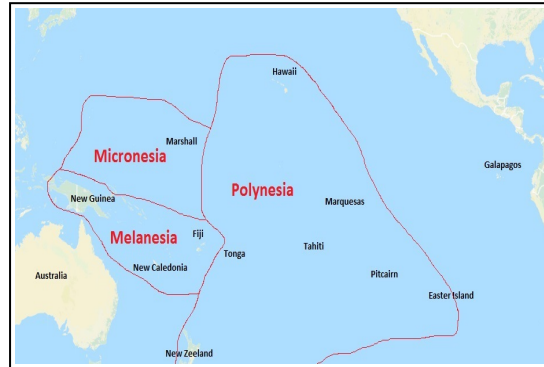




3. Polynesia 2017



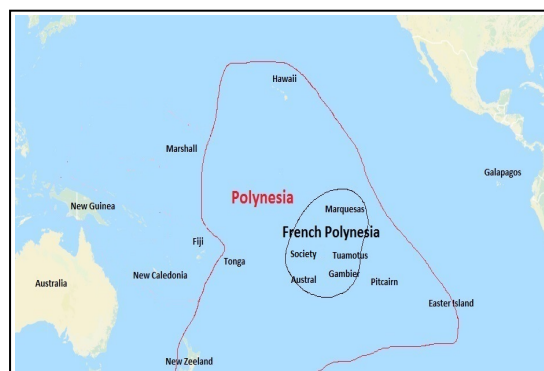
by Johan Kjellander 2017



Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia.

The islands of the Pacific are often divided into three groups. According to a Swedish antropologist they correspond to differences in race, culture and language. In his book "Bengt Danielsson i Söderhavet" writes:

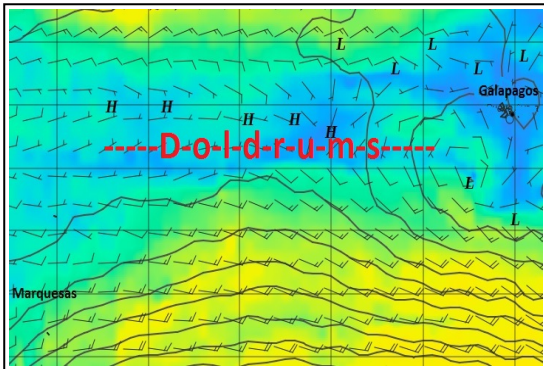
Melanesians are dark, loosely organized, tradesmen with many different languages and individually oriented religion. Polynesians are fishermen and sea travelers, have lighter brown skin, strongly organized religion with priests and temples and a relatively common language. Micronesians are something in between but with a very large number of different languages.



Many of the islands in Polynesia belong to French Polynesia, a French colony since 1880, still under rule by the French but with a large degree of autonomy. 30%-50% of BNP are subsidiaries from France and the rest of the economy is based on tourism, fish export and cultivation of black pearls. Capitol city is Papeete on Haiti.

After 21 days at sea and 3100 NM from Galapagos, we arrived to Atuona on the Marquesian island Hiva-Oa on the 11:th of April.

Marquesas is one of five groups of islands in French Polynesia. The others are: Tuamotu, Gambier, Society and Austral, together covering a distance of more than 1000 NM from east to west.



Getting there takes time but is fairly easy if you start from Galapagos. Sail due south, if you can, or motor, until you are out of the Doldrums and reach the steady south easterly trade. Then go directly for Marquesas.



As we left Galapagos and sailed south, we passed the island of Floreana where the events that lead to the book: Satan Came to Eden: took place. A mysterious story of murders and missing people. Here we saw a lot of Masked Boobies for the first time.



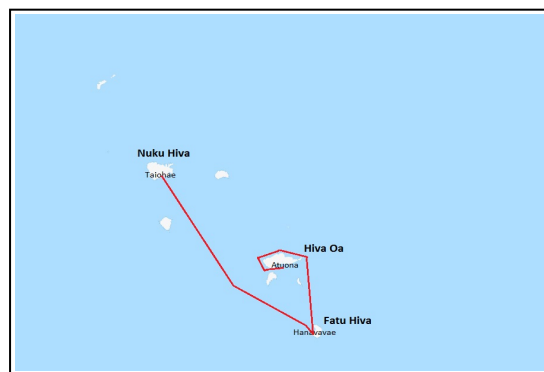
As we passed Floreana, day turned into night. Once again, the sky exploded with color and shape, almost like a painting.



There was no moon so it got very dark. I turned on our lanterns and after a while we were surrounded by sea birds flying very close to us for many hours. A new experience. Later on the moon showed up and shined through a thin layer of high clouds. Sailing in full moon is wonderful.



When we are on long passages for many days I usually go out on deck every morning to see that everything is okay with the rig. Sailing day and night for weeks is a tough challenge for lines, wires and deck hardware.



After 21 days and 3100 NM we finally arrived to Atuona on the island of Hiva-Oa. A relatively good passage but some days with uncomfortable seas, and weak winds at times. Still, we did not have to motor many hours, we only used about 50 litres of diesel. We were also surprised to see that we had more than 300 litres of water left in our tanks when we arrived to Atuona. During three weeks at sea, we had used less than 500 litres of our water supply for drinking, cooking, dishes, showers and laundry.

We were also glad that Bird of Passage was in good condition. We met several boats in Atuona with damages. Broken rudder and broken spinnaker pole were the most serious things I heard of but almost all crews we talked to reported technical problems of some kind. Water makers, generators, sail and engine problems seemed to be common.

During our passage I checked in every day with a radio network organized by the "Pacific Puddlejumpers". This way I got information about all the other boats in the network, their position, speed and current weather situation. Nice to know that you are not alone out there. Radio amateurs like Larry&Sue on Serengeti made it all work.



The Marquesas islands are all of volcanic origin. Relatively young, with sharp high peaks. Very dramatic. Atuona lies close to an old partly submerged crater. Clouds form at the top while the sun shines on the water below.



One who loved Hiva-Oa was Paul Gauguin, the famous painter. He lived and died here and his grave is now a popular tourist attraction.



Another European who ended up here is Jacques Brel, the musician. He and his wife sailed here, just like us, fell in love with the island and stayed. His grave is only 10 meters from Gaugin. Someone has put up a sign with a poem that reads:

Passant,

*Hommes de voiles
Hommes d'étoiles
Ce troubadour
Enchanté nos vies
De la Mer du Nord
Aux Marquises*

*Le Poète,
Du bleu de son éternité
Te remercie
De ton passage*

I have not found a proper English translation to this poem. If I should try on my own it might be something like:

Visitor,

*Men of sails
Men of stars
This trubadour
Sang to our lives
From the North Sea
To Marquesas*

*The Poet,
From the skies of his eternity
Thanks you
For your visit*

Jacques Brel was a sailor but also an airplane pilot. He was born in Belgium by the North Sea and sailed in his own boat to Marquesas.

In Swedish:

Besökare,

Män av segel

Män av stjärnor

Denna trubadur

Sjöng till våra liv

Från Nordsjön till Marquesas

Poeten,

Från sin evighets himmel

Tackar dig

För ditt besök



Old style Polynesian canoes with outriggers still exist. We saw locals paddling in long narrow, very fast sixes around our anchorage several times.



In the centre of the village is an open space surrounded by wooden buildings and stone statues (tikis) in traditional polynesian style. The place is used for celebrations of various kind.



After a few days in the crowded harbour of Atuona we left to see more of the island. We sailed along the beautiful north coast, past Matahau Point and spent the night in Hanaiapa Bay where Fatutue Rock guards the entrance. It does remind of a certain Mr. Simpson, doesn't it ?



Next day we continued to Hanavave Bay (Bay of the Virgin) on the island of Fatu Hiva. A beautiful bay with steep cliffs on both sides. One of the most impressive anchorages I have ever visited.



Fatu Hiva with only 700 people is very far away from modern civilization. The main street in the village of Hanavave feels like a small country road. Lots of fresh water pours down from the surrounding mountains.



There is no airport and there is no harbour, only a small concrete jetty behind a short pier. Living here must be very lonely. One who tried was archaeologist Thor Heyerdahl who lived here in 1937-38 and wrote a book about it.



From Fatu Hiva we continued 125 NM north to Taiohae on the island of Nuku Hiva. First thing you see is this Tiki on a small hill looking out over the anchorage. Look for Tove at the base of the Tiki in the right picture above. This Tiki is big.



On the way up to the Tiki we met Peter and Eva from the Swedish Hallberg Rassy "Tina Princess".



Nuku Hiva was rainy with showers almost every day. The air was humid and you sweat a lot. After a squall there was often a nice rainbow and on the beach you could see the water forming beautiful patterns in the sand as it returned to the sea.



One day an interesting boat anchored next to us. Dutch Ya, a prototype with lots of solar panels, electric engines and lead batteries in the keel. One of the rudders was broken and the skipper was working hard to repair it. I borrowed him some tools and he gave me a bag of Dutch honey-bisquits. Very nice tasting, thank you Peter. You can read more about this boat on: <http://www.duurzaamjacht.nl>



We went on a tour with minibus across the island. The road climbs in sharp zig-zag turns up to around 1000 meters above sea level with beautiful views over the anchorage in Taiohae.



Tony and Karen on one of the boats next to us arranged the tour with French Jocelyne who was our guide. She knew a lot about ancient life in the Marquesas. That was interesting.



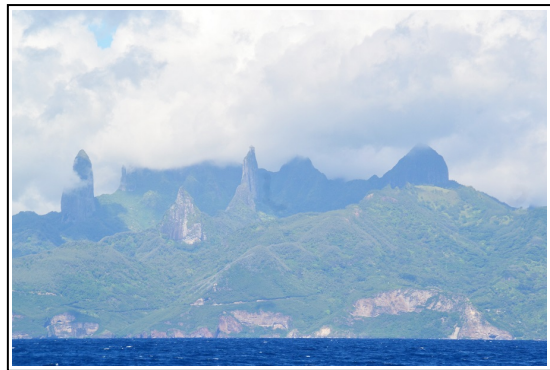
In the village of Taipivai we stopped to have a look at the church. Writer Herman Melville was here at the end of the 19:th century and wrote the famous novel "Typee".



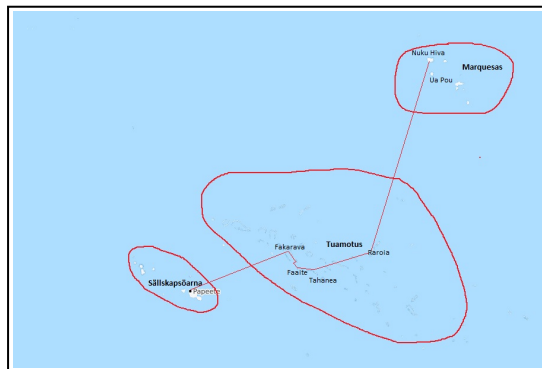
Close to the village are the remains of an old place for religious worship and sacrifice. In the centre is an enormous Banyan tree and around it are ruins of buildings and structures that were used for ceremonies of different type. According to our guide young boys were sacrificed to the gods several times a year.



Before we turned back we had lunch in Hatiheu on the north side of the island. Sweet water eels swarmed in the creek beside the restaurant.



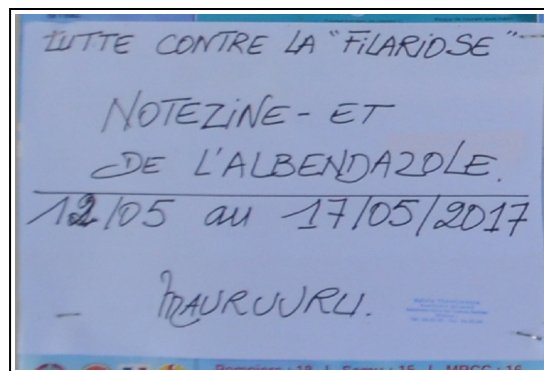
After a month in the Marquesas we left Nuku Hiva and set course for Raroia in the Tuamotus archipelago. On our way we passed Ua Pou with its spectacular stone pillars near the top.



Tuamotus is a huge area of small islands called atolls because of their geological history. An atoll is an old volcano where the top of the volcano has sunken down beneath the water. Left is only the coral reef that grows around its perimeter. Inside the reef is a shallow lagoon. We started with the atoll Raroia.



On the village jetty of Ngarumoava in Raroia a welcome comitty had gathered (well, I did persuade them a little). Not afraid to try a few English words. Hello, what's your name, where do you come from? Sweet, aren't they?



We went for a walk and found an unusual message from the health authority. A parasite that causes Elephantiasis is spread by mosquitos in Polynesia and the French are trying to get rid of it by offering free profylactic medication with Notezine, a pill you swallow that lasts for a year. A nurse travels around the islands to provide the pills and anybody who wants, is free to visit her. Since she was in our village right now, we did that and got our pills. No Elefantiasis for us, at least for a year!



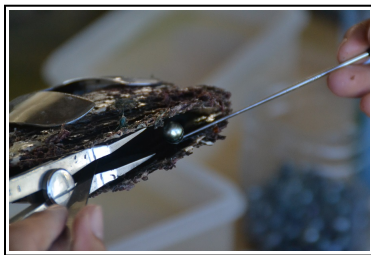
A fisherman was taking care of his catch on the jetty. Fins and guts that he threw in the water immediatley started a race between Black Tip Sharks to get the best pieces. They were quite many and some of them relatively large, I think close to two meters.



Most coral fish are much smaller. These were 10-15 centimeter long.



We took the main road into the village and found a young man working in a garden. I talked to him and he asked me if we were interested in pearls. Black pearls are cultivated in many places in Polynesia, also in the lagoon of Raroia and this young man worked in the local pearl industry. We followed him home, met his wife and daughter and bought the two pearls above at 8 USD each. When we left, his wife presented us with a half kilo of oyster meat that Tove fried for dinner later that day. Very delicious.



We visited the pearl factory in Ngarumoava and the people there showed us their work. The sea shells are prepared in the factory and then taken out to sea to grow. Chinese workers did some of the job and the owner of the farm was also Chinese we were told.



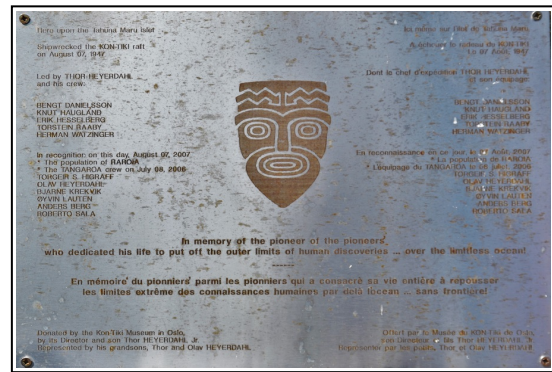
Roy and Mark on S/Y Mabrouka from Seattle made us company. Their anchor chain had got twisted around some coral heads so bad they couldn't get their anchor up. They had to wait until the next day for divers to arrive and help them.



Later that week, we went on a tour with local fishermen. Rigis was in charge and arranged a wonderful day for Tove, me and the Swiss couple Peter and Franciska.



On a small island (motu) in the east part of Raroia there was a salt water lagoon full of fish. The fishermen walked in the shallow water with a long net between them and chased the fish to the end of the lagoon where it was stranded. Pretty effective. Some of the female catch had rom and a fisherman took a few to spread the rom in the water. For the future he said. I asked them how long time it would take before they could come back for another catch. Two months was the answer. I wonder how those fish can grow so fast from rom that has not been fertilized.



In August 1947 Thor Heyerdahl was shipwrecked with Kontiki on one of the small islands of Raroia. Fifty years later his grandson Olav came here to put up a memorial at the place where the expedition ended.



We had a stop there and the fishermen made a barbeque. Rigis had cold beer in an icebox and life was just wonderful.

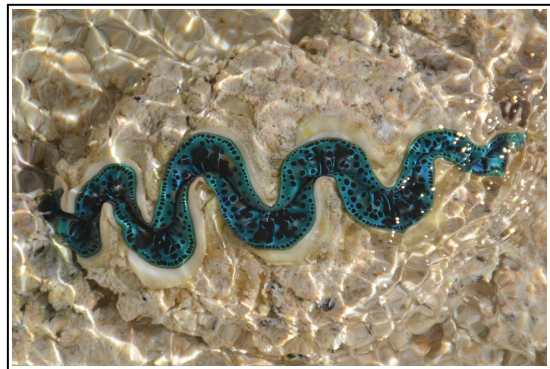


We saw big Coconut Crabs and beautiful white Terns. Later in the evening Rigis cooked a crab and invited us to his place to taste. Thanks Rigis for a wonderful day!



Together with Thor Heyerdahl on the Kontiki expedition was a Swedish scientist named Bengt Danielsson. After the shipwreck on Raroia he married a French woman and stayed in Polynesia for the rest of his life. He wrote many books about Polynesian culture and history but also a childrens book named *Villervalle i Söderhavet* about Villervalle, a young boy who spent some time on an atoll in Polynesia. Swedish Television went to Raroia to make a film series based on the book and it was very popular among young Swedes when it was sent during the early sixties.

On Raroia we met Rogo Tokoragi. He remembers when the Kon Tiki stranded in 1947 and he also remembers the filming of the Villervalle series in which he played a part.



After Raroia we wanted to see Fakarava, one of the bigger and more popular atolls in the Tuamotus, about 175 NM west of Rarioa. We planned to reach the south entrance to Fakarava in daylight but the wind decreased slowly and so did our speed. Instead we aimed for Tahanea where we spent the night. Next day we sailed to Faaite and the day after we entered the south pass of Fakarava for a night in Tetamanu, a popular diving centre.

There is not much to do in Tetamanu except for diving so the next day we followed the reef on the inside to Hirifa in the south east corner of Fakarava. A fantastic place. Protected from sea and wind, good anchoring in sand and long white beaches perfect for walking and shallow lagoons with lots of fish and other wildlife. Benitier Clams for example, beautiful and good to eat we were told.



We found many beautiful sea shells and some of them were inhabited by Hermite Crabs. Tove became an expert in removing them. According to the fishermen on Rairoia they were good to use as bait.



Laiza and Toria are the only ones who live here. They collect coconuts for kopra, catch fish and run a small restaurant with excellent food. Laiza invited us for fresh coconut drinks and showed us her pigs.



She fed her pigs with coconuts. Then she fed her guests with her pigs.



It seems that everybody was feeding on coconuts.



Three times a year they sold dried coconut meat to a company in Tahiti. The current price was one euro per kilo.



The walls of their little restaurant were decorated with flags and burgees from all over the world left by visiting sailors. We presented Liaza and Toria with the burgee of our old boatclub in Sweden.



One evening the skippers of Leeward, Serengeti and A Capella formed a band and played in the restaurant. Laiza came up with a buffet and there was dancing, European style and Polynesian. Thanks Steve, Larry and Martin for the nice music.



VISITEZ LE CHANTIER NAVAL VA'A MOTU // VISIT THE VA'A MOTU SHIPYARD
 CONSTRUCTION D'UNE PIROGUE A VOILE TRADITIONNELLE PAUMOTU // CONSTRUCTION OF A TRADITIONAL PAUMOTU SAILING CANOE

FICHE TECHNIQUE // TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Nom // Name:
 Te Maru O Hareki (l'ombre de Hareki // The shadow of Hareki)
 Maketina // Motetina

Centre d'origine marine // essence locale (locality):
 Paithe spiky // fibre de verre

Matériau // coconut wood / kauri // epoxy // fiberglass

Caractéristiques // Specifications

Longueur coque // Hull length	9,07 m
Bau Maxi // Maximum width	4,83 m
Tranch d'eau // Draft	0,27m / 1,46m
Déplacement léger // Light displacement	923 Kg
Déplacement en charge // Loaded displacement	1470 Kg
Équipage maxi // Maximum crew	8 pers
Catégorie de navigation // Navigation category	4ème

Voiles // Sails

Grand voile latine // Main sail	29,6 m ²
Genoa // Genoa	14,8 m ²
Yac // Jib sail	6,3 m ²
Code 0 // Code 0	33,8 m ²

LE PROJET VA'A MOTU CONSISTE À RÉINTRODUIRE DES PIROGUES À VOILE UTILES SUR LES LAGONS DES TUAMOTU.
LA PIROGUE TE MARU O HAREKI DEVIENT LE SUPPORT DE PROGRAMMES ENVIRONNEMENTAUX, SCIENTIFIQUES, PÉDAGOGIQUES ET ÉCO-TOURISTIQUE.
THE VA'A MOTU PROJECT IS ABOUT TO REINTRODUCE HELPFUL, TRADITIONAL SAILING CANOES ON THE TUAMOTU LAGOONS.
THE CANOE - TE MARU O HAREKI - BECOMES THE SUPPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL, SCIENTIFIC, EDUCATIONAL AND ECO-TOURISM PROGRAMS.

LE PROJET VA'A MOTU EST SOUTENU PAR // VA'A MOTU PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY

INSTITUTIONS INTERNATIONALES // INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We spent a couple of nights anchored outside the village of Rotoava where we could get some fresh food. Here I found an unusual boatbuilding project. A sailing canoe with an outrigger. Made by epoxy, plywood, glass- and coconut fibres.



We left the Tuamotus and sailed to Tahiti, 250 NM south west from Fakarava. The last evening we saw our first Green flash since the Caribbean, about a year ago.



We arrived to Tahiti after sundown so we anchored at point Venus over the night and motored in to the harbour of Papeete the next morning. Now we saw an Asian bird for the first time, the Common Myna (Sv: Brun Majna). They seem to be very common in Papeete.



We are now in Papeete marina and plan to stay here for a while. We will leave the boat a few months so that we can visit our home in Aland while it is still summer. Then we will come back to Bird of Passage and continue our voyage.



End of Polynesia 2017

