

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Houses are much more than physical structures. This is obvious when we think about what makes a house a home. Like the people they contain, houses are dynamic entities which are often thought to be born, mature, grow old and die.

The essays in this collection reveal some of the different ways in which houses stand for social groups, and represent the surrounding world. They focus on the relations between buildings, the people who live in them, and the ideas they represent. Inspired by Lévi-Strauss's recent writings, the contributors critically assess Lévi-Strauss's notion of the 'house society' in various Southeast Asian and South American cultures. In their introduction, the editors place Lévi-Strauss's latest theories in a broad anthropological context. They demonstrate how an analysis of the house can bring together areas of social life which anthropology has tended to separate. Their innovative approach stresses kinship as a process of lived relationships, and links the anthropology of the house to the anthropology of the body.

The volume bridges the disciplines of anthropology and architecture, and marks a major step in our understanding of the relation between material culture and sociality. It will appeal to anthropologists, architects, social historians, archaeologists and social geographers.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## **ABOUT THE HOUSE**

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# ABOUT THE HOUSE LÉVI-STRAUSS AND BEYOND

---

Edited by

**Janet Carsten**

*University of Edinburgh*

and

**Stephen Hugh-Jones**

*University of Cambridge*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

First published 1995

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

About the house: Lévi-Strauss and beyond / edited by Janet Carsten  
and Stephen Hugh-Jones

p. cm.

ISBN 0 521 47421 3 (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 47953 9 (pbk.)

1. Dwellings – Social aspects. 2. Dwellings – Asia, Southeastern.

3. Dwellings – South America. 4. Kinship – Asia, Southeastern.

5. Indians of South America – Kinship. I. Carsten, Janet. II. Hugh-Jones, Stephen, 1945–

GN414.A24 1995

307.3'36–dc20

94–26899

CIP

ISBN 0 521 47421 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 47953 3 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 1999

CE

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

To Claude Lévi-Strauss

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

---

|                                                                                                                                  |             |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|
| <i>List of illustrations</i>                                                                                                     | <i>page</i> | xi   |
| <i>List of contributors</i>                                                                                                      |             | xiii |
| 1 Introduction<br>Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones                                                                           |             | 1    |
| 2 Houses and hierarchies in island Southeast Asia<br>Roxana Waterson                                                             |             | 47   |
| 3 The resurrection of the house amongst the Zafimaniry<br>of Madagascar<br>Maurice Bloch                                         |             | 69   |
| 4 The hearth-group, the conjugal couple and the<br>symbolism of the rice meal among the Kelabit of<br>Sarawak<br>Monica Janowski |             | 84   |
| 5 Houses in Langkawi: stable structures or mobile homes?<br>Janet Carsten                                                        |             | 105  |
| 6 Having your house and eating it: houses and siblings in<br>Ara, South Sulawesi<br>Thomas Gibson                                |             | 129  |
| 7 The Lio House: building, category, idea, value<br>Signe Howell                                                                 |             | 149  |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**Contents**

---

|    |                                                                                                                     |     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 8  | Houses and hierarchy: the view from a South<br>Moluccan society<br>Susan McKinnon                                   | 170 |
| 9  | Houses, places and people: community and continuity<br>in Guiana<br>Peter Rivière                                   | 189 |
| 10 | The houses of the Mēbengokre (Kayapó) of Central<br>Brazil – a new door to their social organization<br>Vanessa Lea | 206 |
| 11 | Inside-out and back-to-front: the androgynous house<br>in Northwest Amazonia<br>Stephen Hugh-Jones                  | 226 |
|    | <i>Notes</i>                                                                                                        | 253 |
|    | <i>Bibliography</i>                                                                                                 | 270 |
|    | <i>Index</i>                                                                                                        | 287 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)


---

## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

| <b>Plates</b>                                                                                     | <i>page</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 Origin house ( <i>tongkonan</i> ) of a Toraja noble family, Ulusalu district, Tana Toraja, 1977 | 59          |
| 2 Zafimaniry houses with a 'holy house' to the right of the picture                               | 80          |
| 3 The walking house: group of men lift a house on Pulau Langkawi, Malaysia                        | 108         |
| 4 The house of Gallarrang Daeng Makkilo, the last hereditary ruler of Ara, who died in 1913       | 139         |
| 5 A Lio temple on top of the dance-burial space and three ceremonial houses along the side        | 153         |
| 6 The beehive-shaped Trio house known as <i>mine</i> in the village of Alalaparu in 1963          | 192         |
| 7 Mëbengokre houses in Kapòto village, 1987                                                       | 207         |
| 8 A Tukanoan (Makuna) longhouse with painted facade, Río Komenya, 1990                            | 229         |
| <br>                                                                                              |             |
| <b>Figures</b>                                                                                    |             |
| 4.1 Kelabit longhouse, pre-1945                                                                   | 89          |
| 4.2 Cross-section of a Kelabit longhouse, pre-1945                                                | 90          |
| 4.3 Constituent parts of the two Pa'Dalih longhouses                                              | 91          |
| 4.4 A Kelabit hearth ( <i>tetal</i> )                                                             | 92          |
| 5.1 Langkawi house plan                                                                           | 110         |



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**List of illustrations**

---

|       |                                                                                                                                          |     |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 8.1   | The relation between 'sisters and aunts' pathways and 'rows'                                                                             | 176 |
| 8.2   | The exchange pathways implicated in a man's marriage with an 'other' woman                                                               | 179 |
| 8.3   | The continuity and limitations of bridewealth obligations                                                                                | 182 |
| 10.1  | Cross-cousin terms and examples of name transmission                                                                                     | 213 |
| 11.1  | Plan of the interior of a Tukanoan longhouse                                                                                             | 230 |
| 11.2a | The Universe House (from Umúsin Panlõn Kumu and Tolamãñ Kenhíri 1980: 194)                                                               | 234 |
| 11.2b | The Universe House redrawn according to the accompanying text (Umúsin Panlõn Kumu and Tolamãñ Kenhíri 1980: 51–4)                        | 234 |
| 11.3  | The world according to a Tukano shaman (from Béksta 1988: 47)                                                                            | 235 |
| 11.4  | Transformation houses established along the Río Tiquié by the ancestral anaconda (from Umúsin Panlõn Kumu and Tolamãñ Kenhíri 1980: 209) | 236 |
| 11.5  | Anacondas painted on the main columns of Tukanoan longhouses (redrawn from Koch-Grünberg 1910: 243)                                      | 242 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTRIBUTORS

---

MAURICE BLOCH is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics. His most recent book is *From Prey into Hunter* (1992).

JANET CARSTEN is a Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, and is the author of a number of articles on Malaysia.

THOMAS GIBSON is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Rochester. He is the author of *Sacrifice and Sharing in the Philippine Highlands* (1986).

SIGNE HOWELL is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. She is the author of *Society and Cosmos* (1984) and *Societies at Peace* (1989).

STEPHEN HUGH-JONES is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *The Palm and the Pleiades* and joint editor of *Barter, Exchange, and Value* (1992).

MONICA JANOWSKI holds a Research Fellowship at the University of Cambridge and is the author of several articles on the Kelabit of Sarawak.

VANESSA LEA is a Lecturer in Anthropology at UNICAMP University, São Paulo and is the author of several articles on the Mëbengokre of Central Brazil.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47953-0 - About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond

Edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

**List of contributors**

---

SUSAN MCKINNON is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *From a Shattered Sun* (1991).

PETER RIVIÈRE is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Marriage among the Trio* (1969) and *Individual and Society in Guiana* (1984).

ROXANA WATERSON is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. She is the author of *The Living House* (1990).