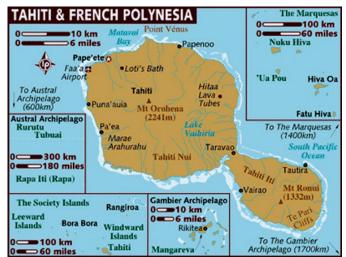
World of Stamps:

Island Communities: French Polynesia

by Geir Sør-Reime



French Polynesia is an overseas country within the French Republic since 2004. The territory has an area of 1,622 square miles (scattered over 965,255 square miles of ocean) and a population of 260,000. (See condensed map, above, and Figure 1, page 20.)

The islands were settled by Polynesians from AD300 till AD800. Europeans first came to the islands in 1521 (Magellan, Tuatumo Archipelago), 1722 (Roggeveen, Bora Bora), 1767 (Wallis, Tahiti). The first missionaries were Spanish (from 1769); Protestants arrived in 1797.

In 1842, Tahiti and Tahuata were made French protectorates, and the capital of Papeete (Figures 2 and 3) was founded 1843. Tahiti was annexed by France in 1880 and made it a colony. Further islands were annexed or taken over by France in the following years. The official name of the colony was French Oceanic Settlements.

After WWII, the islands became a French overseas territory and the inhabitants were granted French citizenship. In 1957, the name was changed to French Polynesia (Figure 4). In 1977, French Polynesia was granted internal autonomy, this was extended 1984. The 10th anniversary of the 1984 achievements was celebrated on a 1994 single (Figure 5).

The territorial flag was first featured on 1985 and 2003 (Figure 6) stamps. In 2001, a stamp commemorated the 17th anniversary of internal autonomy; the design was based on the territorial flag (Figure 7). A similar motif appeared on the 2004 stamp commemorating the 20th anniversary of the internal autonomy.

Tourism is very important to the economy. Tourism has been a recurring theme of French Polynesian stamps, starting with a 1966 single showing Polynesian dancers. Dancers were also featured on a 1981 stamp (Figure 8) and a large 1977 air post stamp (Figure 9). Tourist activities were featured on a 1992 set of six, and also on a 1993 set for World Tourism Day, and a 1997 booklet of 12 different stamps, and on a 2004 single (Figure 8), and most recently, on twelve booklet stamps issued 2006. Touristic sights appeared on 1992 and 2005 singles (Figures 10 and 11).

There is also some agriculture, coconuts, vanilla, fruits and vegetables. Other resources are minerals, fish and timber (Figure 12). Copra production was featured on two 1989 stamps, the lowest value of which was withdrawn after a short time due to objections from the lady depicted on the stamp (Figure 13).

Probably most people associate the islands partly with the painter Paul Gauguin, and with the RA expedition.

Gauguin paintings have been reproduced on many French Polynesia stamps, including the painting "Te Matete" on a 1973 air post stamp, and in 1978 a painting entitled "Tahitian Woman and Boy" (Figure 14) was reproduced on a stamp commemorating his 75th death anniversary.

The painting "Tehemana's Ancestors" appeared on a 1980 air post stamp, the painting "And the Gold of their Bodies" appeared on a 1981 air post stamp, "The Axeman" (Figure 15) on a 1983 stamp commemorating his 80th death anniversary, "Woman with Mango" on a 1984 air post stamp, "Where Have We come From? What are We? Where are We going" (Figure 16) on a 1985 stamp, "Soyez Mystérieuses" (wooden sculpture) on a 1987 stamp, "Te Faaturuma" in 1989 (Figure 17), "Oranges of Tahiti" on the 1991 stamp issued to commemorate the centenary of his arrival in Tahiti, "Faaturuma" in 1994, "Te arli vahine" in 1997, and in 1998 "The Lovers" (Figure 18) commemorated the 150th birth anniversary of Gauguin, and similarly, a 2003 stamp commemorated his birth centenary. Gauguin paintings most recently appeared on two 2006 stamps.

The 25th anniversary of the arrival of the RA raft was commemorated on a 1972 air post stamp. In 1997, a single stamp commemorated the 50th anniversary of the voyage from Peru to the Tuamoto islands, and in 2007, a further single commemorated the 60th anniversary. (Figure 19)

Polynesian women have also been featured on a number of stamps of French Polynesia, starting with the very first issue of 1958 (Figure 4). Other issues include the 1990 World Tourism Day set of three, the 1990 Tiare hairdresses set of three, the 1998 set of four showing necklaces and hairdresses, the 1999 set of four reproducing nude paintings, the 2000 set showing traditional costumes (Figure 20). In 2000, the first stamp in a series portraying Polynesian women was issued (Figure 21). Further stamps were added 2003, 2004 (Figure 22), 2005 (two), 2006 (two), 2007 (two), 2008 (two issued, one shown in Figure 23), and also on the 2007 Heiva festival set of three.

The first specific stamps for the area were standard French colonies stamps surcharged with new values, in 1882. One stamp was also overprinted TAHITI. In 1884 further overprints/surcharges appeared (Figures 25, 28). In July 1893, the whole series of French colonial stamps were issued with a diagonal TAHITI overprint (Figure 26). In August 1893, an overprint reading "1893/TAHITI" was applied to the French colonies general issue (Figure 27), and in 1903 10c surcharges were issued.

To Be Continued



Fig. 1: 1992 Tahiti viewed from space (Sc. 587)





Fig. 3: Papeete in 2007, Sc. 956

Fig. 2: 1998 Watercolors of Old Papeete Bay (Sc. 743)

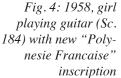






Fig. 5: 1994 for 10th anniversary of self-government (Sc. 641)



Fig. 7: 2001 17th anniversary of internal autonomy S/S (Sc. 804a)



Fig. 6: 2003 Polynesian flag, Sc. 857



Fig. 8: 1981 folklore dance (Sc. 346)

Fig. 9 (right): 1977 air post

stamp, Tahitian dancer (Sc. C147)



Fig. 10: 1992 Tourism (girl with fish) (Sc. 583)



Fig. 11: 2005 traditional scene, Sc. 909



Fig. 12, left to right: 2008 fruits; 1948 definitive, fisherman with catch (Sc. 163); 1934 spear fishing (Sc. 83).





Fig. 13: 1989 Extracting copra, stamp withdrawn on demand of women depicted (Sc. 505)



Fig. 14: 1978 "Tahitian Women and Boy" painting by Paul Gauguin (Sc. C159)



Fig. 15: "The Axeman" by Paul Gauguin (Sc. C198)



Fig. 16: Gauguin's "Where Have We come From? What are We? Where are We Going", Sc. C212



Fig. 17: 1989 "Te Faaturama" by Paul Gauguin (Sc. 526)



Fig. 18: 1998 "The Lovers" by Paul Gauguin (Sc. 735)







Fig. 19: upper left, 1972 25th anniversary of Kon-Tiki arrival in Tahiti (Sc. C87); above, 1997 50th anniversary of Kon-Tiki expedition (Sc. 722); 2007 for 60th anniversary of Kon-Tiki expedition



Fig. 20:.2000 Traditional dresses (Sc. 779)



Fig. 21: 2000 Polynesian Women S/S (Sc. 778a)



Fig. 22: 2004 Polynesian women (Sc. 868)



Fig. 23: 2008 Polynesian women (Sc. 970)



Fig. 24: 1982 PhilexFrance issue showing the 1882 first issue, Tahiti Sc. 1



times on French Colonies overprint on French Col-20c (Tahiti Sc. 2)



Fig. 25: Tahiti 1884 5 cen- Fig. 26: 1893 "Tahiti" onies 5c (Tahiti Sc. 8)



Fig. 27: "1893 Tahiti" overprint on French Colonies 75c (Tahiti Sc. 27)



Fig. 28: 1882 25c on 35c, Tahiti Sc. 1, tied by "Papeete/13 Sept. 82/Taiti" circular date stamp.



Fig. 29: FrPolynesia05: 1892 French Oceanic Settlements 1st issue (Fr. Poly. Sc. 1



Fig. 30: 1903 Tahiti overprint on French Oceanic Settlement stamps (Fr. Poly Sc. 29)



Fig. 31: 1907 cover with five copies of 10c on 40c, Tahiti Sc. 31, including gutter pair, tied by Papeete double-ring cancels