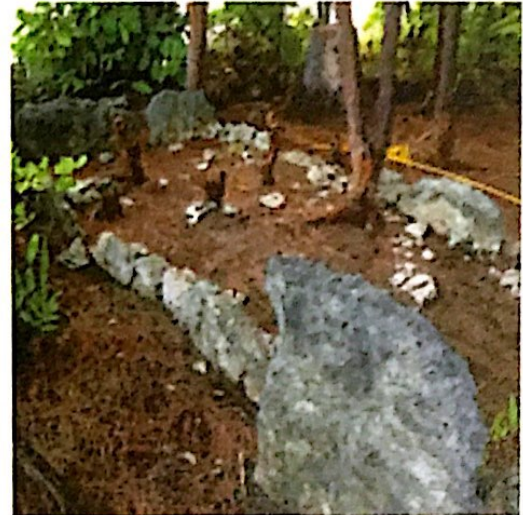


Archaeological Research On Tetiaroa

UNIVERSITY OF FRENCH POLYNESIA • UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Tetiaroa is the only atoll in the Windward Islands group and is well known for having been a place of residence and retreat for chiefs from Tahiti and Moorea. However, the atoll's history, and especially its deeper, pre-contact past remains poorly known. Though important preliminary archaeological work was conducted on the atoll during the 1970s, the data to help properly understand Tetiaroa's place in the Society Islands at large is still to be gathered.



Marae (ancient ceremonial sites) hold secrets of Tetiaroa's cultural history.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Researchers from the University of French Polynesia and the University of California, Berkeley will conduct a research project over three years to investigate several topics, including:

- The timing and process of initial Polynesian colonization of Tetiaroa
- The development and distribution of ceremonial architecture on various islets (likely to reflect complex socio-political patterns and cultural influences)
- The dynamic interactions between Tetiaroa's human population and its unique atoll ecosystem through time

This project builds on previous research conducted at the request of Marlon Brando by Dr. Yoshihiko Sinoto and Patrick McCoy from the Bishop Museum (1972-1973) and researchers from the University of French Polynesia (2010-2013).

CURRENT PHASE OF RESEARCH:

Phase I: Archaeological survey of Tetiaroa:

- It is likely that the first Polynesians who settled on Tahiti and Moorea discovered Tetiaroa as early as the 9th and 10th centuries. However, it is important to understand how the atoll was progressively occupied since then.
- Extensive archaeological survey of all islets will complete preliminary inventories and provide a GIS database of all ancient remains on the island. Recording and mapping of structures will help identify the functions of sites and understand how they were distributed over the motus.
- The Seeley Family Foundation, of Seattle, Washington, has funded this phase of the research.

NEXT PHASES OF RESEARCH:

Phase II: Ceremonial and domestic architecture as indications of socio-political organization:

- An investigation of Tetiaroa's settlement patterns and the development of ceremonial architecture, especially the marae (traditional ceremonial sites), will follow previous work that demonstrated considerable variation in the architecture of these ceremonial sites. Understanding the degree of architectural influences is likely to reveal a complex socio-political pattern.
- Building upon data sets acquired during the first phase, some sites (including marae and dwelling structures) will be selected and carefully excavated in order to date construction and modification stages, and to understand the functions and rituals performed on them. This potentially also includes a field-school on Reiono.
- Approximately \$45,000 USD is required to fund this next phase of research.



Remains of a traditional Polynesian dance house from the 18th century are found on Tetiaroa.

Phase III: Interactions between humans and coral atoll ecosystems:

- Atolls posed special challenges as much as potential for Polynesian habitation, being rich in marine resources but limited in arable land and freshwater.
- Adaptation processes of Polynesian communities to this constraining environment will be documented. Tracing the history of vegetation on Tetiaroa will help us understand human impact, and a zooarchaeological analysis of faunal remains will help determine what resources were most utilized and whether these patterns changed over time. Additionally, geochemical analysis will reveal the relationships with Tahiti and Moorea as basalt tools were imported from high island regions.
- Approximately \$25,000 USD is required to fund this next phase of research.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

The archaeological research project on Tetiaroa is a major contribution to our understanding of a land that occupied a special place in the history and culture of the Society Islands. The program also includes field training and educational opportunities for Polynesian students at the University of French Polynesia, and schools on Tahiti and Moorea. A museum is also planned for Tetiaroa once completed, which will showcase the history and archaeology of the atoll.



A seaside shrine found on Horoatera, one of Tetiaroa's 12 motus.

PROJECT TEAM:

- Dr. Guillaume Molle, Archaeologist at the University of French Polynesia and affiliated researcher to the International Center for Archaeological Research in Polynesia (CIRAP)
- Dr. Aymeric Hermann, Archaeologist at the University of French Polynesia and affiliated researcher to CIRAP
- Professor Patrick V. Kirch, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley and CIRAP
- Professor Eric Conte, Director of the CIRAP, Professor of Archaeology and President of the University of French Polynesia

Collaborators:

- Mark Eddowes, National Geographic expert of archaeology in the South Pacific
- Dr. Emilie Dotte-Sarout, Australian National University (anthracology)
- Dr. Janelle Stevenson, Australian National University (palynology)

SUPPORT RESEARCH ON TETIAROA:

This research is sponsored in part by Tetiaroa Society, a non-profit organization established to help protect Tetiaroa, promote sustainable activities, and support scientific research targeted at understanding and protecting delicate island ecosystems.

We invite you to experience the life of a scientist in the field and better understand our work by joining investigators studying on the atoll. If you are interested, please contact one of our scientists at the Ecostation, the Tetiaroa Society Visitor Center or the concierge at The Brando.

We also invite you to make a financial contribution to Tetiaroa Society to support the world-class science taking place on the atoll. Your donation will support us in our mission and the next phase of this project. If you want your funds to be used exclusively for this research project, please note this when you donate. Donations can be made online at www.tetiaroasociety.org or added to your hotel invoice. Thank you for your generosity, participation, and support.

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