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# Monumental Architecture, Inequality, and Social Organization in the Pacific

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## Résumé

The highly conspicuous megalithic and monumental traditions in the Pacific, including latte stones in the Marianas, the vast columnar basalt complexes of Central Micronesia built atop artificial islets, Yap's famous stone money, Palau's vast earthwork formations, and the well-known marae and moai of East Polynesia, are but a few examples of the variety and extent of impressive construction that for centuries have piqued the interest of scholars and laymen alike. But how and why did such a diverse array of unique and elaborate monuments, architectural features, and earthworks develop in the Pacific and from populations that in some cases shared no ancestral connection? And why did so many develop within just a few centuries after colonization? In attempting to answer these questions, researchers have explored a number of different theoretical approaches. Some have suggested that these monuments are indicative of status competition between emerging and increasingly territorial conical/chiefly units. But this likely masks other variables that were equally or even more important toward encouraging, coercing, and/or forcing people to expend time and critical resources for their construction. To examine these issues, we explore the problem from the perspective of how governance is maintained and projected through environments, arguing that intrinsic fragmentation and relative marginality both encourages emergent inequalities, but may prohibit the development of more stratified social institutions. This has implications for how we understand social evolutionary trajectories both inside, but also outside of the Pacific.

**Mots-Clés:** Archaeology, Pacific, Micronesia, monuments, earthworks

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