University of Wollongong

Research Online

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts -
Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities

1-1-2013

An ocean of leisure: early cruise tours of the Pacific in an age of empire

Frances Steel

University of Wollongong, fsteel@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/lhapapers>

Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Law Commons](#)

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

An ocean of leisure: early cruise tours of the Pacific in an age of empire

Abstract

In the late nineteenth century, the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (USSCo.) offered a series of cruise tours from the ports of Sydney and Auckland through the islands of the South Pacific. The cruises complemented excursions to the Mediterranean, the "old country" and other "worn lines of pleasure," remarked the Sydney Morning Herald in 1898. They even offered a novel contrast to "doing Japan." Australian settlers had largely ignored their island neighbours, the newspaper continued, yet the cruise program indicated the range of "splendid holiday resorts" that lay on their doorstep. Although regular trading steamers made the Pacific increasingly accessible, it had been difficult until this point in time to take a "comprehensive trip in the South Seas under the conditions desired by exacting tourists."

Keywords

early, ocean, cruise, leisure, tours, pacific, age, empire

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

Steel, F. (2013). An ocean of leisure: early cruise tours of the Pacific in an age of empire. *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 14 (2 Summer), 1-12.

An Ocean of Leisure: Early cruise tours of the Pacific in an age of empire

In the late nineteenth century, the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (USSCo.) offered a series of cruise tours from the ports of Sydney and Auckland through the islands of the South Pacific. The cruises complemented excursions to the Mediterranean, the “old country” and other “worn lines of pleasure” remarked the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1898. They even offered a novel contrast to “doing Japan”.¹ Australian settlers had largely ignored their island neighbours, the newspaper continued, yet the cruise program indicated the range of “splendid holiday resorts” that lay on their doorstep. Although regular trading steamers made the Pacific increasingly accessible, it had been difficult until this point in time to take a “comprehensive trip in the South Seas under the conditions desired by exacting tourists”.²

These first Pacific cruises were introduced as the region was being remade by the plantation economy, the growth of port towns and the formalisation and contestation of imperial power. Britain, France, Germany and the United States were asserting claims to different island groups. The British colonies of white settlement in Australia and New Zealand, from where the majority of cruise tourists hailed, were thinking more intently about their interests in the Pacific, a region in which they regarded themselves as uniquely positioned to influence. As a mobile practice that traded on images of luxury, exclusivity and novelty, tourists might have understood themselves as skirting around the edges of the colonial project, focused solely on fleeting pleasure rather than shore-based interventions in island life. Yet in its assumption of easy access to islands both within and outside of Britain’s sphere of political influence, cruise tourism both naturalised and popularised fantasies of colonial domination.

Studies of tourism history in the Pacific to date have favoured images and representations of travel promotion, notably the escapist power of the “tropical island paradise” and the allure of indigenous exoticism—from sexualised “dusky maidens” to the thrill of the “cannibal isles”. Existing histories have also tended to focus on

individual islands, notably iconic destinations such as Hawai'i, or, conversely, the more generic and abstract depictions of the "South Seas".³ In this article, by contrast, I bring together questions of tourism promotion and consumption, following tourists along more wide-ranging cruise itineraries that linked diverse islands, and engaging with the impressions and ideas generated by them in the course of their travels.

Tourists' observations allow historians previously ungarnered insights not only into the beginnings of an influential mobile industry in the Pacific world, but also into different imperial imaginings—of "exotic natives," but also of a range of imperial actors who had ventured into the Pacific by the end of the nineteenth century from various metropolitan centres. An island cruise offered Australasian settlers new avenues for pleasure and relaxation, but also an opportunity to directly encounter the colonial transformations gathering pace in this period, to compare and assess the fortunes of different island communities and to record their impressions for a wider reading public. As sociologist Judith Adler remarks, travel movements, in their border crossings, intrusions, comparisons and appropriations, "give a vivid, experiential dimension to political ideas".⁴ It is the relationship between the rise of cruising and the shifting, heterogenous political "landscape" of the Pacific in an age of globalising empire—both in dialogue and in tension with more romanticised investments in "the South Seas" or "the Coral Islands"—that principally concerns me here.

"Steam yachting" and "exacting tourists"

To embark on a sea voyage expressly for pleasure was "quite unthinkable" before the late nineteenth century, as maritime historian David Williams points out.⁵ Sea travel was traditionally undertaken out of necessity, and had long associations with discomfort, boredom and danger. From the mid-nineteenth century cruising on private yachts was a popular elite form of recreation. With advances in ship-building, new forms of ship ownership in the large-scale, bureaucratic operational structures of shipping companies, the emergence and popularisation of the package tour, growing economic prosperity and middle-class access to leisure time, cruising developed on a commercial scale. Just as cruises from New York to the Caribbean, and from British ports to the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Isles and the Norwegian fjords were advertised to the general public from the early 1880s, so too were tours from

Australasian ports to the fjords in southern New Zealand and to various islands in the Pacific Ocean.

The main shipping companies active in the Pacific from the mid 1870s included the San Francisco Oceanic Steamship Company which traded to Hawai'i, the Dunedin-based USSCo., which extended its New Zealand coastal operations to include trades to Australia and into the eastern Pacific, and Burns Philp & Company, a Sydney stores, plantation and shipping company focused on the Melanesian islands to the north of Australia. The Oceanic and Union companies also engaged in the more wide-ranging transpacific mail routes between Sydney and San Francisco. The companies were concerned principally to develop the cargo and passenger trades, but they began to promote dedicated cruises to boost the public profile of their services as a whole. They were not initially in direct competition, as each company carved out spheres of operation in specific "regional seas," but considered together their cruising activities indicate a rising trend.

In this article I focus specifically on the island tours offered by the USSCo. before 1900, primarily because its cruise itineraries were diverse, offering greater insights into the uneven nature of colonial engagements in the region, and they attracted an intense level of public interest, given New Zealand's aspirations in the Pacific at the time. The USSCo. cruise program began in 1877 with summer tours of the West Coast Sounds in the South Island of New Zealand which were put on an annual footing in 1883. In June 1883, the company ran a winter cruise from Auckland to Fiji. Its success prompted officials to offer a more wide-ranging itinerary the following year. In June 1884 a four-week excursion on the steamship *Wairarapa*, encompassed Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, and was repeated the following month.

Unlike the Sounds tours which quickly attracted hundreds of Australasian and international travellers and mirrored the popular summer fjord season in Norway, winter cruises to the Pacific lapsed.⁶ The island round-trip tour was readvertised in 1885 and again in 1886, but sufficient interest was not forthcoming. A depression in the Australasian colonies made its mark, as did difficulties in securing suitable vessels. The wreck of the *Wairarapa* with the loss of 121 lives during a routine crossing between Sydney and Auckland in 1894 compounded these problems. Rather

than offer special tours in this period, the USSCo. actively encouraged people to organise independent island travel by their ships between the cooler winter months of May and November, especially as its monthly trades to Pacific Island ports expanded in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1895 the company published *A Cruise to the Islands*, a travel guide to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, to encourage the tourist traffic.⁷

Dedicated island cruises were revived at the end of century following the construction of a new passenger steamer, the 3000-ton *Waikare*. In 1898 a six-week tour encompassed the Cook Islands and Tahiti, returning to New Zealand via Samoa and Tonga. The following year, the *Waikare* revisited the established circuit between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. The ship then steamed further west, calling at the New Hebrides (present-day Vanuatu) and New Caledonia, returning to Sydney via Norfolk Island. After 1899 the USSCo. only offered package tours intermittently, often to coincide with special events such as the coronation ceremonies in Fiji in 1902. It confronted a far smaller local cruise market than its northern hemisphere counterparts, as well as prohibitive distances from a larger and wealthier pool of passengers in Britain and Europe. Cruising only really “came of age” in the interwar years, yet the earlier tours of the 1880s and 1890s marked a turning point in popular attitudes towards sea travel.

Before the late nineteenth century, western travel in the Pacific was associated predominantly with exploration, trade, missionary activity or colonial administration. Ships were commissioned for specific voyages and itineraries were framed around the needs of particular industries, such as whaling and labour recruitment. The rise of steam-shipping in the late 1870s presented new mobility opportunities, but the dedicated cruise tours entailed a different sort of investment again on the part of transport operators, including forward-planning, an extended booking period and extensive advertising.⁸ As one Auckland resident interested in the USSCo.’s success emphasised, “you want something the Australian people can read over during the year; something to make the trip a matter to be looked forward to and done”.⁹ “Independent” adventuring on trading vessels still held appeal. In 1890, for instance, Fanny and Robert Louis Stevenson embarked from Sydney on a three-month voyage through the western and central Pacific on the *Janet Nicholl*, a copra trading steamer operated by the Auckland firm Henderson and Macfarlane. The ship sailed with

sealed orders, meaning the small number of passengers was not privy to the itinerary.¹⁰ Cruising, by contrast, was marketed as a superior way to “know” the Pacific, even if the package tour locked passengers into a prearranged and company-managed itinerary. Ordinary steamers, with their mundane cargo and mail concerns, only stayed in port long enough “to enable the work to be done,” as one 1898 brochure put it, while the cruise itinerary would prioritise the interests of tourists, not traders.¹¹

Cruising was also deemed superior because it encompassed ports that ordinarily lay outside of the Union Company’s existing transport network. In 1884, only Fiji, a British crown colony annexed in 1874, was already linked to Auckland by a monthly passenger and cargo service. Tonga and Samoa, both under direct British political influence but outside of its formal empire, could only be reached by “stray sailing vessels”.¹² The cruise, in linking the three island groups, confirmed the power of steam to “unlock” the region and associated the tour with the prestige of unrivalled and exclusive access. Furthermore, the multi-stop itineraries of later cruises were perceived to offer a “comprehensive” or “complete” idea of the Pacific, enabling passengers to see “all that was worth seeing”.¹³ In contrast to the “beach crossings” of previous generations, an important metaphor in Pacific contact history, shipping companies might be understood, as Ewan Johnston suggests, as having “crossed cultures” on tourists’ behalf.¹⁴

Cruise passengers, those “exacting tourists,” were understood to require levels of comfort and sophistication that other empire travellers, such as missionaries, soldiers or traders, did not. Liners were not built especially for cruising, but taken out of ordinary service and refitted temporarily for tourism. Neither steerage nor second class tickets were issued; in 1884 all passengers travelled on the *Wairarapa* first class at £30 per person. The steamer normally accommodated 200 people, but the passenger list was restricted to 100. People could enjoy two-person, instead of the usual four-person berths, and meals were staged in one sitting instead of two. They were also assured of more personal attention, with the appointment of thirty-four stewards. One passenger referred to the inaugural tour as “the trip of the one hundred,” and the shipboard company as “the centurians”. He delighted in the fact that they were treated “with the respect due to pioneers”.¹⁵

The *Wairarapa* was fitted out with a refrigerated chamber (a new innovation) for the carriage of fresh vegetables, dairy products, meat and ice.¹⁶ Such provisioning marked a turning-point in the history of deep-ocean travel. It was now a question, one man remarked, “whether Vanilla icecreams, which Birch of Cornhill, in the City of London, could not excel, were ever before eaten in a similar expedition, certainly not off the islands of Samoa”.¹⁷ These provisions also served to further distinguish tourist mobilities from contemporaneous civilising missions in the islands. On the passage between Auckland and Suva in 1884 it dawned upon one man as he ordered alcoholic beverages from the stewards that they were “a party on pleasure bent, and not a missionary expedition carrying with us a cargo of tracts and flannel waistcoats for the little heathens”.¹⁸

By century’s end, the *Waikare* provisioning was far more elaborate, as the USSCo.’s experience in the long-distance ocean mail routes and the summer fjord season in the interim years set new benchmarks for luxury. Tickets ranged from £35 to £52.10, where fares differed according to cabin location and occupancy. New positions on board included “a special American Barman,” hairdresser, confectioner, and a Hungarian band. Ice pyramids ordered from a Sydney company were “perhaps among the first seen at any banquet in the colonies”. Stores items listed as luxuries included turtle soup, oysters, truffles, pate de fois gras, anchovies, white bait, mushrooms, tomatoes, peas, crystallised fruits and Swiss cheese.¹⁹ As one company official emphasised to an Australian reporter, “the whole of the vessel of 3000 tons has been fitted up, equipped, and provisioned exactly as if the tourists had purchased her and themselves fitted her out as a private yacht.”²⁰ The original association of cruising with prestige persisted, there being no incongruity here labelling a 3,000-ton steamer a “yacht”.²¹ The atmosphere at the wharf was different too: there was “no cargo carried, no horrid working of winches, no hurrying and scurrying of stevedores and lumpers, and no coaling miseries to be endured”. Everything was “quiet and serene,” in order well before time.²²

The majority of tourists on all four cruises were British settlers from the Australasian colonies. Amongst the 100 passengers on the June 1884 cruise, the greatest number hailed from Melbourne (thirteen), followed by Auckland, Wellington

and Christchurch. Men dominated the passenger lists, with women accounting for only one quarter of the party on both 1884 tours. “The professions,” one passenger summated, “were well distributed. Law, medicine, the Church, wool, journalism, and the King’s Own Dragoons were there”.²³ A case of measles detected in a crew member after leaving Fiji prevented the *Wairarapa* landing at either Tonga or Samoa. The July trip was completed more successfully and attracted seventy-eight passengers, seven of whom were returnees from the first. Of the 160 passengers in 1898, thirty-one hailed from Sydney and New South Wales, twenty-six from Dunedin, and twenty-one from Melbourne and country Victoria. By century’s end women accounted for half of the passenger list. Emile Doublet, a prominent member of Sydney’s French community, remarked that most of his fellow travellers were wealthy older men and their children, particularly their daughters, “for Australian young men cannot very well leave their business for six weeks”. Of the 180 passengers in 1899, women slightly outnumbered men. Melbourne and country Victoria were well-represented again by fifty-three passengers.²⁴ The high-status Ngati Kahungunu landowner, Airini Donnelly and her daughter Maude took the 1899 trip, but they appear to have been the only Maori or non-European passengers on the four tours examined here. Whereas Donnelly’s presence suggests an absence of racial segregation on board, the expense of a cruise meant it was only within reach of the most affluent members of colonial society.

Anticipation and imaginings

To travel en masse for leisure to comparatively unknown parts of the world was only feasible if imperial powers had begun to establish authority and reorder indigenous spaces in their own interests. European tourists needed to be assured of safety in unfamiliar territories far away from home. As noted, the cruise tour only emerged as images of sea travel and the conditions under which it was provided were reworked. In the Pacific, popular stereotypes of the islands also had to shift. The “tropical island paradise” was a prominent trope in European voyaging literature. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as K.R. Howe and John Connell have demonstrated, “paradise” was unsettled by fears of white degeneration through physical intimacy with indigenous people and an unhealthy tropical environment. Yet paradise was “regained,” Howe continues, as tourism discourse “deliberately and radically helped to reshape the hostile nineteenth-century image of Oceania”. The earliest tourist

handbooks emphasised the “healthiness of the tropical climate,” the “strength and stability of colonial government” and “the safety provided by modern technology”.²⁵ USSCo. travel guides followed these general patterns.

Evidence of cannibalism, as literary historian Lydia Wevers remarks, was a “universal formula” in masculinist narratives of adventure and violence on Pacific island frontiers in the nineteenth century. Similarly, Tracey Banivanua Mar identifies cannibalism’s “banal ubiquity” in colonial texts from Fiji, referring to “political and social constructions” rather than “empirical cultural practices”.²⁶ In the literature produced for tourists evidence of cannibalism’s passing or its relegation to a recent, if not distant, past was now mandatory. Fiji’s attractions, as identified by the USSCo. in 1884, included a site where “cannibal feasts were frequently held in bygone days”. By century’s end the company placed more emphasis on missionary-driven transformation. As the travel guide, *A Wonderful Trip*, set out, Fijians once had the reputation “justly earned, of being the most atrociously bloodthirsty cannibals on earth”. A “wonderful” change had occurred “mainly through the instrumentality of the missionaries”. Fijians were now “a quiet, kindly people, to some extent educated, attentive to the ordinances of religion, and strict Sabbatarians”.²⁷ The suggestion of “stone-age savages” and “cannibal islands” retained a certain intrigue. In finalising the itinerary for the New Hebrides, which was under the informal joint rule of Britain and France, the company’s Suva manager advised in 1898 that one island, Tanna, “is the most curious, with natives quite savage”. Port Resolution was populated by natives “of a low type, different from any others previously seen, and I think it would be a great attraction”.²⁸ The published brochure acknowledged, however, that the association of the New Hebrides with a brute “savagery” was intimately entangled with European abuses in the labour trade, notably “the misconduct and cruelty of traders and labour agents”.²⁹

Imagination or “vision” preceded encounter, a teleology typical of European voyaging history in the Pacific, but one also central to contemporary tourism. In his seminal text, *The Tourist Gaze*, sociologist John Urry points to the power of anticipation and “imaginative pleasure-seeking,” although he stresses that tourists’ day-dreams “are not autonomous” but mediated through advertising.³⁰ Advertisements captured neatly the appeal of an island tour. As one newspaper put it: “A glamour of

romance and adventure has always surrounded the South Sea Islands, and the idea of a cruise amongst them must fire the imagination of the most phlegmatic. Visions of palm trees, coconut groves, luscious tropical fruits, coral reefs and picturesque natives pass before one's eyes as in a dream, and the possibility of seeing all these in reality is fascinating in the extreme."³¹ For some passengers, cruising stirred up childhood fantasies of being "castaways on a coral island," building canoes and dressing in garments of "primitive design," as Adelaide resident, Miss M. Methuen remarked, while the New Zealand journalist Forrest Ross related that coral reefs once held a "wondrous fascination" in her "childish imagination," just as the "Fee Foh Fums" dominated her "childish nightmares".³² For others the opportunity simply to see the islands first-hand was impossible to forgo. As New Zealand Native Land Court judge William Gilbert Mair wrote in his diary on departing Auckland in July 1884, it was "one of the dreams of my life about to be realised".³³ "Ever since I first read Cook's 'Voyages'," remarked another passenger, "a halo of romance has for me surrounded the Coral Islands of the Pacific Ocean". Knowing the USSCo. was offering a tour "to some of those fairy lands...I simply felt that I must go".³⁴

Tourists drew explicit "genealogical connections" to previous voyages in anticipation but also in the course of their travels. In 1899 "one much envied man" carried the original edition of Cook's *Voyages* and, as Ross recorded, "it was strange to sit on the deck and read of the old navigator's experiences among the very islands we were passing".³⁵ This perhaps functioned as the oceanic equivalent of the "imperial sites of memory" emphasised in travel guides of the period, where, for instance, the historical traces of British activities in India, including battlegrounds, statues and memorials, were identified as key attractions. This offered British tourists a "legitimizing reassurance" during their travels, as John MacKenzie puts it.³⁶

Practical guides to trade and settlement complemented more fanciful renderings of the South Seas. Influential texts included H. Stonehewer Cooper, *Coral Lands* (1880), reprinted as *The Coral Lands of the Pacific: Their peoples and their products* (1882). Cooper wrote, he explained, to assist in the moral and commercial work of utilising the European "discovery" of the Pacific, which "will almost certainly be the work of the Anglo Saxon".³⁷ His book became "a favourite tome" on the *Wairarapa*, while tourists also cited Constance Gordon Cumming, *At Home in Fiji* (1881) and

Alexander Findlay's navigational directory for the South Pacific Ocean, first published in 1851.³⁸ Later in the century, the *Waikare* library contained a mix of fact and fiction, including missionary narratives, the novels of Louis Becke and Herman Melville, and accounts of islands not included on the itinerary, such as Isabella Bird, *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands* (1875) and Henry Guppy, *The Solomon Islands and their Natives* (1887). By this time the house and grave of Robert Louis Stevenson, who died in Samoa in 1894, were pilgrimage sites, for "we are all Stevenson lovers," attested an Australian tourist.³⁹

Not simply inspired by an already existing print culture, cruise tourism generated its own. Passengers' travel narratives, some of which the USSCo. expressly commissioned, were serialised widely in Australasian newspapers. Travelling and then writing about it, the "double deed" identified by Mary Louise Pratt, attested to a dominant sense of "personal and cultural duty" to share sights and experiences with others, as Wevers observes. Collectively this act "gathers the world into European experience and epistemology".⁴⁰ With the rise of cruising, this "duty" was now underpinned by a commercial imperative. One passenger framed his trip as a reconnaissance mission, to "spy out the land" and bring back good reports to ensure the continuation of the USSCo. cruise program.⁴¹ These newly-generated narratives did not simply communicate information about Pacific places and peoples for the entertainment of a "stay-at-home" readership, but promoted an experience that readers themselves might choose to emulate.

Tourists' self-fashionings and anticipations can be matched by archival glimpses of the ways in which island residents viewed them and in turn anticipated their arrival. No islands in the Pacific, with the partial exception of Hawai'i, actively sought tourists at this time. Tourism began as a commercial venture promoted by shipping companies in the white settler colonies, rather than colonial traders or officials in island ports. As a result, receiving communities often understood tourists, settlers and investors as part of the same wave of influence. Tourism was heralded as the beginning of a stronger pattern of routine, rather than novel, connection with the wider world, a development which would ultimately render tourists less visible or important. Europeans in the Cook Islands, a British protectorate staffed by a New Zealand Resident, believed that hosting the tourists in 1898 would encourage

familiarity with the colony in a way that “heaps of newspaper paragraphs” could not. This could only do incalculable good: “we have room for hundreds of active settlers.”⁴² New Caledonia, annexed by the French in 1853 and established as a penal colony, “needs very much to be known,” remarked Governor Paul Feillet in anticipation of the 1899 cruise. He welcomed the tour as a publicity opportunity, arguing that a visit of wealthy Australians, even for four days, “cannot but lead to give a good idea of our Colony to our neighbours”. He hoped the tour might serve as a precursor to regular communications between Noumea and “the principal archipelagos of the Pacific”.⁴³

The notion of entrepreneurial opportunity was also used as a marketing tool, with the cruise pitched to excursionists as a timely opportunity to mix leisure with commerce. The USSCo.’s summer excursions to the New Zealand Sounds were confined to the enjoyment of natural scenery. Here the businessman “simply recreates,” remarked the *New Zealand Times*, whereas an island cruise was “just that sort of outing in which business and relaxation may be beneficially combined”. The newspaper went on to urge: “Every business man of New Zealand who can find time should go make the tour. It is clearly the policy of the colony to throw out tentacles Pacific-islands-wards.”⁴⁴ A touristic discourse linked the “destiny” of the island Pacific to the political and economic maturation of the Australasian colonies. While it had once been the case that the “richness and variety of their tropical beauty” made the islands interesting, as USSCo. literature put it in 1884, as the Australasian colonies “have grown in importance, the political and commercial value of these neighbouring Islands has correspondingly increased”.⁴⁵

Political and economic leaders in New Zealand and Australia had expressed a range of sub-imperial ambitions in the Pacific long before the establishment of the USSCo. But as the company facilitated regular connections between island ports, shipping networks were recruited to advance arguments about future relationships in the region.⁴⁶ The cruise tour was entangled in this wider web of transcolonial maritime exchange and for some commentators, at least, it might provide a foundation for increasing New Zealand engagement in the Pacific. As one tourist concluded, the USSCo. was doing “a great national work”.⁴⁷ So whereas imperial incursion might

have been the necessary precursor to mass tourism, tourism might itself promote a more intensive imperialism.

Ambivalent pleasures

Leisure and business opportunities aside, the tours also produced a degree of anxiety particularly concerning the behaviour of passengers. As the tourists prepared to disembark at Suva in June 1884, the captain posted a notice in the *Wairarapa* saloon informing them that “According to the Fijian law any European supplying liquor or striking a native of Fiji is fined the sum of £50 for each offence”.⁴⁸ From the perspective of British colonial officials, tourists might pose a threat to order and stability, with European occupation undermined or undone by the misconduct of whites, especially those with little prior awareness of Fiji and no permanent investment in the island group. A preoccupation with monitoring travellers’ behaviour and instructing on how they “ought to be seen” was also prominent in guides to colonial equatorial Africa, as Libbie Freed has recently observed.⁴⁹ At the same time, the shipboard notice communicated British commitment to the civilising mission, its paternalistic concern for the welfare of its native subjects. This project was of special interest to many in the cruise party.

On disembarking in Suva, the passengers, as the shipboard newspaper attested, “wandered about anxious to see the sights of a country so lately admitted to the benefits of civilization”. They wanted to know “how far has contact with Europeans affected the natives, and has the native Fijian the capacity to adapt himself to the higher civilization of the British race?”⁵⁰ Impressions were overwhelmingly positive. Tourists were particularly pleased to see Fijian men playing cricket, the game a marker of corporeal discipline and order, regarded as a fitting substitute for warfare. They remarked on the dignity and intelligence of the chiefly class, noting that many men had been educated in Australia or New Zealand. Sites of colonial industry, notably mission stations, sugar mills and plantations, were favoured excursion destinations. Pupils at one mission school on Taveuni were adjudged “intelligent-looking”. They had “a tidy air about them, which contrasts very strongly with the neglected appearance of Australian aboriginals”.⁵¹

Labour regulations restricted indigenous Fijians from engaging freely for work on plantations. European growers were largely dependent on workers indentured from neighbouring islands in Melanesia and from India. During an excursion along the Rewa River on the outskirts of Suva, glimpses of “dark-skinned labour boys” and European planters in white jackets and wide straw hats conjured up visions of a different empire: “one might fancy the Rewa a tributary of the Mississippi,” a Dunedin tourist remarked. Arriving at a sugar mill, he was surprised at the skill of men who worked complicated machinery with limited European supervision. He revised his belief that “coloured” labour was “useless”. Some tourists opined that Melanesian men should not have been removed from the “happy innocence and aimless idleness of their island life,” yet he was adamant that such work offered them “the first rung in the ladder of civilisation”. The “only ugly fact,” he acknowledged, was their high mortality rate in Fiji, but he soon put these reflections aside for they were beyond his remit as a “historiographer of a yachting cruise”.⁵²

Side-stepping the lived experience of the native worker was not unique to this “historiographer”. Grand exhibitions being staged around the empire at about the same time extricated productive processes and commodities from their “original social relations” as Peter Hoffenberg argues, and reconfigured them for display in metropolitan centres, with workers typically absent from the exhibits.⁵³ Yet tourism reversed both the directionality and abstraction of display. Settlers travelled out from (sub-) metropolitan centres to the colonies to observe how the economic interdependencies of the imperial market functioned *in situ*. The bodies labouring in Fiji’s sugar mills and plantations were engaged in “the real thing,” where “ugly facts” were not as easily ignored. Grand exhibitions and tourism might be grouped together with coronations and funerals as imperial “rituals of integration and education,” but whereas exhibitions celebrated and encouraged “participation, movement and direct consumption,” tourism’s uni-directionality and its juxtaposition of mobile subjects in sites distant from “home” (leisured travellers vis-à-vis indentured workers) pointed instead to the limits of empire’s “participatory cultural practices”.⁵⁴

Other tourism encounters were more interactive, with passengers often commenting favourably that Fijians were expecting them. Islanders performed *meke* (ceremonial dances) and firewalking, hosted feasts, kava ceremonies and cricket

matches, engaging in their own representation. As eager traders and willing dancers, they frequently accommodated the tourists' self-confessed "rage for curios, exploration and meke".⁵⁵ The cruise ostensibly suspended the usual trading concerns, but given the tourists' enthusiasm for collecting, in most ports of call "the steamer looked as if she was taking in cargo".⁵⁶ As a principal labour depot, ships not only brought indentured workers to Suva from islands throughout the western Pacific, but also their weapons and utensils. Tourists deemed the port capital "the best place" for curios.⁵⁷ In this respect, concurrent colonial industries might also be perceived to have "crossed cultures" on their behalf.

There was a measure of uncertainty and hesitation about the terms of exchange. After a reception in Fiji in 1884, "some marplot sent round the hat for the benefit of the Samoan dancing-girls". The German consul "resented this proceeding" and pursued the ship to New Zealand "with an expostulatory letter and a cheque, requesting that the contributors should have their money returned to them".⁵⁸ Adelaide tourist Miss M. Methuen remarked that Fijians frequently denuded themselves of their *sulu* (waistcloth), armlets and headgear after performing *meke* "frequently only for thanks". She surmised that "the Fijian of Suva is not yet demoralised by inroads of tourists".⁵⁹ This contrasted with New Zealand where the tourist traffic was well-established by the 1880s, particularly to the "thermal wonderland" in the central North Island. Maori frequently erected barriers to access and demanded payments from tourists who wished to sketch or take photographs. Many travellers regarded such assertions of indigenous possession as illegitimate, degenerate and corrupt.⁶⁰ In the Pacific, cruise tourists occasionally acknowledged their complicity in altering the stakes of exchange. In 1899 Forrest Ross remarked that Islanders appeared "afraid of these English—who want to buy everything," later referring to her tour party as a group of "ravelling tourists".⁶¹

The spectacle of tourism can be observed from both sides of the beach. Tourists might have marvelled on leaving Fiji, "when before did seven revolving days bring so much of novelty and delicious excitement?"⁶² Yet as the European passengers came streaming on shore and "spread themselves over the place to see all that was worth seeing," so too did "a moving mass of gaping natives" board the liner, as Methuen reported, and "even penetrated into the cabins, where they felt and

examined the dresses and boxes of the absent occupants with greedy wonder”.⁶³ Tourists remarked that although Fijians and Samoans crowded the ship “nothing was ever missed by any passengers of the many attractions which lie about”.⁶⁴ At Vuna, by contrast, some passengers “took possession of what they thought was an empty house,” the *Fiji Times* reported, “and commenced to denude it of its *masi* [bark cloth] and other native articles”.⁶⁵ Given these intrusive and extractive impulses, tourism might be understood as an extension or continuation of earlier colonial trades.⁶⁶

Some of these objects continued to circulate on tourists’ return. Reverend J.S. Rishworth of Oamaru held a public lecture and decorated the venue with objects collected during the cruise, some of which were available for purchase afterwards.⁶⁷ Pacific curios were frequently displayed at athenaeums and during conversaciones, not only in New Zealand’s larger cities but also in smaller provincial towns, as Tony Ballantyne observes, and it seems likely that some objects, at least, were collected during such tours.⁶⁸ Other passengers collected biological specimens for museums and universities in New Zealand, also suggestive of the extent to which tourism folded back into a wider culture of colonial knowledge formation about the islands, not simply confined to professional ethnographic institutes such as the Polynesian Society (est. 1892).

Colonial tourism traded on an inherent paradox, with travellers pursuing “an essentially schizophrenic purpose,” as MacKenzie puts it. Tourists relied on, embodied and promoted imperial penetration, yet they also expressed desire for the unfamiliar and exotic, the untouched authenticity of other cultures.⁶⁹ “Fijians were interesting,” remarked one man, “but they were a civilised and Christianised people—British subjects like ourselves”. Samoans, by contrast, “were children of nature. We wanted to study them in their primitive condition, or the next thing to it”.⁷⁰ Moreover, port towns might be reassuring spaces of imperial control, with amenities such as banks, postal facilities, roads and hotels, yet they could also be rejected for their lack of novelty and interest. As one New Zealand tourist declared, “our object was not to see what our own towns put before us, but as far as possible pure nature unadulterated by the hands of civilisation”.⁷¹

There were also clear limits to the attractions of a “primitive” authenticity. The *Waikare*’s visit to the New Hebrides in 1899 was the anticipated highlight. On arrival at Port Sandwich on the island of Malekula, the inhabitants still apparently lived as they had in the 1770s at the time of Cook’s visit. This was intrinsically repellent, rather than enticing. Passengers were unnerved by the “grim and morose looks of the savages who did not laugh and chatter as did the Samoans and Fijians”. A number of women, Forrest Ross related, “got sad scares and were quite certain the natives intended to attack the *Waikare*”.⁷² In contrast to Fiji, where the USSCo. had an established foothold and capitalised on its local networks, nothing was prepared for their arrival. A group of men was eventually assembled for a dance, but only after “the traders sent out some suggestive looking bottles”. Once they began, Ross commented dismissively, it was “the rudest and most elementary of performances, prancing in a huddled mass”. They eventually left them “howling, and prancing and drumming, and for all we know, they might still be at it”.⁷³ Here a comparison with indigenous Australians was drawn to confirm the Islanders’ backwardness, for “a more disgusting or degraded-looking lot it would be hard to find in Australia”.⁷⁴ Further on at Tanna “its savages and its marvellous volcano had been looked forward to by everyone”. Yet again the mode of life elicited disapproval rather than admiration. The men “obstinately refused to repudiate their fierce customs and superstitions” and the people as a whole were adjudged “dirty and gloomy and unfriendly”.⁷⁵

Embodied encounters on shore might unsettle or encourage the revision of tourists’ preconceptions. As Methuen remarked in Fiji, travelling “makes many radical changes in one’s ideas of foreign countries and climes which one has insensibly gathered from reading in books and newspapers”. She quickly discovered that Fijians were not simple “children of nature” and did not stretch prostrate “before the God-like form of the pale-faces,” just as another tourist had to confront his ignorance of “coloured labour”.⁷⁶ In the New Hebrides, limited opportunities for action and interaction on shore, that “transforming dialectic,” as Margaret Jolly and Serge Tcherkézoff point to, left preconceived attitudes and images far less open to revision.⁷⁷ Tourists’ impressions entrenched further the hierarchical division of the Pacific between Melanesia as masculine, hostile and dark and Polynesia as feminised, enlightened and brown (or “bronze” and “dusky”). But tourists also partitioned the

islands along imperial fault lines rather than simply cruder divisions based on ideas about racial difference and hierarchy. Where there was “no rush of whites” and where “the Union Jack has no one to flourish it,” a group of islands like the New Hebrides was not a secure realm of pleasure.⁷⁸

Assessments and affinities

In some ports, typically those under formal British political influence, cruise tourism fostered a kind of regional diplomacy. Passengers frequently related meeting the most esteemed members of society including colonial officials, high-ranking Islanders, who were typically individuated by name, and prominent expatriate residents. This bolstered passengers’ sense of status and underscored the cruise as an expression of imperial kinship. In 1884, for example, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, descendent of Seru Cakobau, a prominent chief in pre-cession Fiji, had his photograph taken on board the *Wairarapa*, and in Levuka, Sovita Baleinabuli, “a relation of the ex-king of Fiji,” guided tourists on a walk. In Samoa, William Mair “made the acquaintance” of the principal chief of Tutuila and his wife, Vaoroa, who presented him with gifts on his departure.⁷⁹

A warm reception could undergird New Zealand’s sense of fitness for sub-imperial influence, even in the face of local unrest. In the lead-up to the arrival of the *Waikare* in Rarotonga in 1898 there was growing agitation against the unpopular New Zealand Resident, Frederick Moss. A newspaper editorial expressed hope that by the time the tourists arrived “a spirit of concord will be reigning throughout the Island”. It proposed a public holiday to coincide with the steamer’s visit, with a picnic “to which the natives should be asked to join and cooperate”.⁸⁰ In the intervening months Moss was removed from his post and on the arrival of the *Waikare* “the natives were found greatly excited”.⁸¹ High-ranking Islanders were invited to the ship for dinner and dancing. They sang “God Save the Queen” in their own language and “the passengers responded by rendering it in good old Anglo-Saxon”. People left the ship at midnight, “giving us many cheers”.⁸² The feting of the tourists became a celebration of British imperialism, despite the controversy surrounding Moss. In a public speech, the retired New Zealand politician, Thomas Fergus, hoped that the visit had “knitted a bond of friendship that would never be broken,” anticipating the official transfer of

administrative responsibility for the Cook Islands from Britain to New Zealand in 1901.⁸³

Imperial kinship might be expressed overtly in familial terms, with Sydney railway administrator William Fehon referring to his 1898 cruise party as the “paler brothers and sisters from the great Pacific continent and New Zealand”.⁸⁴ Yet Forrest Ross more often felt like one of “the strange white people” in the eyes of receiving communities during her tour the following year, suggestive of the physical and emotional distance between Australasia and the neighbouring islands, even as steam-driven shipping intensified regional entanglements.⁸⁵ Political and racial affinities were embodied more powerfully by indigenous peoples. In 1899, Maori tourist Airini Donnelly had a “constant retinue” in Rotumah. In Samoa she invited Malietoa Tanu, the “young vice-King,” on board the *Waikare* for dinner. Ross recorded that the likeness between “the two natives of highest rank in Samoa and New Zealand was an interesting one” and “pointed plainly to these islands being the home of the Maori”.⁸⁶ This served as an implicit endorsement of New Zealand’s role in the Pacific, for its experience in governing Maori was often held up as a fitting track record for administering other Polynesian populations. Moreover, Maori might serve as ambassadors of British imperialism in the region.⁸⁷ By contrast, comparisons drawn between Islanders and Aboriginal Australians only served to chart degrees of indigenous degradation and, by extension, raise questions about Australia’s fitness to govern indigenous peoples beyond its own shores.

By the end of the nineteenth century, some indigenous elite reacted to the tourist encounter by withdrawing from it. Tonga was an independent monarchy under the reign of King George Tupou I assisted by the controversial Premier, the British missionary Shirley Baker. In 1884, many tourists gained an audience with Tupou I, who apparently expressed enthusiasm for New Zealand annexation.⁸⁸ But by 1899 they were prohibited from visiting his successor, Tupou II. He “was not pleased to receive us,” related one passenger, “he has been badly treated by former tourists and now shuts himself up when he hears of a boat’s arrival”.⁸⁹ Ross trivialised the snub, positing that it was the “Queen’s washing day,” yet this archival glimpse, although it offers no concrete reasons for the retreat, suggests something of indigenous disenchantment with or resistance to tourists’ presumptions of access and entitlement.

Tourists' access was impeded in other ways. When measles disrupted the June 1884 itinerary one passenger quipped that the German consul at Samoa did not want his settlement "opened to the prying eyes of scores of enterprising Englishmen". He anticipated that they would be granted *pratique* at Tonga, because Baker was a fellow Englishman and, more importantly, a clergyman "proud to show us the triumphs of the Wesleyan Mission". Yet measures at Tonga were far stricter, as if tourists had arrived on a "veritable plague ship". While this was a huge disappointment, it served as an implicit endorsement of British authority and efficiency. Quarantine measures in Samoa had been a "farce," for the mailboat along with numerous canoes traded with the steamer and two German consuls dined on board.⁹⁰ Unlike the German authorities, the British understood the gravity of the threat of seaborne epidemics, with memories still fresh of the devastation wrought by measles in Fiji after the arrival of an infected ship from Sydney less than ten years earlier. The collective memory of previous voyages, notably Cook's explorations in the late eighteenth century, might have inspired travel; on the other side of the beach the "imperial memory" of prior seaborne arrivals might as easily expose the limits of "pleasure" cruising.

The cruise tour brought Australasian settlers in contact with fellow members of Britain's imperial community, both formal and informal, in the Pacific. It was also a spatial expression of the "simultaneity of British imperial ambition," to borrow from Antoinette Burton's recent discussion of the co-production of the global.⁹¹ Tourists cruised through a sea of competing and colliding empires, meaning passengers' accounts also allow us to access the views that one empire's mobile subjects held of another's. Tonga might have possessed the "strongest native Government," with the passenger guide noting that Tongans "have been styled the Anglo-Saxons of the Pacific".⁹² Yet British tourists remarked that Tupou I hung a full-sized portrait of Emperor William in his palace. Hamburg, rather than London or Sydney, supplied Tongans with European merchandise. German traders engaged in business "unhampered by any law but that of expediency" and apparently regarded British missionary zeal as "amusing". If the German trader "had one-half the colonising capacities of the Anglo-Saxon," one tourist opined, he would "soon obtain a political as well as a commercial supremacy in the South Sea Islands".⁹³

From the late 1870s Samoa was the site of “great power” rivalry, with Samoans having faced a series of temporary governments formed from unstable alliances between indigenous leaders and representatives of Britain, the United States and Germany. In 1898 passenger William Fehon was adamant that Germany only had a superficial hold there. Samoans, he remarked, “have not much liking for the Germans...their sympathy appears to be entirely with English people”.⁹⁴ In 1899, the tour occurred during heightened political tensions. Commissioners had arrived in Apia to draft a constitution to divide the island group between Germany and America, and to formalise Britain’s withdrawal from Samoa following concessions in other parts of the German Pacific.⁹⁵ Passengers were warned in advance “not to talk politics to the natives,” yet on arrival “everywhere the war is pressed on our notice”.⁹⁶ Hosting the tourists was politically sensitive. The responsibility for compiling a guest list for a shipboard ball fell to a German trading firm. They snubbed British officials and this was later reported as “an unpleasant incident”.⁹⁷ A German warship invited passengers on a harbour cruise, but this was later countermanded and Ross reported that “rumour was rife as to the reason”.⁹⁸

As a French possession, Tahiti was deemed “especially interesting to the English tourists,” for whenever Frenchmen travel, remarked the *Otago Witness*, “they carry Paris with them”.⁹⁹ The 1898 tour was timed to coincide with Bastille Day celebrations. Arriving in Tahiti “after the quiet simplicity of Rarotonga,” Fehon remarked that “the lower tone of native life at Papeete comes as a nasty jar”. It was “not at all complimentary to the French as a colonising nation wishing to preserve the best features of the race over whom they preside”. There was no system of rubbish collection, streets were poorly lit and indigenous people had free access to alcohol, in sharp contrast to the British Pacific.¹⁰⁰ The USSCo. travel guide highlighted a recent despatch of French troops to Ra’iatea in response to an indigenous uprising as of “special interest,” but passengers regarded this as “evidence that peace and harmony are not universal”.¹⁰¹ French officials were clearly preoccupied with Bastille festivities, yet another tourist opined that “the French, as a whole, were distinctly cold in their welcome and paid us but little courtesy, so that we were pleased to leave a somewhat inhospitable region,” a rather ironic portrayal given Tahiti’s longstanding reputation as an inviting layover for western crew.¹⁰²

Attention to the conditions of white settlers also incriminated the French who appeared incapable of making “a go of it”. In Tahiti it was reported that many British and American residents were “not happy” and were thinking of on-migrating to North Queensland to cultivate vanilla.¹⁰³ In New Caledonia, Ross remarked on “the pathetic earnestness with which the French try, amid depressing circumstances, to preserve the national gaiety and volatility”. There were numerous “dismal sights that depress the visitor” and the French convicts, many of whom were “lifers,” were more intimidating than indigenous people. The region’s mineral wealth was neglected and “even a Frenchman said ruefully that he wished the colony were British” for then “the place would go ahead”.¹⁰⁴ Another passenger remarked that Noumea had a “squalid and neglected appearance” and the cafes and restaurants were “to English ideas quite the reverse of comfortable”; “why we stayed four days was a mystery which no one could fathom”.¹⁰⁵

The comparative dimensions of the cruise suggest it was a kind of spatial expression of British exceptionalism. Most passengers travelled with British Empire loyalties and were curious about the progress and future prospects of the civilising mission. On the basis of their observations “their” Pacific was seemingly on track, in contrast to the perceived carelessness and incompetence of the French, or the Germans who pursued trade at the expense of indigenous “conversion” and appeared to lack an overarching moral imperative. The steamer’s arrival in port was in itself a powerful statement of British imperial power and was often experienced as a comforting space of fellow feeling. Methuen commented on the crowding of the vessel, not only by “natives who delighted in the rarities and luxuries of European travel,” but also “white settlers who rejoiced to dine with their compatriots and exchange experiences of life in the different hemispheres represented on board”.¹⁰⁶ Equally, the ship might serve as a painful reminder of their “exile” and tenuous ties to civilisation, particularly in locations on the margins of formal empire. At Tanna in 1899, a Scottish missionary and his wife came on board the *Waikare* for they “longed to have a crack about the dear old land they lived so far away from. It is a lonely life, and full of peril”. The tourists met an English nun on the Isle of Pines in New Caledonia who had not seen an English woman in twelve years. Ross related that “she was loth to part from us, and said the sight of the *Waikare* gave her pain”.¹⁰⁷

This emphasis on the touristic performance of British imperial might is not to imply that there were not at least pockets of dissatisfaction and disaffection in the British Pacific. In Fiji where a small vocal group of white settlers, frustrated with perceived arbitrary restrictions on access to land and labour in the crown colony, agitated for the comparative freedoms enjoyed by other British settlers in Australasia. Whereas the tourists relayed settler concerns in French Polynesia, here they rebutted them. Thomson Wilson Leys, writing for the *Auckland Evening Star* in 1884, roundly dismissed planters' demands for a "civilised government". Seeing Suva "busy, active, thriving" it astonished him to pick up a newspaper and find it "abusing the Government with intemperate vehemence". He concluded that "the visitor who has come with the notion that a 'Crown colony of a severe type' must be a sort of Anglo-Saxon Siberia, rubs his eyes, feels for a moment dazed, and then finds vent to his feelings in a terrific outburst of laughter".¹⁰⁸ The *Fiji Times* bristled at his assessment, for "none but a very bold man could have supposed that ideas Fijian were to be grasped, analysed, and finally disposed of from the basis of information to be obtained, and observations to be made, extending over a period of just five days". Published travel narratives circulated in the wake of the tours and were read, debated and evaluated. Tourism joined a wider conversation about evolving regional relations, and the *Fiji Times* ultimately welcomed the "present effusion" of literature for "the history of personal travel will serve to spread at least a better if not a precisely accurate idea of Fiji".¹⁰⁹

In other ways the cruise tours, in moving between colonies and across empires, expressed the fact that the Pacific was not simply an ocean of intractable imperial rivalry. In Samoa in 1884 the American consul expressed a desire "to see Australian capitalists turn their attention in this direction". Unlike Germany and America, Britain prohibited the importation of labour to Samoa. Australians might obtain lands and "work them under American protection".¹¹⁰ This perhaps anticipated later visions of the Pacific as "an Anglo-Saxon sea," whereby increasingly assertive colonial nationalists in Australia looked out from their "great Pacific continent" to their potential allies in the east with whom they shared an apparently unique capacity for empire building.¹¹¹

Rivalries aside, the imperial partition was also understood more broadly as a shared European endeavour, whereby France, Germany and Britain were invested equally in making the islands safe for western activities. So whereas some British passengers were unimpressed with Noumea, others could not fault French hospitality, where they “plunged into civilisation” after their time in the New Hebrides. They delighted in their access to the leading club, the tennis courts, cafes and curio shops and the opportunity to ride around in horse-drawn carriages on “excellent roads”.¹¹² In the New Hebrides where France and Britain were literally in it together, two lone French traders at Port Sandwich were invited on board the *Waikare* for dinner where “the ‘Marseillaise’ was played for their especial benefit”. In a reversal of roles, the passengers conducted a lantern slide, showing the men “some capital views of beautiful New Zealand”.¹¹³ Such encounters also left tourists reflecting on the contrasts inherent in their own freedoms and the circumscribed status of port residents. After hosting a ball, concert and regatta at Port Vila in the New Hebrides, Ross lamented that “it seemed hard to go off a-pleasuring...leaving this handful of plucky white men to the loneliness of their island home”.¹¹⁴

Concluding thoughts

Steamship services gradually produced denser and more durable transoceanic networks, meaning travel for leisure was increasingly feasible and attractive. There were only a small number of dedicated tours in the Pacific before the turn of the twentieth century, yet they generated far more public interest than routine maritime trades, alongside an extensive public archive in their wake. Cruise tourism popularised steamer travel in the Australasian colonies and highlighted the comparative proximity and accessibility of the neighbouring islands. In similar ways to the Grand exhibition, tourism made empire part of popular culture, facilitating immediacy with Pacific places and peoples in ways that reading about them at a distance could not. With its emphasis on luxurious and novel multi-stop itineraries and welcoming and accommodating Islanders willing to trade and perform, cruising also naturalised colonial assumptions of unfettered white settler mobility throughout the region. Questions of intrusion, voyeurism and extraction positioned tourism as an extension of the colonial encounter.

The more generic and romantic images of “the South Seas” or “the Coral Islands” certainly stimulated popular interest in a cruise. In practice, moving from port to port, staying for a period of days or only a few hours at each, cruising both relied upon and encouraged the production of continuous contrasts: between the British, French and German Pacific, between “settled” colonial rule and political upheaval, between civilised port towns and undeveloped coastal frontiers, and between “strict Sabbatarians” and “heathen savages”. Even if an indigenous “authenticity” was of primary appeal, cruise tourists could not bypass evidence of sociopolitical transformation, given many key ports of call were the main hubs of colonial administration. Wherever they disembarked people encountered communities in flux, from civil unrest in French Polynesia and Samoa, to local agitation against individual colonial officials in the Cook Islands, or against the very mode of rule itself as in Fiji. Tourists also had to navigate a range of responses to their presence, from curiosity and delight to disinterest and hostility.

Tourists’ observations offer insights into the origins of mass tourism in the late nineteenth century, but they also paint a picture of messy, fractured and notional colonial configurations in the Pacific at the time of its imperial partition. Tourists observed and formed ideas about Islanders, but they also assessed the fortunes of people who had travelled into the region from different and sometimes competing imperial centres. Their accounts contributed to an ongoing conversation about the colonising capacities of Britain vis-a-vis its rivals and about the future potential of the islands as shifting fields for western occupation and development. In this way tourism can be understood as constitutive, rather than just reflective, of popular understandings about the changing colonial Pacific.

Finally, historians of New Zealand and Australia have approached their respective “Pacific pasts” separately, yet cruising is one activity where people on both sides of the Tasman Sea, albeit the most privileged, shared pathways of engagement into the islands. Their collective mobilities indicate that to grasp better the nature and rhythm of connections between Australia, New Zealand and “other” Pacific Islands, a historical scholarship still in its infancy, the maritime realm and specific oceanic voyages would need to sit at the very heart of this endeavour. The political wrangling for formal recognition of Australasian interests in the neighbouring islands is still

better known than the everyday routes, circulations and related cultural productions which routinely stitched these colonies together, albeit in fundamentally power-laden, hierarchical and uneven ways.

¹ “A Winter Excursion,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 1, 1898, 3.

² *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 16, 1898, 4.

³ For example, K.R. Howe, *Nature, Culture and History: The knowing of Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), chapter 1; Ross Gibson, “I Could Not See as Much as I Desired,” in *Pirating the Pacific: Images of trade, travel & tourism*, ed. Ann Stephen (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 1993), 22-39; John Connell and Chris Gibson, “‘No Passport Necessary’: Music, record covers and vicarious tourism in Post-war Hawai’i,” *Journal of Pacific History* 43: 1 (2008): 51-75; Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on display from Waikiki to Seaworld* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998); Christine Skwiot also focuses on Hawai’i, but develops a transcolonial and comparative analysis, see *The Purposes of Paradise: U.S. tourism and empire in Cuba and Hawai’i* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Ngaire Douglas’ work is another exception in that she explores tourists’ accounts and brings a number of islands into comparison, see *They Came for Savages: 100 years of tourism in Melanesia* (Lismore: Southern Cross University Press, 1996).

⁴ Judith Adler, “Travel as Performed Art,” *American Journal of Sociology* 94:6 (1989): 1377.

⁵ David M. Williams, “Market Pressures and Innovation: The Orient Steam Navigation Co. and the development of pleasure cruising, 1888–1900,” *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord* 10:4 (2000): 3.

⁶ Bard Kolltveit, “‘Deck Chair Explorers’: The origin and development of organised tourist voyages to northern and southern polar regions,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 18:2 (2006): 351-69.

⁷ *A Cruise in the Islands: Tonga, Fiji, Samoa* (Dunedin: USSCo., 1895).

-
- ⁸ Williams, "Market Pressures," 7.
- ⁹ Wellington City Archives (hereafter WCA), USSCo. Records, 2004/310:42:1, Coleman Phillips to Mills, April 15, 1899 (original emphasis).
- ¹⁰ Roslyn Jolly, ed., *The Cruise of the Janet Nichol Among the South Sea Islands: A diary by Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).
- ¹¹ *Off To Tahiti! Trip to the South Seas Islands* (Dunedin: J. Wilkie & Co., 1898).
- ¹² Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (hereafter ATL), Scrapbook, MSY-5843, "Winter Excursion to the South Sea Islands," March 1, 1884.
- ¹³ *Off to Tahiti!*
- ¹⁴ Ewan Johnston, "Reinventing Fiji at 19th-century and early 20th-century Exhibitions," *Journal of Pacific History* 40:1 (2005): 42; Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across times, cultures and self* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004).
- ¹⁵ "Among the Coral Islands," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 10, 1884, 5.
- ¹⁶ Christine Whybrew indicates that the USSCo. regarded this as a trial in the lead-up to participation in New Zealand's frozen meat export trade, "The Burton Brothers Studio: Commerce in photography and the marketing of New Zealand, 1866-1898," (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2010), 148. See "Current Topics," *Otago Witness*, September 6, 1884, 13; "The Union Steam Ship Company's Arrangements," *Otago Witness*, October 6, 1883, 22.
- ¹⁷ "The Wairarapa's Cruise in the Pacific," *Te Aroha News*, August 9, 1884, 6.
- ¹⁸ "The Cruise of the Wairarapa," *Nelson Evening Mail*, June 25, 1884, 4.
- ¹⁹ *Evening Post*, July 5, 1898; Hocken Collections, University of Otago (hereafter HC), USSCo. Records, AG-292-005-001/046, Stores Department to Managing Director, August 19, 1898.
- ²⁰ "A Winter Excursion," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 1, 1898, 3.
- ²¹ Williams makes a similar observation, see "Market Pressures," 4.
- ²² "Off to the Islands," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 4, 1899, 3.
- ²³ Thomson Wilson Leys, *The Cruise of the Wairarapa* (Auckland: 1884), 1.
- ²⁴ WCA, USSCo. Records, 2004/310:42:1, Emile Doublet to Feillet, April 1, 1899. For the 1899 passenger list see, "The Waikare's Excursion," *Auckland Star*, July 5, 1899, 5.

-
- ²⁵ Howe, *Nature, Culture and History*, 21, 24. See also John Connell, "Island Dreaming: The contemplation of Polynesian paradise," *Journal of Historical Geography* 29:4 (2003): 554-81.
- ²⁶ Lydia Wevers, *Country of Writing: Travel writing and New Zealand, 1809–1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002), 83. Tracey Banivanua Mar, "Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting colonies and frontiers in nineteenth-century Fiji," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52:2 (2010): 273, 256.
- ²⁷ *A Wonderful Trip With the S.S "Waikare" Among Sunny Southern Isles* (Dunedin: USSCo., 1899), 32.
- ²⁸ WCA, USSCo. Records, 2004/310:42:1, Duncan to Mills, September 17, 1898. For more on early tourist images of Melanesia see Ngaire Douglas, "The Fearful and the Fanciful: Early tourists' perceptions of Western Melanesia," *Journal of Tourism Studies* 8:1 (1997): 52-61.
- ²⁹ *A Wonderful Trip*, 44. For a discussion of the discursive production of Melanesia as a colonial frontier, see Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian Pacific indentured labour trade* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), chapter 1.
- ³⁰ Margaret Jolly and Serge Tcherkézoff, "Oceanic Encounters: A prelude," in *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, desire, violence*, eds. Margaret Jolly, Serge Tcherkézoff and Darrell Tryon (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2009), John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002), 14.
- ³¹ *Otago Daily Times*, July 20, 1897.
- ³² "In Southern Seas," *Otago Witness*, July 27, 1899, 17.
- ³³ University of Auckland Library Special Collection, William Gilbert Mair Papers 1871–1904, MSS & Archives A-31, William Mair Diaries, Wairarapa Cruise 1884.
- ³⁴ "My Trip to Coral Islands," *Wanganui Herald*, July 26, 1884, 2.
- ³⁵ "In Southern Seas," *Otago Daily Times*, September 4, 1899, 3. "Genealogical connections" comes from Margaret Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali Hai'i: Eroticism and exoticism in representations of the Pacific," in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, eds Margaret Jolly and Lenore Manderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 106.

-
- ³⁶ John M. MacKenzie, “Empires of Travel: British guide books and cultural imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries,” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, identity, conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), 25.
- ³⁷ H. Stonehewer Cooper, *Coral Lands* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1880), Preface to the first edition. Incidentally, Cooper’s book was republished in 1888 as *The Islands of the Pacific: Their peoples and their products* expressly “for circulation in Australia”.
- ³⁸ “Among the Coral Islands,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 12, 1884, 6.
- ³⁹ “With the Waikare,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 5, 1899, 7.
- ⁴⁰ Wevers, *Country of Writing*, 159
- ⁴¹ “Among the Coral Islands: The trip of the one hundred,” *Sydney Morning Herald* June, 10 1884, 5.
- ⁴² “The Coming Excursion,” *Ioi Karanga*, April 16, 1898.
- ⁴³ WCA, USSCo. Records, 2004/310:42:1, Feillet to Doublet, April 7, 1899.
- ⁴⁴ *New Zealand Times*, March 11, 1884.
- ⁴⁵ ATL, Scrapbook, MSY-5843, “Winter Excursion to the South Sea Islands,” March 1, 1884.
- ⁴⁶ Frances Steel, *Oceania under Steam: Sea transport and the cultures of colonialism, c.1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), chapter 1.
- ⁴⁷ “The Wairarapa’s Cruise in the Pacific,” *Te Aroha News*, August 9, 1884. Skwiot explores the ways in which the pursuit of pleasure was tied to ideas about imperial “duty” in Hawai’i, see, *The Purposes of Paradise*, chapter 1
- ⁴⁸ “A Trip to Fiji in the S.S. Wairarapa,” *South Australian Register*, August 8, 1884, 5.
- ⁴⁹ Libbe Freed, ““Every European Becomes a Chief”: Travel guides to colonial equatorial Africa, 1900-1958,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 12:2 (Fall 2011), doi: 10.1353/cch.2011.0024.
- ⁵⁰ *The Wairarapa Wilderness* (Wellington: 1884), 10.
- ⁵¹ “Among the Coral Islands,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 14, 1884, 5.
- ⁵² “Steam Yachting in the Pacific,” *Otago Daily Times*, July 15, 1884, 1 and July 19, 1884, 11.

-
- ⁵³ Peter Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 20, 28, 243.
- ⁵⁵ “Among the Coral Islands,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 19, 1884, 7.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1884, 5.
- ⁵⁷ “Oceania: Steam-yachting in the Pacific,” *Otago Witness*, July 19, 1884, 11.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ “A Trip to Fiji in the S.S. Wairarapa,” *South Australian Register*, July 1, 1884, 5.
- ⁶⁰ Wevers, *Country of Writing*, 199-205.
- ⁶¹ “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, September 4, 1899.
- ⁶² “Oceania: Steam-yachting in the Pacific,” *Otago Witness*, July 19, 1884, 11.
- ⁶³ *Fiji Times*, July 5, 1884; “A Trip to Fiji in the Wairarapa,” *South Australian Register*, July 28, 1884, 6.
- ⁶⁴ *Wairarapa Wilderness*, 17.
- ⁶⁵ *Fiji Times*, July 5, 1884.
- ⁶⁶ For a wider discussion of the cultural history of South Seas “raids,” see Ann Stephen, ed., *Pirating the Pacific*.
- ⁶⁷ “Rev Mr Wishworth’s lecture,” *North Otago Times*, October 11, 1884, 3.
- ⁶⁸ Tony Ballantyne, “Thinking Local: Knowledge, sociability and community in Gore’s intellectual life, 1875–1914,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 44:2 (2010): 143; *Otago Witness*, January 24, 1885.
- ⁶⁹ MacKenzie, “Empires of Travel,” 20.
- ⁷⁰ “Among the Coral Islands,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 17, 1884, 5.
- ⁷¹ “The Wairarapa’s Cruise in the Pacific,” *Te Aroha News*, August 6, 1884, 6.
- ⁷² “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, September 4, 1899, 3.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ “A Trip to the South Sea Islands,” *South Australian Register*, August 28, 1899, 6.
- ⁷⁵ “In Southern Seas,” *Evening Post* (Supplement), September 16, 1899, 1.
- ⁷⁶ “A Trip to Fiji in the S.S. Wairarapa,” *South Australian Register*, August 8, 1884, 5. Tellingly, though, she fell back on preconceptions when recording her impressions of Tonga. The people, she wrote, “are dark, handsome, brave, intelligent, but treacherous in the extreme,” yet this generalised description

basically recorded a “non-encounter,” for the *Wairarapa* could not land at Tonga due to the quarantine measures

⁷⁷ Jolly and Tcherkézoff, “Oceanic Encounters,” 14.

⁷⁸ “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, September 4, 1899, 3.

⁷⁹ *Wairarapa Wilderness*, 14; William Mair Diaries, Wairarapa Cruise 1884.

⁸⁰ “The Coming Excursion,” *Ioi Karanga*, April 16, 1898.

⁸¹ “The Excursion to the South Seas,” *Evening Post*, August 6, 1898, 5.

⁸² William Meeke Fehon, *Six Weeks’ Excursion* (Sydney: S.D. Townsend & Co., 1898), 6, 8.

⁸³ “The Waikare’s Excursion,” *Otago Daily Times*, July 30, 1898, 6. A culture of New Zealand parliamentary cruising also developed in the early twentieth century, whereby various political leaders engaged in “fact finding” missions to promote annexation or dispensed moral counsel to island communities. See for example, Edward Tregear, *The Right Hon. R.J. Seddon’s (the Premier of New Zealand) visit to Tonga, Fiji, Savage Island, and the Cook Islands, May, 1900* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1900); “Our Island Possessions: The parliamentary cruise,” *Press*, June 10, 1903, 8.

⁸⁴ Fehon, *Six Weeks’ Excursion*, 6.

⁸⁵ “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, August 3, 1899, 5.

⁸⁶ “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, August 4, 1899, 6.

⁸⁷ Angus Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Ross, “Maori and Polynesia, Race and Politics: The racial argument in support of New Zealand’s interests in Polynesia,” in *Anthropology in the South Seas: Essays presented to H. D. Skinner*, eds. J. D. Freeman and W. R. Geddes (New Plymouth: Thomas Avery & Sons, 1959), 221-33.

⁸⁸ “Rev Mr Wishworth’s lecture,” *North Otago Times*, October 11, 1884, 3.

⁸⁹ *Auckland Star*, August 4, 1899.

⁹⁰ “Among the Coral Islands,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 19, 1884.

⁹¹ Antoinette Burton, “Getting outside the Global: Repositioning British imperialism in world history,” in *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 286.

⁹² *Excursion to the South Seas* (Dunedin: USSCo., 1884), 9

⁹³ Leys, *The Cruise of the Wairarapa*, 26

-
- ⁹⁴ Fehon, *Six Weeks' Excursion*, 17.
- ⁹⁵ For the politics of Samoa in this period, see R.P. Gilson, *Samoa, 1830–1900: The Politics of a multi-cultural community* (Melbourne and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Malama Meleisa, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional authority and colonial administration in the modern history of Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987).
- ⁹⁶ “A Trip to the South Seas,” *Argus*, May 10, 1899, 7; “Sailing in the South Seas,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 5, 1899, 7.
- ⁹⁷ “An Unpleasant Incident,” *Star*, August 3, 1899, 2; “Affairs in Samoa,” *Launceston Examiner*, August 7, 1899, 3.
- ⁹⁸ “In Southern Seas,” *Evening Post* (Supplement), August 19, 1899, 1.
- ⁹⁹ “Union Company’s Excursion to Tahiti,” *Otago Witness*, January 20, 1898, 25.
- ¹⁰⁰ Fehon, *Six Weeks' Excursion*, 9, 13
- ¹⁰¹ *Off to Tahiti*, 14.
- ¹⁰² “The Excursion to the South Seas,” *Evening Post*, August 6, 1898, 5.
- ¹⁰³ Fehon, *Six Weeks' Excursion*, 9.
- ¹⁰⁴ “In Southern Seas,” *Evening Post* (Supplement), September 16, 1899, 1.
- ¹⁰⁵ “A Trip to the South Sea Islands,” *South Australian Register*, August 28, 1899, 6.
- ¹⁰⁶ “A Trip to Fiji,” *South Australian Register*, August 8, 1884, 5.
- ¹⁰⁷ “In Southern Seas,” *Evening Post* (Supplement), September 16, 1899, 1.
- ¹⁰⁸ Leys, *The Cruise of the Wairarapa*, 10–11.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Fiji Times*, July 19, 1884.
- ¹¹⁰ Leys, *The Cruise of the Wairarapa*, 18.
- ¹¹¹ Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and rule between the British and United States empires, 1880–1910,” *Journal of American History* (2002): 1335. See also Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).
- ¹¹² “With the Waikare,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 17, 1899, 4.
- ¹¹³ “In Southern Seas,” *Otago Daily Times*, September 4, 1899, 3.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, September 5, 1899, 2.