

into sober, competent advice to development planners.

Tom Spencer's paper on the future effects of global warming on coral reefs fits uneasily with the rest of the volume. Its natural science perspective is complemented by Christian Clerk's social science commentary to smooth over the discontinuity. More problematic is the short shelf life of any 1995 paper in this field, given the questions raised by El Niño-related events as well as by new research. Researchers throw in new variables as fast as even the science weeklies can keep up. For instance, in the 21 May 1998 issue of *Nature*, reports from new computer simulations indicate that rising ocean temperatures may substantially reduce the capacity of the oceans to take up carbon dioxide, hence increasing the pace of greenhouse effects over 1995 predictions.

This book will be valuable to Pacific scholars, libraries, and policymakers. Its usefulness would have been enhanced by an index, but it is in other respects nicely produced.

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*Home in the Islands: Housing and Social Change in the Pacific*, edited by Jan Rensel and Margaret Rodman. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8248-1934-9 (paper), vii + 264 pages, maps, figures, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, us\$39.00; paper, us\$24.95.

This book represents an exciting new direction in the anthropology of contemporary Pacific societies—a venture into understanding the complexities and intricacies of the built environment. Well organized and written in an English that eschews jargon and excessive technical language, it should be accessible and useful to a broad audience, both in the Pacific and elsewhere, from architects, urban planners, and social welfare agents to researchers and scholars in the social sciences and history, as well as students, politicians, and the ordinary person.

The basic premise is that houses provide shelter but homes extend far beyond that simple concept. People not only construct, use, move, and destroy houses to produce, shape, and define individual and communal identity, but in turn homes direct and reflect history, technology, demographic and economic conditions, social interactions, and political influence, not to mention cultural values and symbolic representations.

The focus of this collection is on domesticity, on dwelling units or houses rather than on ceremonial or utilitarian structures, such as churches, canoe huts, animal shelters, or the like. Although the latter are not missing from the social and physical landscape about which these authors write, they

are not featured. Construction materials and techniques, housing styles, and labor requirements are mentioned in these essays, but not extensively, unlike in many other works on architecture. Rather, these issues are subsumed under the emphasis on the human use of buildings and space, on the social relationships inherent in the idea of home. This collection of essays also focuses on change in the built environment in and around which people live their lives and shape their relations with each other, with kin, with strangers, with the outside world. At issue are questions of how, why, when, and where dwellings are placed and, over time, displaced or even misplaced, and eventually replaced; and by whom and for whom homes are built. Domestic architecture is shown to be shaped and changed by diverse forces, occurring either singly or in combination, as one-time or ongoing events, such as natural disasters, economic adversity or success, metaphorical and actual skirmishes with kin or neighbors, demographic shifts, political persuasion, and cultural values.

For the reader without prior exposure to the literature on the anthropology of architecture, Rensel's "Introduction" and Rodman's "Prologue" and "Conclusion" provide thoughtful overviews, and references to path-breaking work in this arena in general, and to previous work in the Pacific in particular. Judicious use of maps, photographs, and drawings throughout the volume ably help set the scene. Shifts over the past century in housing style and construction materials on the Polynesian island of Rotuma, due in part to changing demographics, migra-

tion and remittances, hurricanes, and social prestige, are documented by Rensel. Shaw reveals that gradual abandonment by the Samo of Papua New Guinea of a longhouse style of dwelling had profound influences on language, fertility, kinship organization, and village ecology. Missionaries, colonists, European aesthetics, education, cash, and remittances had lasting effects on housing and residence patterns among the Lakalai of West New Britain (Papua New Guinea). As Chowning shows, however, the elevation of houses above ground and other consequent changes in Lakalai life were not achieved without resistance by the local population. Present-day high country sheep stations in New Zealand reflect not just the history and generational identities of the particular families who have lived there but, as Dominy notes, gender and class differences in the occupants and their activities, as well as the socioeconomic fortune of the nation as a whole. In an essay titled "Private Houses, Public Sharing," Flinn examines the ways in which a migrant Pollapese community in Chuuk, in the Federated States of Micronesia, engage in, and thereby sustain yet alter, housing in both the sending and receiving communities. In Macpherson's discussion of the ways in which Samoan migrants have adapted "the garage" in suburban New Zealand, a complex picture emerges of the social, economic, political, and symbolic issues at stake, as well as variety of gender and age groups who use garages for a wide variety of activities. In contrast, high-rise public housing in urban Hawai'i is

far less flexible for Samoans who struggle to adapt to this uncomfortable housing form, as Franco and Aga comment. Cultural values around the meaning of home (as a complex intertwining of person-environment-activity) and its relation to housing (as a built structure), and the politics behind housing policy, are addressed by Modell in her essay on the homeless in Hawai'i.

The agenda was clearly laid out by the editors—to discuss the ordinary, everyday life of the people and their complex actual and symbolic interactions with the spatially organized structures they build and inhabit. Not every essay is entirely successful in carrying out all aspects of this agenda. Some chapters focus so much on the structures that the occupants and their ordinary day-to-day activities fade a little too much into the background. Similarly, in some chapters, the internal division of the dwelling into rooms or spaces associated with specific activities or gender or age groups, and the furnishing of these rooms, is often a little too sketchy. Given the lack of any previous collection on the built environment in contemporary Oceanic societies, however, these are not major drawbacks. Rather, they point the way to needed future research.

All chapters are written by anthropologists with extensive firsthand experience of living and working in the societies they discuss. These essays are generic and eclectic rather than specific in their theoretical approach. There is an occasional and useful reference to contemporary anthropological theorists, especially those who have exam-

ined architecture elsewhere (eg, Bourdieu), but there is no sustained examination from any particular theoretical perspective. Given that change over time is a central issue in this volume, one cannot help wondering if a greater variety of specific social science theories, especially those dealing with change, would have taken some analyses further, so making their contribution greater. This generic theory, however, along with the wealth of ethnographic detail and documentation from archival sources, manages to provide cohesion to a volume that is otherwise exceptionally broad in scope, ranging as it does from examination of housing on a tiny atoll to high-rise buildings in a large cosmopolitan setting.

Broadly encompassing though this collection is, there are gaps that one hopes will soon be filled. There is, for example, no discussion of housing in the distinctly urban yet nonmetropolitan port towns of the Pacific, such as Apia or Honiara. How are houses in such places arranged in relation to mercantile or governmental domains? In Tahiti, Vanuatu, the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, and elsewhere in the Pacific, how has tourism affected housing? What makes a home in a peri-urban slum or squatter settlement in a place like Port Moresby? Exactly when and why do families in nations such as Tonga decide to commit remittance money to building homes rather than to purchasing consumer durables such as refrigerators or motorbikes? What is the relationship between house location and form and that of other structures, both ceremonial and utilitarian in purpose—in

terms of use, materials, technology, and symbolism?

Pointing to gaps such as these is, in large part, simply quibbling. Before *Home in the Islands*, relatively little was known about housing in the Pacific. Now that this fine volume and its contributions are available to stimulate question and thought, it is easy to see just how much more is needed, and how to fill the gaps.

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*Nuclear Nativity: Rituals of Renewal and Empowerment in the Marshall Islands*, by Laurence Marshall Carucci. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-87580-217-6, xvii + 217 pages, maps, photographs, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$32.

Few ethnographies measure up to the charge set by Clifford Geertz to provide a truly “thick description.” Carucci’s discussion on Marshallese ritual, however, commendably achieves the kind of ethnographic thoroughness I believe Geertz advocated. Carucci does more than let us merely peer through a crack into the cultural world of the Marshall Islanders; he throws the door wide open so we may come in to gain a full view. He richly describes Marshallese culture and social practices, extensively connects ritual to social life and meaning, and interweaves descriptions with theory for consideration rather than fixing interpretive outcomes.

In this book Carucci, an anthropol-

ogist at the University of Montana who has worked in the Marshall Islands over a period of twenty years and published extensively on Marshallese culture, describes how the Islanders of Āne-wetak Atoll make sense of their history by drawing on the representational resources that have deep historical meaning. In recent history many global dramas have been played out on these Islanders’ atoll: World War Two battles, military occupation, relocation to Wūjlañ for atomic bomb testing. Carucci, however, does not attempt to detail this imperial history, nor does he wish to be overly occupied by the reality of the social and economic conditions of the Islanders. Instead, he concentrates on how the Islanders think through a “verified past for purposes of historical reference and current empowerment” by symbolically constructing “an indigenous history” and a “historically significant existence” derived from mythology, Christianity, and kinship. This meaningful existence is represented and reconstituted through ritual practice. He identifies the annual three-month celebration called *Kūrijmōj* (Christmas) as the inter-actational and performance context in which significant physical and symbolic capital (both “pagan” and Christian metaphors) is invested to draw on the life-giving forces of deities and thus perpetuate and ensure a meaningful existence for the Islanders. This unified cosmology is “lived in” daily and maintained through ritual enactments.

Through the course of the celebration competing songfest groups called *jepta* engage in several activities such as recruitment, song competitions, dis-