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In Memoriam of Bengt Emmerik Danielsson

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IN MEMORIAM

Bengt Emmerik Danielsson July 6, 1921-July 3, 1997

The Swedish ethnographer and writer Bengt Danielsson passed away this summer after some years of illness. He and his wife, Marie-Thérèse, had their home on Tahiti in French Polynesia for around 40 years, but he returned to his native country to die. Now he rests in peace at Ostra Tollstad in the parish of Ostergötland, where he was born.

Bengt studied ethnography at Uppsala University and participated in a Swedish/Finnish expedition to the Amazon region in 1946-47. After this he went to Peru to continue his studies among the native peoples there. However, instead he volunteered to participate in the *Kon-Tiki* expedition in 1947. After this voyage he received scholarships and grants from universities in the United States which enabled him to return to Polynesia and the island of Raroia, in the Tuamotu archipelago, where the raft landed. First he went back to Peru to marry a young French girl, Marie-Thérèse, whom he met before the *Kon-Tiki* voyage. Together they studied daily life on Raroia during a period of 18 months. This resulted in his Ph.D. dissertation, *Work and Life on Raroia*, in 1955. He was interested particularly in sociological issues and the process of acculturation.

After Raroia, they moved to the Marquesas but in 1953 they settled on Papahue in the Paea district on Tahiti. In 1952 he became research assistant at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, and from 1961 he acted as Swedish Honorary Consul in French Polynesia. In 1966 he was offered the position of director of the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm where he stayed until 1971. When Bengt and Marie-Thérèse came back to Tahiti, they suffered a personal tragedy when their only child, their daughter Maruia, died at age twenty.

His interest in the past and present life in Polynesia never ceased and he was director and one of the creators of the Centre Cultural on Tahiti in 1972. Throughout the years he visited many islands in the Pacific and lectured and wrote books and articles about Polynesian issues, both of a scholarly and popular nature. Some of his popular books *The Happy Island* (1952), *Love in the South Seas* (1956), *Forgotten Islands of the South Seas* (1957), *What happened on the Bounty* (1962) have been translated into many languages. He wrote several books for children, which were filmed in the 1960s. He also did studies of Gauguin (1965) and Captain Cook (1993) and, in six extensive volumes, *Le Memorial Polynésien*, he recounts the history of Tahiti (1977-79).

He and his wife also protested strongly against nuclear testing performed by the French Government on the island of Moruroa in the Tuamotus. Together they wrote about this injustice in *Moruroa mon Amor* (1974). They organized protests and drew attention to this criminal deed and, as a consequence, Bengt was forced to resign as consul and was persecuted by the French government. In 1991 they received the Human Rights Award for this work.

Bengt was a collector of books and probably had the most extensive private library in the Pacific area, visited by many scholars and laymen over the years. This interest was apparent from the *Kon-Tiki* voyage where his only personal belongings were 73 ethnographical and sociological books.

Bengt will be remembered as a man with a passion for books and knowledge—paired with a good sense of humor, and also for his deep commitment about social issues, and fighting against injustices against the Polynesian peoples. *Aroha nui*, Bengt!

Helene Martinsson-Wallin and Paul Wallin
Kon-Tiki Museum