

Coral files reveal time of first Polynesian settlements

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This shows pristine (upper) and used (lower) surfaces of an *Acropora* coral file used to sculpt and smooth wood and shell surfaces. Credit: *PLoS ONE* 7(11): e48769. doi:10.1371/ journal.pone.0048769

Polynesia was one of the last places on Earth to be settled by humans, and new techniques reveal that this settlement first occurred within a 16 year window nearly 3000 years ago.

The research, published November 7 in the open access journal [PLOS](#)

[ONE](#) by David Burley and colleagues from Simon Fraser University, Canada, reveals that the first human settlers lived in a founder colony on the islands of Tonga between 2830 to 2846 years ago.

To arrive at this precise figure, the researchers used a high-precision technique to estimate the age of coral files that [early settlers](#) used to sculpt and smooth wood and shell surfaces.

As Dr. Burley states, "This degree of precision is impossible using [radiocarbon](#) and other dating techniques. It provides significant new opportunities for our understanding of the exploration and settlement of the far distant islands spread across the South Pacific."

More information: Burley D, Weisler MI, Zhao J-x (2012) High Precision U/Th Dating of First Polynesian Settlement. *PLoS ONE* 7(11): e48769. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048769](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0048769)

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