

Island Communities: French Polynesia, Part 2

by Geir Sør-Reime

(Continued from July 10)

In November 1892, stamps inscribed 'ETABLISSEMENTS DE L'OCEANIE' (Oceanic Settlements) had been issued (Figure 32, page 20), and these were also on sale on Tahiti from 1893 (Figure 33). In 1992, the centenary of Oceanic Settlements (FOS) stamps was celebrated with a single French Polynesia stamp (Figure 34). A pictorial set with three different designs was issued in 1913. Color changes and various surcharges appeared on these stamps (Figures 35-37).

A new pictorial series appeared in 1934, inscribed "E.T.S FRANC. S DE L'OCEANIE" (French Oceanic Settlements) (Figure 38).

The authorities adhered to the Free French during WWII, and initially, stamps were overprinted "FRANCE LIBRE" (Figure 39). A definitive series inscribed "FRANCE LIBRE" and "OCEANIE" and printed in London was issued 1942 (Figures 40 & 41). Despite the fact that the Free French government controlled the Oceanic Settlements, the Vichy government in France continued to issue new stamps for the territory during WWII. These included a re-issue of the 1934 series without the "RF" monogram (Figures 42-45).

After the war, a completely new definitive series was issued in 1948 (Figure 46, 47). The first distinctive commemorative stamp for the Oceanic Settlements appeared in 1953, honoring the painter Gauguin (Figure 48).

In 1957, the name of the territory was changed to French Polynesia, and a definitive series displaying that title was issued 1958 (Figure 49). Similar designs were used 1978 for the 20th anniversary of the first French Polynesia stamps.

French Polynesia is normally divided into six island groups:

Austral Islands (Figure 50), Bass Islands, Gambier Islands, Marquesas Islands, Society Islands (which includes Tahiti), and Tuamotu Archipelago.

The largest, and the only inhabited island of the Bass Islands group is Rapa (or Rapa Ini) island, a map of which appeared on a 1987 stamp (Figure 51), along with its discoverer, George Vancouver.

An old print showing a raft from the Gambier Islands (Figure 53) was reproduced on a 1992 stamp (Figure 52) for the sixth Pacific Arts Festival in Rarotonga (Cook Islands). Churches on the island of Rikitea were depicted on two 1985 stamps.

The 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Marquesas Islands (Figure 53) by a Spanish fleet was commemorated 1995 with two stamps, featuring the explorers de Mendana de Neira and de Quiros and their ships (Figure 54). A 2001 stamp depicted a waterfall on Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands (Figure 55).

The grave of Gauguin was depicted on one of 1964 island views stamps (Figure 56). Ancient art of the Marquesas Island was the theme of a 1967-68 series of eight stamps (Figure 57). Similarly, Tikis of the islands were shown on three 1984 stamps. Marquesas Islands sculptures appeared on a 1991 set of three.

In 1999, a stamp marked the fifth Marquesas Islands' Art Festival (Figure 58).

The island of Ua Puo, one of the Marquesas Islands was included in the 1979 island views series (Figure 59).

In 2006, two stamps and a souvenir sheet marked the discovery of the Washington Islands in the Marquesas group (Figure 60).

Several stamps have, quite naturally, been dedicated to Tahiti and Bora-Bora in the Society Islands. A map of Tahiti was shown on the 1986 stamp issued for the Stockholm international stamp exhibition

that year (Figure 61). An aerial photo of the island appeared on a 1992 stamp (Figure 1, July 10 issue). Tahiti is a mountainous island, and in 2000, two stamps featured mountains over 2000 meters height on Tahiti (Figure 62). Impressive waterfalls on Tahiti were depicted on two 2001 stamps.

Tahiti was ruled by the kings of the Pomare dynasty 1793-1880. Kings and queens of this dynasty were portrayed on a 1976 set of four, and in 1996 stamps portraying Queen Pomare were issued (Figure 63). In 1775, a Spanish expedition under de Boenechea visited the settlement of Tautira on Tahiti, and this was commemorated on a 1995 single stamp (Figure 64).

The bicentenary of the discovery of Tahiti was commemorated on three 1968 stamps (Figure 65), which were also issued in a souvenir sheet. 19th century paintings from Tahiti appeared on four 1982 stamps (Figure 66). Stamps showing old views of Papeete appeared 1985, 1986, 1988 (three stamps in each set), and also in 1994 (three), 1998 (two) 2003 (four), and 2007 (two). The centenary of the township of Papeete was celebrated 1990 with two stamps, depicting the old and new (Figure 67) town halls, respectively. The market place in Papeete was the motif of a 2002 stamp.

Tahitian dancers from an old print were depicted on one of the 1992 Maori world stamps (Figure 68). An old print showing pirogues off Tahiti appeared on one of the 1992 Pacific Arts Festival stamps.

Papeete Airport was depicted on a 1960 air post stamp (Figure 69), and the port on a 1966 air post stamp, and again on a 1972 air post to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the autonomous port administration (Figure 70). A scene from Papeete also appeared on one of the 1964 island views stamps.

Tahitian costumes appeared on a 1985 set of three stamps, and three 2008 Heiva Festival stamps pictured traditional natives (Figure 71). The oven pits used to prepare food on Tahiti was depicted on two 1985 stamps (Figure 72). Next to Tahiti is the island of Moorea, a scene from which was included with the 1964 views series.

Bora-Bora is also part of the Society Islands, and a scene from the island was included in the 1964, 1979 and 1981 island views series. An aerial view of the island appeared on a 1992 stamp. In 1993, the 50th anniversary of the Bora-Bora airfield was commemorated on a single stamp (Figure 73). In 1943, 4000 U.S. troops landed on the island to build the airfield and a naval base. The Bora-Bora airfield was the first airfield in French Polynesia. Views of Bora-Bora from the sea and from the air appeared on two 2003 stamps (Figure 74).

Motu Tapu in the Bora-Bora group was included in the 1979 island views series. The island of Maupiti appeared on one of the 1981 island views stamps.

The second largest island in the Society Islands is Raiatea, and a view of this island was depicted on one of the 1979 island view stamps. Also in the Society Island is the island of Huahine, depicted on one of the 1981 island views stamps.

Tuamotu lagoon was depicted on the 1964 landscape series (Figure 75). The island was also included in the 1979 island views series. An aerial view of the island of Mataiva appeared on a 1992 stamp.

Old drawings showing the chief (Figure 76) and inhabitants of St.Christine island in the Tuamotu Archipelago appeared on three 1983 stamps.

The church in the village of Otepipi on Anaa island was depicted on a 1985 stamp (Figure 77).



Fig. 32: 1900 French Oceanic Settlements (FOS) (Sc. 7)



Fig. 33: 1915 Tahiti semi-postal overprint on FOS (Tahiti Sc. B2)



Fig. 34: 1992 centenary of 1st stamps for French Oceanic Settlements (Sc. 605)



Fig. 36: 1915 provisional (Sc. 55)



Fig. 37: 1926 postage due (Sc. J7)



Fig. 35: Left to right: 1913 Tahitian girl (Sc. 22); 1996 Stamp Day reproducing 1913 stamp (Sc. 693); 1924 provisional (Sc. 64)



Fig. 38: 1934 FOS Idols (Sc. 103)



Fig. 39: 1941 "Free French" overprint (Sc. 129)



Fig. 40: 1942 Free French (Sc. 136)



Fig. 41: 1944 Free French semi-postal (Sc. B13)



Fig. 42: Left, 1913 FOS Tahitian girl (Sc. 21); right, 1942 Vichy government re-issue of 1934 definitives without "RF" upper right, never placed on sale



Fig. 43: 1941 Vichy semi-postal (Sc. B12A), never put on sale in FP

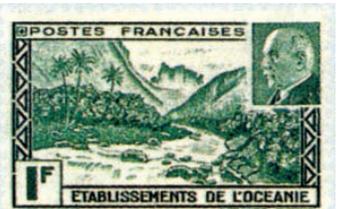


Fig. 44: 1941 Vichy government, prepared but never issued showing Fautaua valley and Marshall Petain (Sc. 125A)



Fig. 45: 1944 Vichy government air post stamp, never put on sale in FOS (Sc. C18)



Fig. 48: 1953 air post for 50th death anniversary of Paul Gauguin (Sc. C21)



Fig. 49: 1958 "Women of Tahiti" by Gauguin (Sc. C25)



Fig. 46: 1948 definitive, Tahitian girl (Sc. 169)



Fig. 47: 1948 air post fishermen (Sc. C18)



Fig. 50: 1998 pre-stamped postal card dedicated to the Austral islands, and showing Raivavae island

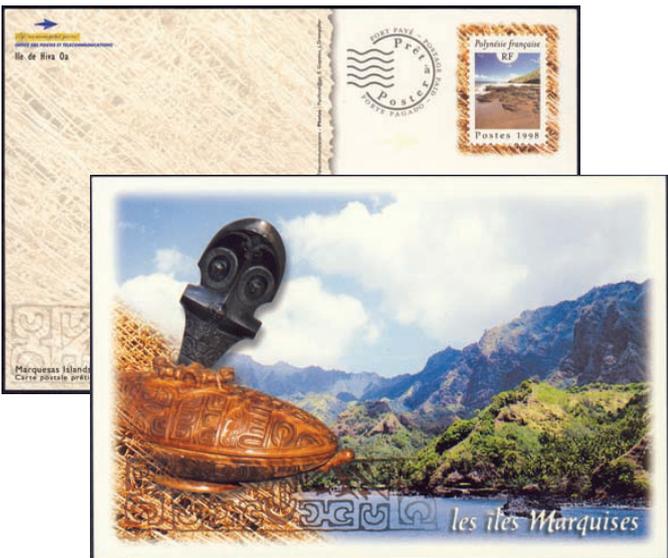


Fig. 53: 1998 pre-stamped postal card dedicated for the Marquesas Island and showing a view from Hiva Oa island



Fig. 55: 2001, Vaiharuru Waterfall, Sc. 794

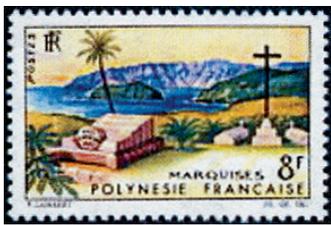


Fig. 56: 1964, Gauguin's tomb, Marquesas, Sc. 214



Fig. 57: 1967, Art of Marquesas Islands, earring, Sc. 233



Fig. 58: 1999 for 5th Marquesas Islands Arts Festival (Sc. 769)



Fig. 59: 1979, Mountain peaks, Ua Pou, Sc. 314



Fig. 51: 1987 airmail with map of Rapa, George Vancouver and excerpt of ship's log, Sc. C225



Fig. 53: 1992 for 6th Festival of Pacific Arts, Raratonga, Sc. 603

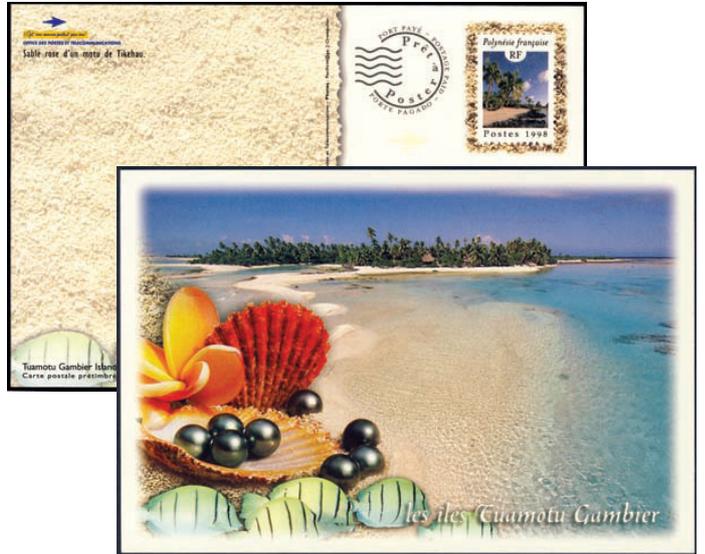


Fig. 52: 1998 pre-stamped postal card dedicated to the Tuamotu and Gambier islands and showing view from Tikehau



Fig. 54: 1995 400th anniversary of discovery of Marquesas Islands (Sc. 665)



Fig. 60: 2006 for discovery of Washington Islands, 1791 (Sc. 918a)



Fig. 61: 1986 showing map of Tahiti and two Swedish scientists who accompanied Captain Cook (Sc. C219)



Fig. 62: above, 1948, Coast of Moorea (Sc. 161); right, Mt. Aorai and Mt. Orohena (Sc. 783)



Fig. 63: 1996 Queen Pomare (Sc. 678)



Fig. 64: 1995 for 220th anniversary of Don Domingo de Boenechea's expedition to Tautira (Sc. 653)



Fig. 65: 1968 Explorer's ship and canoe, for bicentenary of discovery of Tahiti (Sc. C45)



Fig. 66: 1982 paintings, Papeete Harbor, by C. F. Gordon Cumming (Sc. C197)



Fig. 67: 1990 Centenary of Papeete township, new town hall (Sc. 538)



Fig. 68: 1991 Maori world, here Easter Island (withdrawn after short time on the demand of Chile) (Sc. 560)



Fig. 69: 1960 airmail, plane over Papeete airport (Sc. C28)



Fig. 70: 1972 airmail, Papeete airport (Sc. C83)



Fig. 71: 2008 Heiva Festival, Tattooed man, (Sc. 978)



Fig. 72: 1985, Local foods: pit fire (Sc. 423)



Fig. 73: 1993, 50th Anniversary, Allied airfield on Bora-Bora (Sc. 615)



Fig. 75: 1964, Tuamotu scene (Sc. 211)



Fig. 76: 1983, Chieftain in traditional costume, St. Christine Island (Sc. 383)



Fig. 74: 2003 aerial view of Bora Bora island



Fig. 77: 1985, St. Anne's Chapel (Sc. 424)