonial land policies were quite different in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. New Caledonia had features of a typical Western settler colony, with large tracts of land alienated for the penal colony, cattle ranching, and agricultural settlements and farming. Kanak were forced into reservations, where they were denied French citizenship and subjected to a separate legal code.

Tahiti, on the other hand, was a French protectorate during most of the 19th century, and land alienation remained limited despite ineffectual attempts by France to introduce a system of private individual property ownership. In 1880, Tahiti’s last King Pōmare V made an agreement with the French government to abdicate his sovereign powers and thereby facilitate the conversion of his kingdom into a French colony.
return for transferring sovereignty to France, subjects of the Tahitian Kingdom became French citizens, while land tenure was supposed to remain under the jurisdiction of customary law. However, France refused to implement customary law as required by its agreement with Pōmare, and instead gradually phased out customary jurisdiction and introduced private property titles under the French civil code.

On the outer islands of French Polynesia that were never part of Pōmare’s kingdom, various legal systems of land tenure were created and implemented after their annexation. Several jurisdictions resembled Kanak reserves in terms of legal rights, until they were dissolved and French citizenship and the French civil code were extended to the entire territory in 1945.

The Loyalty Islands of New Caledonia were considered Kanak reserves and not subject to the kind of mass French settlement experienced on Grande Terre in New Caledonia. Meanwhile, there were scarcely any changes to land tenure in Wallis and Futuna, where traditional governance under the three kingdoms endured. No permanent French settlement took place, and all land remains under customary jurisdiction to this day.

As a consequence of French colonialism, New Caledonia and French Polynesia have both undergone extensive land alienation. In New Caledonia, land alienation happened on the largest scale on Grande Terre, where many Kanak tribes lost most or all of their customary land to French farmers and ranchers due to confiscation and forceful resettlement into reserves. In French Polynesia, on the other hand, land alienation was more haphazard, largely as a result of the forced implementation of individual fee-simple ownership under French civil code.

Nevertheless, many Mā’ōhi families have lost their traditional lands to cash sales to individual European settlers and local elites. Meanwhile, land not individually claimed and titled under French law was long considered government land. Previously administered by the French state, this land has more recently been transferred to the local territorial government.
1878 Kanak Revolution, War of 1917, Historical Legacies, Nouméa, and the 2018 Vote

French settler colonialism and the massive land alienation that came with it on the New Caledonia main island, called Grand Terre, was met with violent resistance by Kanak in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with legacies that persist into the present.

Two dates stand out in early Kanak resistance to French colonial rule. The first is the 1878 Kanak uprising in the La Foa-Sarraméa region under the leadership of Chief Ataï as a response to continuing French political and economic displacement and disruption of Kanak communities and society. The resistance effort was brutally suppressed by French military forces, causing hundreds of casualties and the forcible relocation of thousands of Kanak following further land confiscations. The second is the final insurrection of the several Kanak groups of the regions of Koné, Tipijé, and Hienghène in 1917 against the forced recruitment of soldiers for World War I in Europe and certain other measures of the French administration. Much like the 1878 rebellion, this effort was met with brutal suppression by French forces. It was not until 1946 that Kanak were no longer subject to the derogatory status called the Indigénat and finally recognized as citizens of France. That said, Kanak did not gain the right to vote until 1957. The legacies of these historical acts of resistance, the repression that followed, and Kanak’s changing legal status in the mid-20th century fuelled the modern Kanak resistance movement of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

After a decade of near civil war in the 1980s between pro and anti-independence movements with dozens of casualties called Les Événements (see above), the French government, the Kanak Independence movement, and the local pro-French party reached an agreement. A decade later in 1998, this agreement was affirmed with the Nouméa Accord, placing New Caledonia on a 20-year timeline of increasing autonomy. As stipulated in the Accord, New Caledonian resident-citizens (voters who had the right to participate in this referendum under the residence-based rules of the Accord) voted on independence in 2018. The result of a surprisingly large voter-turnout was a slight majority (56.40%) in favor of remaining a French territory. This was actually taken by many as a striking victory for the pro-independence movement since the prevailing common-sense had been that there would be a more modest turnout of voters and a larger margin of victory for the “remain” parties. The Accord authorizes two more referendums in 2020 and 2022. Given the narrow results of the first round, a future vote in favor of independence remains a possibility.
Language from the Nouméa Accord has been used in peace agreements in other parts of Oceania specifically in Bougainville. Oscar Temaru has also suggested applying at least some of the text to an “Accord of Tahiti Nui” (Tahiti Nui or “Greater Tahiti” was Temaru’s preferred name for a new independent nation). Do you think the Nouméa Accord can work as a model for decolonization in other parts of French speaking Oceania or beyond? What might be some of the benefits, drawbacks, and challenges of trying to apply it to another context?

**Key elements of the Nouméa Accord:**

- Constitutional changes to New Caledonia’s status within the French Republic, creating ‘shared sovereignty’, a new citizenship for New Caledonians, and ending the previous status as a territoire d’outre-mer (overseas territory) of France;

- Elections in May 1999 for new political institutions, replacing the existing Territorial Congress;

- An ‘irreversible’ transfer of administrative powers from Paris to local authorities and the new Congress in New Caledonia;

- Measures to recognise Indigenous Kanak culture and identity (highlighted by a preamble to the Nouméa Accord which acknowledges the ‘shadows’ of the colonial period); and

- A further 15-20 year transition before a referendum on self-determination for New Caledonia, possibly leading to the ‘emancipation’ of the territory.

[Click here](#) to open the full text of the Nouméa Accord in web-browser.

**Result of the 2018 Referendum**

- **Vote Yes to independence**
  - 56%
- **Vote No to independence**
  - 44%


**Image 34.**

Voters cast their ballots in Nouméa for the referendum on New Caledonia’s independence from France on November 4, 2018. Photo by Theo Rouby (AFP).
Extractive Industries: Nickel Mining, Phosphate Mining, Pearls, Deep Sea Mining, Ranching, Coffee, Vanilla

Extractive industries including nickel, phosphate, and deep sea minerals as well as agriculture and aquaculture such as pearl fisheries, ranching, coffee and vanilla play an important role in the economies and politics of the French speaking Pacific. These industries have driven French investment in the region, benefited elite local land holders, attracted labor migrants, and provided an economic foundation for demands of independence and greater local control over natural resources.

Mining: Nickel and Phosphate

New Caledonia’s Grande Terre contains the world’s second largest reserve of nickel ore, a key corrosion-resistant ingredient in such alloys as stainless steel. Nickel deposits in New Caledonia were first discovered by Jules
Garnier in 1864, launching a rush to locate copper, gold, coal, and other forms of subsurface wealth. Through World War I, New Caledonia produced most of the world’s nickel and was considered by France a key strategic resource in the production of armored warships and tanks. The French company Société Le Nickel consolidated control over New Caledonia’s mining and refining industries in the early 20th century, importing tens of thousands of migrant laborers from across the French empire to work the mines. New Caledonia’s nickel economy has been subject to boom and bust cycles, alternating between periods of prosperity and mass unemployment. By the early 20th century, nearly a half dozen mines owned and managed by multinational corporations were open on Grande Terre. The environmental impact of nickel mining has drawn close scrutiny and caused confrontations with traditional Kanak landholders and poorly paid laborers. This has resulted in work stoppages and temporary mine closures and led many to think about New Caledonia’s post-nickel future.

With the exception of Makatea, the archipelagos of French Polynesia did not experience the industrial scale development of New Caledonia’s mining industry. Makatea is a raised, in-filled coral atoll with cliffs towering above the Pacific Ocean as the result of a geological uplift caused by the volcanic activity that created the Society Islands. The island’s rich phosphate deposits were likely discovered due to its physical similarity to Banaba and Nauru, two islands in the western Pacific region known as Micronesia also rich in phosphates.

Phosphate is a key chemical ingredient in many fertilizers, and Makatea’s deposits fueled intensive agricultural production in Aotearoa, Japan, and Hawai‘i in the 20th century. The Makatea mine was controlled by a French company established by Pape‘ete elite including the former Queen Marau Salmon and the Australian based Pacific Phosphates Company. Imported laborers from Japan, China, Vietnam, the Cook Islands, and Tahiti successively worked the mine, each group gradually replacing the one that had come before. When known phosphate reserves began to run low in 1966, the mine closed. Since then, several business interests have used research pointing to a remaining phosphate reserve to explore the possibility of reopening the mine. So far, local opposition to renewed foreign control and the environmental impacts of open pit mining has left the mine to be reclaimed by the natural environment.
Pearls and Pearl Shell

Black pearls and mother-of-pearl shells from the black-lipped oyster (Pinctada margaritifera) are both products of the Pearl industry in French Polynesia and have been an important trade commodity since before European contact. Black-lipped oysters are not cultivated on every island as they need specific water temperatures and sea depths to grow. Black-lipped oysters thrive best in nutrient rich and relatively undisturbed lagoon waters, such as those in the Gambier and Tuamotu archipelagos where the majority of pearl farms are located. There, pearl oysters are seeded and left to mature, to be harvested 18 months to three years later. The pearls are sold internationally via Tahiti, which is why they are generally referred to as “Tahitian” black pearls despite not being cultivated there. The mother-of-pearl shells are cultivated because of the thin, natural, layer of nacre coating the outside of the shell that gives it its iridescent shiny look. While not as lucrative as pearls, mother-of-pearl shell is still an important export used for adornments in fashion, decoration of furniture or musical instruments, and many kinds of household items.
Deep Sea Mining

Farming for deep sea minerals is the newest and potentially most significant extractive industry in the Pacific Islands. Large equipment managed on the surface of the sea lowers huge excavators to grind and extract minerals for manufacture. Deep sea mining has already started in such places as Papua New Guinea. In French Polynesia, the potential economic benefits of the industry are currently being weighed against other considerations including extraction methods, geographic range, and potential environmental and other impacts.

Image 40.
“Schematic of manganese nodules mining on the deep sea floor. Environmental impacts are underlined.” Graphic by MimiDeepSea (CC0).

Activity

What are some of the pros and cons of deep sea mining?

While it is easy to assume that protecting environmental resources is of utmost importance, why are some Pacific Island governments and communities choosing to pursue this course? What factors might they be considering in their decision making?

Visit NationalGeographic.com to read more about the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining.

Also see Teaching Oceania, Volume 3: Health and Environment in the Pacific.
Nuclear Testing and Militarism

With the striking exception of the Franco-Tahitian War of the 1840s and a lingering armed resistance movement in the Leeward Society Islands until the late 19th century, French colonization in French Polynesia was not largely driven by massive military conflict and the buildup of French armed forces in the region. However, this changed in the 1960s when French Polynesia was chosen as the new site for France’s nuclear weapons testing after it became impossible for France to continue its early nuclear testing in Algeria due to political instability and revolution in that nation which was shortly to declare independence. After this move, France conducted nuclear testing in Polynesia between 1966 and 1996. Its ongoing legacies constitute the darkest pages of French hegemony in the region.

Nuclear Legacies

Although French nuclear testing in French Polynesia ended in 1996, the health, environmental, and other impacts of nuclear testing persist in the present. In 2018, nuclear activist and former president of French Polynesia Oscar Temaru brought an official complaint against France to the International Penal Court, arguing that French nuclear testing constituted crimes against humanity. Visit the LeMonde.fr to read more.

Image 41.
Atmospheric explosion of a 914 kiloton atomic bomb above the atoll of Moruroa on July 3, 1970 at 4:30pm. Photo restored by J. Pierre.
In 1963, France established the Centre d’expérimentation du Pacifique (Pacific Experimentation Center or CEP) on Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls in the Tuamotus. The CEP was intended to replace the nuclear test site in Algeria, which was fighting for independence from France. In its 30 years of operation, the CEP generated 193 nuclear explosions on the two atolls. From 1966 to 1974, the tests took place above ground; they were moved below ground in 1974. The above ground tests in particular resulted in massive nuclear fallout and radiation pollution that spread to neighboring inhabited islands including Tureia and Mangareva. Thousands of Mā'ohi workers hired to work at the testing sites were also exposed to radiation.

Through the start of the 21st century, the French government claimed French tests were “clean,” and would pose no threat to the short term or long term health of test workers, military personnel, or local communities denying any environmental or health damages caused by nuclear testing such as long-term irradiation of the landscape or increased rates of birth defects or cancer. Only recently, after an official government inquiry called the Commission d’enquête sur les conséquences des essais nucléaires (CESCEN) in 2005 which made public a vast range of previously highly classified state secrets about the consequences, impacts, and legacies of nuclear testing, as well as documenting hundreds of firsthand experiences in communities across French Polynesia, France finally admitted what has long been known locally: French nuclear testing profoundly and irrevocably damaged local environments, particularly on the test sites of Moruroa and Fangataufa, as well as human health and well-being.

Local grassroots organizations, including Moruroa e Tatou and Association 193, have been actively working to turn the international spotlight on this frequently overlooked aspect of French colonialism. In 2010, these efforts met some success when France passed the Morin Act to provide compensation for victims of radiation exposure. Despite its passage, however, the act has yet to be fully implemented, and thousands of former CEP employees are still waiting to be compensated for illnesses attributed to radiation exposure.

In 2019, the French Senate began considering a new Organic Law for French Polynesia which, among other things, may include full recognition of the territory’s “contributions” to the development of the French nuclear deterrence program and the impacts of the program for the region and its people. Such formal recognition would include funds for compensation, research, and the revival and rehabilitation of collective “memory” with regard to nuclear testing. For example, the French Polynesia government and the University of French Polynesia recently signed an agreement to develop a program called “History and Memory: Nuclear
Testing in French Polynesia” (Histoire et mémoire des essais nucléaires en Polynésie française) to gather and archive resources and information to pave the way for an eventual Centre de mémoire du fait nucléaire which would serve as a museum and resource center devoted to documenting and preserving the memory of this critical period and its legacies.

In addition to nuclear testing, France has also used its Pacific territories for their more conventional strategic value. Several French army and navy bases have been located in French Polynesia since the Franco-Tahitian war of the 1840s, and the French military has been present in New Caledonia since its annexation in 1854. The establishment of the CEP (see above) led to a massive build up of French military presence in the central Pacific with many thousands of military and civilian personnel moving in and out of the islands each year over three decades. Closure of the CEP in 1996 signaled a shift in strategy and a reduction in French military presence in Oceania. However, although France closed several military bases in French Polynesia and relocated its Pacific command to New Caledonia, it still maintains a significant military presence in the region with strategic and geopolitical implications. With its nickel industry and proximity to Asia and Australia, New Caledonia is now considered a more strategically sensitive area.

The operations of the French military in New Caledonia and French Polynesia have had significant social, economic, and cultural outcomes. On one hand, thousands of French military personnel have been stationed at the bases over the years, and their high purchasing power has helped bolster local economies. Military service also provides lucrative career opportunities for local people in both areas. On the other hand, these economic benefits have come at a cost including environmental pollution due to nuclear testing and the normalization of a culture of militarism and violence, among others.

Video 2.
Click here to play video of a mass demonstration against French Nuclear Testing that took place in Pape’ete (AP Archive 2015).

The Fight Continues
Visit Radio1.pf to read more on the continued legal battles against the legacy of nuclear testing, or visit Tahiti-Infos.com to learn about L’association 193 which has been fighting nuclear testing in Tahiti.
Activity

How do military bases in small island territories impact local communities and contexts?

Image 42.
"Marines in the French Armed Forces, New Caledonia, stand at parade rest during the Exercise Tafakula 2011 opening ceremony at Talaii Military Camp, Kingdom of Tonga, Aug. 11. Exercise Tafakula 2011 is a multilateral exercise between U.S. Marines, Tonga Defense Services and French Armed Forces, New Caledonia conducted to increase interoperability and military relations" (United States Marine Corps 2011).
Tourism

Tourism is a hugely important economic industry in the Pacific Islands, and the islands of French speaking Oceania are no different. Annually, tourism is a multimillion dollar industry that supports infrastructure and economies throughout the region particularly in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Tourism is an important but relatively less significant sector in Vanuatu and plays a very modest role in the economy of Wallis and Futuna. Since World War II and the advent of air travel, particularly for Tahiti and New Caledonia, tourism has also helped make these islands visible and accessible to outsiders, as it is one of the primary ways global audiences experience the region’s diverse languages, cultures, and worldviews. However, at the same time that tourism supports local economies and provides a revenue stream for families and regional governments, tourist developments have sometimes led to the displacement of local communities from land and beach access, amplified economic inequality, led to long-term environmental and ecological degradation of coastal lands and nearshore reefs due to overdevelopment.

Somewhat similarly, marketing campaigns for islands such as Tahiti, Mo’orea, Bora Bora, the city of Nouméa, and others utilize picturesque photos of serene island viewscapes and friendly islanders to portray calm, private, and exotic scenes for potential tourists. They produced and continue to circulate 19th century exotic stereotypes and distortions of Pacific

Image 43.
Borabora (French Polynesia) is one example of a Pacific destination that offers lavish tourist accommodations including overwater bungalows.
Islanders and islands. When such glossy idealized and fantastical representations are taken to reflect authentic cultural and social worlds as available for consumption via tourist experience they contribute to what is sometimes called the Disneyfication of culture, as if culture were all lovely surface and no complex depth. Tourism is not a static industry, however, and depends on innovation and creativity to appeal to and grow clientele. Ideas for building and expanding infrastructure in an effort to grow the tourism sector are under constant debate and are often in the news or under discussion in local political contexts.

For instance, in French Polynesia, on the island of Tahiti, plans for a Waikīkī-style venture called the Mahana Beach Project is currently being discussed for development along an important coastline on Tahiti. If constructed, it would be a resort destination with an estimated 10,000 rooms. This is not the first time a project of this scale has been proposed, but it highlights the current state of the industry and pressures to build up the economy, grow the industry, and support existing infrastructure while mitigating foreign investments and community concerns which include real possibilities of land alienation, displacement of families long resident along that coast, environmental damages, and inequitable distribution of the potential economic benefits of the development.

It is also worth noting that many island economies dependent on tourism are embracing new options for tourists to access a wider variety of places and ecologies. Ecotourism, or tourism focused on engaging with the environment, is one model being used across the region to help meet the demands of a growing clientele. This model uses hiking tours, historic cultural site visits, and wildlife encounters to feature the natural landscape. While ecotourism does not necessarily preclude large building projects, it can present a unique lens on the fragility of island ecologies and bring new awareness to the ways visitors impact the places they visit.

Activity

What are some of the pros and cons of maintaining an industry that is solely dependent on foreign investment? What are the benefits and hazards of the tourism industry for the environment, infrastructure, and small scale local economies?

What are the pros and cons of exposing tourists to island environments and environmental issues?
All four territories in French speaking Oceania have been at the forefront of efforts to establish, manage, and conserve marine spaces, ecologies, and resources. Throughout, they have remained sensitive to and pursued policies that reflect indigenous and local values and rights, including shared governance. French Polynesia established the world’s largest shark sanctuary, which is particularly significant in the environs of Fakarava Atoll in the Tuamotu, now also a 1.8 million square mile UNESCO Bioreserve. Following French Polynesia’s lead, New Caledonia also implemented a sizeable shark sanctuary. In 2014, French Polynesia passed a new set of rules allowing for the reimplementation of customary marine resource management and community-based governance. Called rāhui, a network of these small Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have been implemented by communities around Tahiti’s southern coast beginning at Teahupoo, a famous surf break.

Visit Te Mana o te Moana and Te Ora Naho (aka “FAPE”, the Federation of Associations for the Protection of the Environment) for a sense of the many conservation and environmental protection groups active today in French Polynesia.
In 2017, UNESCO named the Taputapuātea marae on Ra’iātea a World Heritage site. On Tahiti, a marae is raised stone platform historically used as a ceremonial site. Taputapuātea was a site dedicated to the god ‘Oro and is probably the most important and well-known marae in French Polynesia. Its significance extends to other parts of Eastern Polynesia including the Cook Islands, Hawai‘i, and Aotearoa, where various chiefly lineages trace their genealogies to Tahiti and Ra’iātea. The World Heritage site designation recognizes the cultural, historical, or scientific significance of a unique landmark along with its collective interest to humanity and benefit to future progeny. According to the UNESCO website, once a site is honored as a World Heritage site it is legally protected by international treaties.


Image 47. Illustration by Mā‘ohi artist from Ra’iātea Raina Chaussoy entitled Rahui (2014).
Conclusion
Oceania, France, and the Future

The islands of French speaking Oceania have vast, complex histories whose future trajectories are difficult to foresee and will likely follow different paths. To understand this, this volume has tried to emphasize that it is essential to explore the historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts that make French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna unique. In a short introduction to a vast region, it would be difficult to give sufficient attention to every community in each of these four contexts but we encourage the reader to appreciate not only how the four island groups differ from each other, but how each island group is internally diverse, with local politics shaped by the sometimes divergent interests of various ethnic groups and communities living across each of the island groups discussed in this volume.

The state of affairs in each island group is hardly static, and community responses are dynamic and complex. For example, New Caledonia and French Polynesia exhibit highly energized political movements advocating for increased autonomy, independence, and decolonization. And yet there is no universal consensus on what these futures might mean in practice. Nor is it clear if full and immediate independence from France as advocated in the early 20th century is the desire of the majority of either population. As numerous polls, news articles, everyday conversations, and recent referenda reveal, it can be difficult for some people in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna to imagine living in an independent, post-colonial country. In the case of New Caledonia, this is further complicated by the demographics of settler colonialism, which means the majority of Kanak voters who want independence is often overruled by voters from New Caledonia’s other communities who do not. In French Polynesia, in contrast, the Mā’ohi population is in the majority, and independence remains within reach despite misgivings from outer-island communities who make up a small but vocal minority in local politics and who fear that their particular needs and desires might better be served by continuing relations with France than in a new nation dominated by powerful and wealthy central island with large urban centers. Meanwhile, Wallis and Futuna is not actively seeking independence or a changed relationship with France.

It is also worth noting that contemporary metropolitan French politics are far from stable and driven by numerous competing visions of the needs in the present and the future of the nation. As different national governments have come in and out of power over the last several decades, for example, diverse French perspectives about the benefits and drawbacks of maintaining France’s overseas territories have also come into focus. No
matter the course, the people of France and French speaking Oceania will have to address other key issues in the immediate and long term. For example, what moral, political, and economic compensation does France owe the people of French Polynesia whose health and well-being were profoundly affected by nuclear testing? What obligations does France have to Kanak communities displaced and occupied by French settler colonialism from the mid-19th century to the present?

To quote Kanak independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, sovereignty is “the right to choose partners,” whereas independence is “the power to manage all the needs that colonization, the present system, has created” (1996). Although it is impossible to predict how independence or sovereignty will continue to unfold in French speaking Oceania in the coming years, their possibility will undoubtedly continue to be at the center of local and regional conversations about and politics and activism surrounding the future of the islands and their diverse communities.
**Abdicate**
Abdication is a legal process by which a ruler relinquishes sovereign authority.

Section 4 - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy (see page 48).

**Annexation War**
France did not acquire the archipelagoes which make up French Polynesia all at once or without resistance. On Tahiti, for instance, Queen Pomare signed a Protectorate with France in 1842. Shortly after she attempted to repudiate this Protectorate agreement and in 1843, French admiral Dupetit-Thouars unilaterally proclaimed a French Annexation of the Tahitian Kingdom, specifically of the Windward Islands. This in turn resulted in the Franco-Tahitian war of 1844-1847 which ended with the re-establishment of the status of Protectorate (Dupetit-Thouars’ proclamation of the Annexation not having been approved by France). Decades later, the conclusion of long-simmering conflicts in the Leeward group of the Society Islands in 1897 was the last major military resistance by Tahitians to French colonialism and led to the final unification of French Polynesia under colonial rule.

Section 2 - History and Culture (see page 26).

**Assimilation**
A cultural process through which a community acquires some of the cultural and social practices of another community.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 6).

**Atoll**
Low, sandy islands often encircling an interior lagoon and sometimes only three to five meters above sea level, atolls are formed over long geological time periods as high volcanic islands erode.
Austronesian
One of the world’s largest and most dispersed language families, Austronesian languages form a group of relatively closely related languages spoken from Madagascar off the coast of Africa to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the far Eastern Pacific. With an original homeland in Taiwan, evidence from archeology and linguistics suggests that seafaring peoples migrated from this island to the entire region encompassed by the Austronesian languages over the course of millennia.

Autonomy Statute
A legal framework which established the degree of local political control (autonomy) possessed by a colonized or formally colonized state or territory.

Bislama
Along with English and French one of three official languages of Vanuatu. Bislama is the “National Language” of this island nation and like the closely related Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Pijin in Solomon Islands is a post-colonial language that emerged out of the contact of English, French and Indigenous languages over time.

Blackbirding
The historical practice of illegal slave trading in and throughout the Pacific Islands. The term refers to some people being “plucked” off coastline shores and forced to join the labor trade.

Caldoche (Caledonian)
Descendants of French colonial settlers who arrived during the 19th or early 20th century. Caldoche have played a powerful and influential role in New Caledonia’s political and economic spheres sometimes at odds with Indigenous Kanak and French metropolitan visions for the future of these islands.
Centre d’expérimentation du Pacifique (Pacific Experimentation Center or CEP)
The CEP was the administrative institution responsible for French nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia, particularly on the islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa. The CEP also maintained military bases on Hao, Mangareva, Tahiti and other islands. From the mid-1960s to the late 1990s, the CEP transformed local social, political, and cultural life in this region.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 41).

Chiefdoms
The group, tribe or territory where a chief rules.

Section 2 - History and Culture (see page 20).

Collectivité d’outre-mer or Overseas Collectivity (COM)
French administrative groupings of islands overseas, which are all semi-autonomous, although each island nation has varying degrees of autonomy. The Overseas Collectivity includes French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, but not New Caledonia which has special status granted by the Nouméa Accord, nor the Republic of Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides) which has a constitutional democracy.

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Joseph Fidèl Eugène du Bouzet served as a French colonial officer and governor in the Pacific from 1854-1858, his Declaration was used as the justification for increased French governance and control over New Caledonia.

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ʻUvea is the indigenous name for Wallis Island and ʻUvean refers to its indigenous name for its language and people.

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A legal framework implemented in New Caledonia and on some of the outer islands of French Polynesia during French Colonial rule from the late 19th century until after World War II that worked to dispossess, disenfranchise, and
limit Indigenous Kanak and Polynesian communities from political participation, and social and cultural influence in mainstream colonial society by enforcing their “inferior” status under the law.

Section 2 - History and Culture (see page 29)
Section 4 - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy (see page 50).

Kanak

In the era of the Pacific labor trade, the term “Canaque” or “Kanak” was appropriated from the Hawaiian “kanaka,” meaning “person,” and used to refer to all Pacific Islanders. The era is known for the practice of blackbirding, which saw Pacific Islanders “plucked” from islands and forced into agricultural labor elsewhere. While the term has historically had a derogatory connotation, political activists in New Caledonia in the 1970s created the new spelling “Kanak” that related to the word’s indigenous Oceanian origins and thereby reclaimed it as a marker of indigenous identity and political pride. Today, “Kanak” is the term used to refer to indigenous people in New Caledonia and Kanaky or Kanaky/New Caledonia has become a common name for this territory indicating the special historical and contemporary place of the Kanak people in their home islands.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 5).

Kastom

Taken from the English pronunciation of “custom” in Bislama, Tok Pisin and other national languages across Melanesia, Kastom refers broadly to the practice and display of culture across Melanesia. In certain contexts, it also carries specific connotations of political activism against colonial rule and the application of indigenous epistemologies to Melanesian political futures.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 18).

Land Tenure

A system of cultural rules that guides the use, control, and transfer of land. See also Teaching Oceania Series’ Health and Environment in the Pacific.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 15).

Lapita

Refers to a cultural and social group responsible for extending the vast Austronesian migration from near Oceania to remote Oceania. The Lapita people and their culture is often traced through the presence of their notable pottery originating in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and the Bismarck Archipelago off the coast of Papua New Guinea. “Lapita” refers to an archeological site in northern New Caledonia, where the pottery was first documented. This pottery marks the eastward ancestral movements of the
Lapita people, who are believed to have carried the pottery as they migrated to the region now known as Polynesia.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 13).
Related terms: Austronesian

**Leeward**
In an island group, the Leeward Islands are those that are downwind from the direction of the prevailing winds.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 9).
Related terms: Windward

**Les Événements (The Events)**
Consisting of a complex series of smaller and larger social and political events, including a period of violent resistance from 1984-1988 by those in New Caledonia seeking independence from France and violent reprisals by those opposing them, Les Événements mark a watershed in New Caledonia's history and the rise of numerous powerful Kanak political visions for and demands about the future of these islands which led to the signing of the Matignon Accords.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 6).

**Liberation theology**
Rooted in the thinking of a number of Christian faiths, both Catholic and Protestant, scholars and activists, particularly in Latin America, liberation theology is a strand of Christianity (or potentially any faith) that makes explicit connections between religious values and beliefs and an explicit concern for social justice for the marginalized or poor and potentially including a decolonizing politics.

Section 2 - History and Culture (see page 30).

**Littéramā‘ohi**
A magazine created with the goal of publishing creative writing in and for French Polynesia.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 42).

**Marine protected areas (MPAs)**
Oceans, lakes, and other waterways protected from human activity for conservation purposes.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 10).
**Matignon-Oudinot Accords (aka Matignon Accords)**
Precursor to the Nouméa Accord, the Matignon Accords were signed in 1988 in France by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the Kanak and Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS), and Jacques LaFleur of the anti-independence delegation. The agreements aimed to stabilize political riots in New Caledonia and provide institutional and economic guarantees for the Kanak community.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 6).

**May 1968**
A watershed moment in late 20th century French history, May '68 was an intense period of civil unrest throughout France and significant critique of capitalism, consumerism, and other traditional institutions and values which included mass strikes, the closure of universities and factories and other public institutions.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 40).

**Melanesia 2000**
The first Melanesian cultural arts festival held in Nouméa from 3-7 September 1975. Founded by Jean-Marie Tjibaou with the goal of revitalizing indigenous culture, the festival also served as a political statement amidst growing racial and economic tension in the territory.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 6).

**Ministry of Overseas Territories (Ministère des Outre-Mer)**
The branch of French government directly responsible for administering France's overseas possessions.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 4).

**Morin Act**
A legal statute sponsored by the French Defence Minister Hervé Morin in 2009, this act provided the first legal framework under French law to compensate approximately 150,000 people, including civilian and military personnel, who were directly or indirectly affected by French nuclear testing in North Africa or French Polynesia between 1960 and 1996.

Section 4 - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy (see page 57).

**Native reserves**
The enforced and policed communities into which the Kanak peoples of New Caledonia were restricted and amounting to only about 10 percent of the area of their ancestral territories.
Ni-Vanuatu
Literally, “Of Vanuatu,” the name for all the Indigenous peoples of Vanuatu together as a single community.

Nouméa Accord
Agreement signed in 1998 between France and New Caledonia setting out a framework for autonomy and calling for a referendum in 2018. Although the results of the 2018 were in favor of New Caledonia remaining a special collectivity of France, the Nouméa Accord requires additional referenda in 2020 and 2022.

Obsidian
A type of rock formed after lava cools very quickly. It is the primary material used for making tools such as axes and adzes and its use stretches as far to Rapa Nui where it was used as eyes for its famous moai statues.

Organic Law
An organic law is a law which provides a legal framework for a form of government. In New Caledonia recent organic laws have established a unique political status as an overseas collectivity of France and defined New Caledonian citizenship, whose body politic votes in the referenda prescribed by the Nouméa Accord.

Center for Pacific Islands Studies Teaching Oceania Series Vol. 3
Overseas Collectivity (Collectivite d’Outre Mer or COM)
French administrative designation created in 2003 for overseas island groups with varying degrees of autonomy. For the Pacific, the official list of Overseas Collectivities includes French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna. New Caledonia, as the only French overseas entity to have individual recognition within the French Constitution, is considered apart. Thus it can be said that New Caledonia is not a COM or that it is a “COM with specific status.” Sometimes New Caledonia’s special status is referred to with the qualification that it is a “French overseas Sui Generis Community,” although that qualification has no constitutional status. The Republic of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) is an independent nation with a constitutional democracy.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 4).

Overseas Country (Pays d’Outre Mer)
In 2004, French Polynesia was officially designated an Overseas Country, while remaining under the category of Overseas Collectivity. The status gave French Polynesia additional autonomy including increased jurisdiction over civil, commercial, and labor laws, and confirmed its jurisdiction over health, urban planning, and the environment. However, French Polynesia is still a territory of France which maintains control of matters related to defense, justice, currency, municipal governments, higher education, and foreign policy.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 9).

Pacific Islands Forum
Inter-island government organization established in 1971 (formerly South Pacific Forum) which created a platform to negotiate cooperation between governments and agencies for the economic and social welfare of its members.

Paris Commune
During a period of national crisis, a radical socialist and revolutionary government established control of Paris from 18 March to 28 May, 1871. This short lived social and political experiment left a lasting impression on many, including those who were imprisoned for participation and sent to New Caledonia’s penal colony.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 44).

Penal colony
A colony established for the express purpose of imprisoning or resettling convicts.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 12).
**Perliculture**
The commercial business of raising and farming oysters for purposes of harvesting shell or pearls.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 10).
Section 4 - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy (see page 54).

**Phosphates**
A critical mineral for industrial and intensive agriculture, phosphate deposits can sometimes be formed over many thousands of years under certain conditions by the guano deposits of seabirds. There are several Phosphate rock islands in Oceania including Makatea in French Polynesia.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 10).
Section 4 - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy (see page 52).

**Political status**
The political situation of a country including its rights, authorities, citizenship and geographic jurisdictions as defined under international law as either (i) independent and fully sovereign, (ii) internally independent and semi-autonomous but under the protection of another country in matters of defense and foreign affairs, or (iii) as a colony of another state.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 4).

**Pomare Code of 1819**
A set of laws ushered in by Pōmare II with the influence of Christian missionaries that facilitated the rise of Christianity in Tahiti.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 43).

**Puta tupuna**
Translated as “ancestor book” in Tahitian, puta tupuna serve as private family collections of genealogies, place names, and other historical data connected to land claims.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 40).

**Rāhui**
Customary ability of local chiefs to place partial or complete restrictions on access to land or sea-spaces or use of resources found in those territories.
Today, this concept and some traditional practices associated with it have been used to protect areas managed by local governments with the goal of environmental conservation.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 76).
Referendum of 1958
When Charles de Gaulle was elected president of France in 1958, the National Assembly granted him the authority to draft a new constitution. The constitution was subject to referendum, and French overseas territories had the opportunity to vote on independence. In a vote scheduled for 4 September 1958, both New Caledonia and French Polynesia voted to remain a part of the “French Community.”

Remittance economies
A national economy that is largely dependent on the money and goods sent home by emigrants living and working abroad.

Reo Māʻohi
Translated as the language of the Māʻohi people(s) or literally as “native language,” Reo Māʻohi can refer either to the Tahitian language or to all of the languages of French Polynesia.

Semi-autonomous
A government is semi-autonomous if it has absolute political authority in some domains but not in all domains.

Settler colonialism
Scholars have identified a number of different ways to understand and critique colonialism drawing attention to different aspects and kinds of colonial projects and activities. In its barest form, settler colonialism is a form of colonial project that seeks to displace Indigenous or local communities from their lands and “settle” new families or communities in their stead.

Te Tiurai
The name for “July” in Tahitian, Tiurai refers to the month-long festivities in celebration of Bastille Day in French Polynesia that were the precursor of the contemporary Heiva i Tahiti.
**Tīvaivai**

Elaborately appliquéd patchwork quilts (Cook Islands). Also tīfaefae or tivaevae.

Section 3 - Literature, Arts, and Culture (see page 36).

**United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing territories**

Since the mid-20th century, the United Nations has maintained a list of territories which have not yet been formally decolonized. This list implies that the colonial power has the obligation to support and promote full decolonization since the UN ratified the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 4).

**Windward**

In an archipelago, windward islands are those which lie in the direction of the prevailing wind.

Section 1 - Geography, Language, and Contemporary Political Statuses (see page 9).
References


Images and Media


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Image 12. Mourning ceremony at Tiédanite (Hienghène), New Caledonia of the 10 kanak independentist people murdered a year earlier during an ambush by "loyalist" people in the Valley. Photo: Patrice Godin, 1985. Reproduced with permission of owner. (Found on pg. 28).

Image 13. Pouvanaa a Oopa (May 10, 1895 - January 10, 1977) was a French Polynesia politician and Tahitian nationalist, who led a Tahitian separatist movement against French rule, before being exiled to France in the late 1950s. Fair use. Retrieved


Image 38. Black-lip Pearl Oyster (Pinctada margaritifera) cultivated at the Love Here Pearl Farm and Factory on Taha’a, Leeward Islands, French Polynesia. Photo: Arthur Chapman, 2017. CC BY-NC


Image 41. (Digitally restored) hardcopy of a picture taken by the French army which could be purchased in Tahiti at that time. Digital Restoration: Pierre J. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/7969902@N07/511287693/in/photolist-Mbu24-KPDeqk-2cN4eKc-acxot4-acAdEE-2b7NKVL-2e3WYPZ-88QCK3-244kLuT-9KQAa5-5J4J2E-88QAPd-88QBmo-88QBHC-88Mp8e-ttUDLG-sxbsAq-ttUDT5-tcAtVs-tcBxAa-e2Tvgb-tcJQnV-21CTAw3-tucqlx-wQ8tY-acAeMY-aVvecn-M8kdv-aNvj4a-h1Ver8-88MmPH-LTCVE-88MoPM-9KMLEK-QTY6bg-hLUTR4-9KQAIQ-bxk9BG-2bR85Fc-9KMMe6-9KQAcL-HhyFRd-9KMLyR-UrtPyn-9QzoQ-KJnruC-9KML8g-eRQE4z-2bUr526-2cv5w2y. (Found on pg. 56).


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Map 2. States and Territories of Oceania. Graphic: Lorenzo Gonschor, 2019. Reproduced with permission by the owner. (Found on pg. 3).

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Map 5. Map of Wallis and Futuna. Adapted from Map of the Pacific Islands. Prepared by Mānoa Mapworks Inc. for and reproduced with permission of CPIS. (Found on pg. 15).

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Section 4 Header. Breadfruit leaves. Photo: Teora Morris, 2016. Reproduced with permission by the owner. (Found on pg. 48).


Abdicate

Abdication is a legal process by which a ruler relinquishes sovereign authority.

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Islands of French Speaking Oceania - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy
Annexation War

France did not acquire the archipelagoes which make up French Polynesia all at once or without resistance. On Tahiti, for instance, Queen Pomare signed a Protectorate with France in 1842. Shortly after she attempted to repudiate this Protectorate agreement and in 1843, French admiral Dupetit-Thouars unilaterally proclaimed a French Annexation of the Tahitian Kingdom, specifically of the Windward Islands. This in turn resulted in the Franco-Tahitian war of 1844-1847 which ended with the re-establishment of the status of Protectorate (Dupetit-Thouars’ proclamation of the Annexation not having been approved by France). Decades later, the conclusion of long-simmering conflicts in the Leeward group of the Society Islands in 1897 was the last major military resistance by Tahitians to French colonialism and led to the final unification of French Polynesia under colonial rule.

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Assimilation

A cultural process through which a community acquires some of the cultural and social practices of another community.

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Atoll

Low, sandy islands often encircling an interior lagoon and sometimes only three to five meters above sea level, atolls are formed over long geological time periods as high volcanic islands erode.

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Austronesian

One of the world's largest and most dispersed language families, Austronesian languages form a group of relatively closely related languages spoken from Madagascar off the coast of Africa to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the far Eastern Pacific. With an original homeland in Taiwan, evidence from archaeology and linguistics suggests that seafaring peoples migrated from this island to the entire region encompassed by the Austronesian languages over the course of millennia.

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Autonomy Statute

A legal framework which established the degree of local political control (autonomy) possessed by a colonized or formally colonized state or territory.

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**Bislama**

Along with English and French one of three official languages of Vanuatu. Bislama is the “National Language” of this island nation and like the closely related Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Pijin in Solomon Islands is a post-colonial language that emerged out of the contact of English, French and Indigenous languages over time.
Blackbirding

The historical practice of illegal slave trading in and throughout the Pacific Islands. The term refers to some people being “plucked” off coastline shores and forced to join the labor trade.

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Caldoche (Caledonian)

Descendants of French colonial settlers who arrived during the 19th or early 20th century. Caldoche have played a powerful and influential role in New Caledonia’s political and economic spheres sometimes at odds with Indigenous Kanak and French metropolitan visions for the future of these islands.
Centre d'expérimentation du Pacifique (Pacific Experimentation Center or CEP)

The CEP was the administrative institution responsible for French nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia, particularly on the islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa. The CEP also maintained military bases on Hao, Mangareva, Tahiti and other islands. From the mid-1960s to the late 1990s, the CEP transformed local social, political, and cultural life in this region.

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Chiefdoms

The group, tribe or territory where a chief rules.

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Collectivité d'outre-mer or Overseas Collectivity (COM)

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Islands of French Speaking Oceania - Politics of Land, Environment, and Economy
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Land tenure

A system of cultural rules that guides the use, control, and transfer of land. See also Teaching Oceania Series' *Health and Environment in the Pacific.*

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Lapita

Refers to a cultural and social group responsible for extending the vast Austronesian migration from near Oceania to remote Oceania. The Lapita people and their culture is often traced through the presence of their notable pottery originating in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and the Bismarck Archipelago off the coast of Papua New Guinea. "Lapita" refers to an archeological site in northern New Caledonia, where the pottery was first documented. This pottery marks the eastward ancestral movements of the Lapita people, who are believed to have carried the pottery as they migrated to the region now known as Polynesia.

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**Leeward**

In an island group, the Leeward Islands are those that are downwind from the direction of the prevailing winds.

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Les Événements (The Events)

Consisting of a complex series of smaller and larger social and political events, including a period of violent resistance from 1984-1988 by those in New Caledonia seeking independence from France and violent reprisals by those opposing them, Les Événements mark a watershed in New Caledonia’s history and the rise of numerous powerful Kanak political visions for and demands about the future of these islands which led to the signing of the Matignon Accords.

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Liberation theology

Rooted in the thinking of a number of Christian faiths, both Catholic and Protestant, scholars and activists, particularly in Latin America, liberation theology is a strand of Christianity (or potentially any faith) that makes explicit connections between religious values and beliefs and an explicit concern for social justice for the marginalized or poor and potentially including a decolonizing politics.

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Littéramâ'ohi

A magazine created with the goal of publishing creative writing in and for French Polynesia.

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Marine protected areas (MPAs)

Oceans, lakes, and other waterways protected from human activity for conservation purposes.

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Matignon-Oudinot Accords (aka Matignon Accords)

Precursor to the Nouméa Accord, the Matignon Accords were signed in 1988 in France by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the Kanak and Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS), and Jacques LaFleur of the anti-independence delegation. The agreements aimed to stabilize political riots in New Caledonia and provide institutional and economic guarantees for the Kanak community.

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May 1968

A watershed moment in late 20th century French history, May '68 was an intense period of civil unrest throughout France and significant critique of capitalism, consumerism, and other traditional institutions and values which included mass strikes, the closure of universities and factories and other public institutions.

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Melanesia 2000

The first Melanesian cultural arts festival held in Nouméa from 3-7 September 1975. Founded by Jean-Marie Tjibaou with the goal of revitalizing indigenous culture, the festival also served as a political statement amidst growing racial and economic tension in the territory.

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Ministry of Overseas Territories (Ministère des Outre-Mer)

The branch of French government directly responsible for administering France's overseas possessions.

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Morin Act

A legal statute sponsored by the French Defence Minister Hervé Morin in 2009, this act provided the first legal framework under French law to compensate approximately 150,000 people, including civilian and military personnel, who were directly or indirectly affected by French nuclear testing in North Africa or French Polynesia between 1960 and 1996.
Native reserves

The enforced and policed communities into which the Kanak peoples of New Caledonia were restricted and amounting to only about 10 percent of the area of their ancestral territories.

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Ni-Vanuatu

Literally, "Of Vanuatu," the name for all the Indigenous peoples of Vanuatu together as a single community.

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**Nouméa Accord**

Agreement signed in 1998 between France and New Caledonia setting out a framework for autonomy and calling for a referendum in 2018. Although the results of the 2018 were in favor of New Caledonia remaining a special collectivity of France, the Nouméa Accord requires additional referenda in 2020 and 2022.

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Nuclear testing

Major component of the Cold War arms race in which countries with nuclear capabilities tested nuclear weapons to determine their functionality and to displace their power on a world stage. From 1947 to 1996, the United States, France, and Great Britain all tested nuclear weapons in parts of Oceania—including the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Kalama (Johnston Atoll), and Australia—with devastating outcomes for indigenous people and environments. See also Volume 1 of the Teaching Oceania Series *Militarism and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific.*
**Obsidian**

A type of rock formed after lava cools very quickly. It is the primary material used for making tools such as axes and adzes and its use stretches as far to Rapa Nui where it was used as eyes for its famous moai statues.

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Organic Law

An organic law is a law which provides a legal framework for a form of government. In New Caledonia recent organic laws have established a unique political status as an overseas collectivity of France and defined New Caledonian citizenship, whose body politic votes in the referenda prescribed by the Nouméa Accord.

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Overseas Collectivity (Collectivite d'Outre Mer or COM)

French administrative designation created in 2003 for overseas island groups with varying degrees of autonomy. For the Pacific, the official list of Overseas Collectivities includes French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna. New Caledonia, as the only French overseas entity to have individual recognition within the French Constitution, is considered apart. Thus it can be said that New Caledonia is not a COM or that it is a “COM with specific status.” Sometimes New Caledonia’s special status is referred to with the qualification that it is a “French overseas Sui Generis Community,” although that qualification has no constitutional status. The Republic of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) is an independent nation with a constitutional democracy.
Overseas Country (Pays d'Outre Mer)

In 2004, French Polynesia was officially designated an Overseas Country, while remaining under the category of Overseas Collectivity. The status gave French Polynesia additional autonomy including increased jurisdiction over civil, commercial, and labor laws, and confirmed its jurisdiction over health, urban planning, and the environment. However, French Polynesia is still a territory of France which maintains control of matters related to defense, justice, currency, municipal governments, higher education, and foreign policy.

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Pacific Islands Forum

Inter-island government organization established in 1971 (formerly South Pacific Forum) which created a platform to negotiate cooperation between governments and agencies for the economic and social welfare of its members.
Paris Commune

During a period of national crisis, a radical socialist and revolutionary government established control of Paris from 18 March to 28 May, 1871. This short lived social and political experiment left a lasting impression on many, including those who were imprisoned for participation and sent to New Caledonia’s penal colony.

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Penal colony

A colony established for the express purpose of imprisoning or resettling convicts.
**Periculture**

The commercial business of raising and farming oysters for purposes of harvesting shell or pearls.

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Phosphates

A critical mineral for industrial and intensive agriculture, phosphate deposits can sometimes be formed over many thousands of years under certain conditions by the guano deposits of seabirds. There are several Phosphate rock islands in Oceania including Makatea in French Polynesia.

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Political status

The political situation of a country including its rights, authorities, citizenship and geographic jurisdictions as defined under international law as either (i) independent and fully sovereign, (ii) internally independent and semi-autonomous but under the protection of another country in matters of defense and foreign affairs, or (iii) as a colony of another state.

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Pomare Code of 1819

A set of laws ushered in by Pōmare II with the influence of Christian missionaries that facilitated the rise of Christianity in Tahiti.
*Puta tupuna*

Translated as “ancestor book” in Tahitian, puta tupuna serve as private family collections of genealogies, place names, and other historical data connected to land claims.

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**Rāhui**

Customary ability of local chiefs to place partial or complete restrictions on access to land or sea-spaces or use of resources found in those territories. Today, this concept and some traditional practices associated with it have been used to protect areas managed by local governments with the goal of environmental conservation.

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Referendum of 1958

When Charles de Gaulle was elected president of France in 1958, the National Assembly granted him the authority to draft a new constitution. The constitution was subject to referendum, and French overseas territories had the opportunity to vote on independence. In a vote scheduled for 4 September 1958, both New Caledonia and French Polynesia voted to remain a part of the "French Community."
Remittance economies

A national economy that is largely dependent on the money and goods sent home by emigrants living and working abroad.

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Reo Māʻohi

Translated as the language of the Māʻohi people(s) or literally as “native language,” Reo Māʻohi can refer either to the Tahitian language or to all of the languages of French Polynesia.

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Semi-autonomous

A government is semi-autonomous if it has absolute political authority in some domains but not in all domains.

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Settler colonialism

Scholars have identified a number of different ways to understand and critique colonialism drawing attention to different aspects and kinds of colonial projects and activities. In its barest form, settler colonialism is a form of colonial project that seeks to displace Indigenous or local communities from their lands and “settle” new families or communities in their stead.

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Te Tiurai

The name for “July” in Tahitian, Tiurai refers to the month-long festivities in celebration of Bastille Day in French Polynesia that were the precursor of the contemporary Heiva i Tahiti.
Elaborately appliquéd patchwork quilts (Cook Islands). Also tīfaefae or tivaevae.

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United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing territories

Since the mid-20th century, the United Nations has maintained a list of territories which have not yet been formally decolonized. This list implies that the colonial power has the obligation to support and promote full decolonization since the UN ratified the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

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Windward

In an archipelago, windward islands are those which lie in the direction of the prevailing wind.

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