Book and Media Reviews
framework could engage with indigeneity in the contemporary moment. Furthermore, one avenue of inquiry that is suggested but left unexplored is the role of tauhi vā in mediating cross-cultural relationships. Ka‘ili hints at this dynamic when he discusses Tongan relationships with Kānaka Maoli in Hawai‘i, but more could be said about trans-Indigenous relationships and the mediation of social practices that create harmony and reciprocity. This book nevertheless provides a starting point for such discussions and would be useful for anyone working at the intersection of anthropology and Indigenous studies.

MAGGIE WANDER
University of California–Santa Cruz


Postcards from Oceania: Port Towns, Portraits and the Picturesque during the Colonial Era by Max Quanchi and Max Shekleton traces the colonial visual record of Oceania beginning in the nineteenth century. Specifically, the authors provide a rereading of postcard images captured, stored, and disseminated about Oceania during the “Postcard Craze” from the 1890s to the 1930s. They acknowledge that postcards are tangible and ephemeral objects that “highlight the complex, interrelated histories of photography, postcards and colonialism” (12). As a small portion of Shekleton’s private collection of sixty thousand Pacific Islands picture postcards, the 221 analyzed in this book help to illustrate “the knowing and imaging of Oceania by a distant Euro-American world” (46). The representation of the Pacific is long and complex, and this text provides a conversation around the ideas that underpin the images that were produced and marketed.

Chapter 1 demonstrates that the visual history scholarship of “photography in the context of colonial propaganda” about Africa and Asia (20) provides important context for analyzing these Pacific images. As the authors reiterate, all such postcards provide “multiple meanings and readings” available for analysis and interpretation (28). The authors emphasize the trajectories by which postcards from Oceania traveled, as well as the effects they had on how people, places, and spaces were and continue to be understood.

Chapter 2 contextualizes and illustrates the fluid movement of postcards for various purposes: as an educational tool, a support mechanism for the colonial project, a display apparatus for missionary work, and a device for showcasing Oceania as an out-of-the-way place. The authors argue that despite the fact that analysis of postcards in the scholarly historical record was largely absent until the 1990s, postcards (along with other objects and documents) play a significant role as a medium through which to understand multiple sites, exchanges, and readings. Thus, attention to this record provides a rich data
set demanding, and available for, such readings.

Chapter 3 focuses briefly on the “picturesque” postcard, which strikingly even includes images from an area of the Hawaiian island of Moloka‘i that was reserved for victims of Hansen’s disease (formerly known as leprosy). However, the authors state that “among producers, retailers and buyers the picturesque ran a distant fifth in popularity after ethnography, portraits, port towns and postcards of developing colonial infrastructure” (53). But as a whole, postcards from Oceania emerge from a more than three-hundred-year history of imaging the Pacific, the artifacts of which are now housed in private collections and public repositories. During the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, artists were charged with capturing on canvas images of what the voyages of exploration encountered. The process continued to evolve with the introduction of the camera in 1839 and subsequent technological advances in image reproduction (51–52). These changes have since provided diverse and competing views of Oceania.

Chapter 4 presents individual and group postcard images in various settings under the title “Portraits: Nymphs, Types and Stereotypes.” It opens with an arresting image of an unnamed male from Malaita, Solomon Islands, whose dignified and defiant image disturbs the passivity suggested by colonial readings of Oceania. Such images were rare among the deluge of postcards that focused on exploiting the “physical appearance, dress and adornment” of Pacific peoples, which were found to be “marketable, photogenic and of compelling human interest” (68). Most popular for Euro-American audiences seem to have been images of “Samoans, Fijians, Papuans and Tahitians,” with very few images of people from smaller or more isolated islands (68).

As shown in chapter 5, the housing and villages in Oceania captured the ongoing interest of Euro-American audiences, as evidenced by the number of postcards produced to highlight linkages and markers of “primitive life,” as well as “social mobility and status” (82). Simultaneously, these images tended to ignore cultural and geographical differences in favor of presenting a “unitary... generalisation” of the region rather than one that acknowledged the basis of relationships through “kin, clan, totemic association and genealogy” (83). Furthermore, precolonial sites of Oceania were absent, as producers sought to present images of a controlled environment showcasing “a standard postcard ‘village’ with its open space, a line of houses and a background of swaying palms and lagoons, overhanging jungle, menacing cliff or mountain range” (83). The importance of framing the postcard landscape ignored the reality of people moving “to coastal locations to take advantage of the Euro-American commodity trade or to gain access to port and harbour, labour recruitment and schools” (84).

Chapter 6, titled “Kastom: Culture and Tradition,” emphasizes the multiple readings of Oceanic cultures by past and present audiences. The authors argue that audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were keen to view “authentic, timeless and intimate details of other
cultures” (108). Also in this chapter, Quanchi and Shekleton provide a case study of Vanuatu, which had experienced years of interaction with the outside world prior to the “postcard craze.” For outside audiences, Vanuatu “offered the very window to beliefs, rituals, human mystery and the ‘eternal puzzle’ that early twentieth century Euro-Americans were seeking” about how cultures could be so diverse within a single island (121). The ideas of “authenticity” and “cultural traits” were reinscribed by dates, names, and objects captured within the image; in some cases, “cultures in Oceania were trapped in an archaic past, divorced from and unable to benefit from modernity” (107). This chapter also explores these themes through a case study of Hanuabada in what was the Australian Territory of Papua from 1906 to 1949.

In chapter 7, which includes a case study of Honolulu, the authors highlight “Living in Town” as a marker of “colonial progress,” including the growth from “beach community to port town, city and finally metropolis” (130). Moreover, postcards depicting new urban centers provide a record of “a modern, colonial Pacific, remade by Euro-Americans in the image of their own home cities” (131). In contrast, and despite Hawai’i’s popularity, the authors argue that “Hawai’i’s history was not recorded on picture postcards” (140), since it included a militarized space, a multicultural community, and a tourist-driven Honolulu. Presumably, like Hawai’i, all Oceanic places ultimately elude the postcard.

Chapter 8, titled “The Colonial Presence” and including a case study of the French in New Caledonia, refers to the “benign, paternal and beneficial” aspects of colonial rule as well as its “exploitative and oppressive” processes (149). As documents, postcards present images of Oceania within various colonial framings (eg, British, American, French, German), most of which were largely outside of Oceania’s control. For New Caledonia, postcards depicted missionary schools and health services—institutions that were transplanted from France. Images of this ordered world displayed the “subliminal messages” of “civilization, subservience and authoritarian control” (150).

Postcards from Oceania makes an important contribution to knowledge and understanding around the broader apparatus of image-making that has shaped outsiders’ view of Oceania. The comparative approach from across Oceania provides a broad and expansive perspective. As a historian, I appreciated the inclusion of biographies of the photographers and the useful list of colonial powers in one appendix. I found the text accessible for a broad audience. The authors provide a rich panorama of complex framings and the ideas that underpin these images, many of which did not reflect the internal realities of Oceania. Quanchi and Shekleton provide insight into a complicated field of objects that extends the analysis of the visual record of Oceania.

Safua Akei Amaama
National University of Samoa

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