

## Observations on Pacific heritage conservation practice

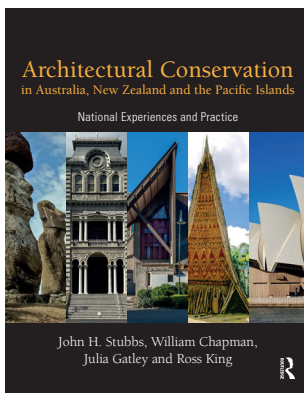


Fig. 1 *Architectural Conservation in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: National Experiences and Practice* [New York: Routledge, 2024].

Twenty years of conservation project management work for the World Monuments Fund (New York) and the associated travel exposed me to numerous ideas about architectural conservation around the world and triggered a series of books published under the banner, “Time Honored.”<sup>1</sup> The first book, which took those words as its main title, was a global history and overview of the subject.<sup>2</sup> The second explored Europe and the Americas in greater detail, and the third, Asia.<sup>3</sup> The fourth, titled *Architectural Conservation in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: National Experiences and Practice*, co-authored with William Chapman, Julia Gatley, Ross King and another 59 expert contributors, has recently been published by Routledge.<sup>4</sup> All four volumes have been amazing odysseys of discovery of interesting and useful information pertaining to the growing international field of cultural heritage protection. This short article reflects on some of the findings from the new book.

The Pacific Ocean covers more than a third of the Earth’s surface and contains over 30,000 islands. The often vast distances between island groupings and their climatic and geographic variations have resulted in diverse Indigenous cultures—each with their own distinctive heritage. But there are continuities and recurrent themes. In many Pacific Islands, natural, built, and intangible wonders and traditions are interconnected, and enduring cultural practices are highly valued. Strong oral traditions, music and dance, art and craft, tattooing, and the making of vernacular buildings all involve the transfer of Indigenous knowledge from generation to generation, while also making the past significant to the present for individuals and for communities.

Oceania’s built heritage also includes evidence of its colonial past. Some Pacific Islanders see the preservation of Western-style colonial heritage as a hindrance to their own cultural expression. On the other hand, continued political ties with former colonisers have strengthened heritage protection in some Pacific countries and territories.

The book’s seven chapters address Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Hawai’i, Micronesia, Melanesia, South Pacific Polynesia, and the Pacific Polar Regions. The pages that follow highlight some of the special heritage resources and protection initiatives underway.