

cultural heritage. Yet in Canada, settlers turned to the Anglo-French culture and history to combat the British dismissal of the country as a place with no history. In Australia, Aboriginal culture was dismissed as primitive and Australia's convict history was considered shameful. Gentry's discussion of how and why Australia gradually came to terms with and finally took pride in its convict history is a useful reflection on how economic and other factors influence history-making. By providing an international perspective, the chapter underlines the striking nature of aspects of the New Zealand experience and makes the book a valuable addition to studies in colonial history.

Tested against the experiences of Australia and Canada, Gentry's conclusions make a noteworthy contribution to New Zealand history and to the study of colonization in general. One of the book's major contributions is its highlighting of the complex interaction between local, national and international influences on colonial identity. Of particular interest is Gentry's call to look beyond national influences and give greater weight to local and regional history. The book is also notable for its reliance on the analysis of places and artefacts as well as traditional written sources. In New Zealand, academic works that rely heavily on an analysis of historic places are not common enough; this book is a sound example of how these sources can be used effectively. The book's structure and layout is occasionally unhelpful, as Gentry covers his major arguments in sections differing considerably in length and his overall message is occasionally lost in the detail of each chapter. Despite this, the book is an absorbing read and has much to offer scholars in a wide range of disciplines. Published as a monograph as part of a well-established series on imperialism, the book will be of particular interest to libraries catering for professionals and scholars working in the fields of museum and heritage studies, national identity, colonization, imperialism, indigenous studies, New Zealand history and historiography.

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The Lives of Colonial Objects. Edited by Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2015. 368pp. NZ price \$44.95. ISBN: 9781972322024.

Objects, artefacts, material culture, taonga, treasures, curios, commodities, heirlooms, souvenirs, relics, knick-knacks, stuff: the things that constitute our material world have an infinite number of labels, functions and meanings. In the case of *The Lives of Colonial Objects*, '[t]hings invite us into the past through their tangible, tactile and immediate presence' (p.13). This accessible illustrated volume, 'curated' by Cooper, Paterson and Wanhalla, showcases things as historical touchstones. Readers who immerse themselves in the book's full-colour content get to 'touch' numerous aspects of New Zealand's colonial and material history through individual 'life stories' of dozens of things. These range from a putorino that sailed from Tai Tokerau to Salem

on an American trading vessel to British-made flying boats that island-hopped around the Pacific.

The Lives of Colonial Objects is the concrete outcome of a conference organized in 2013 by the book's editors. It brings together seamlessly the writing of more than 50 authors working in a number of disciplines. Its 49 concise chapters, each based on a specific object, are arranged more or less chronologically from the 1800s to the 1940s. This timeline provides *The Lives of Colonial Objects* with a coherent structure, yet it also underscores 'colonial' as a neatly bounded and distinct historical period. This 150-year span is atypically voluminous for a book about colonial culture, but it remains, frustratingly, unexplained.

Taken as a whole, *The Lives of Colonial Objects* is an unprecedented approach to the colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand – although not a major reimagining of it. Phillip Jones's *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers* (Adelaide, 2007), for example, provides a trans-Tasman counterpoint that examines, more experimentally, the specific hybrid materiality of colonial encounter. In terms of numerical scope and content, however, *The Lives of Colonial Objects* is much larger and more promiscuous than Jones's book (which focuses on just nine objects). The result is a textual and visual corollary of a colonial museum's 'cabinet of curiosities'. While it resembles an outmoded method of museum display, *The Lives of Colonial Objects* also transcends the purely museological. This flows from the editors' suggestion that contributors 'think beyond the museum'. In the first instance, this means that institutionalized artefacts are joined by objects that are held privately, or perhaps exist only in photographs or in the landscape. Another, perhaps unexpected, result is that things have been untangled from the historical knot of collecting, museum practice and colonization, and woven into many other coexisting social, political and cultural contexts: medical, musical, legal, domestic and sartorial, for example.

Careful juxtapositions between chapters create thought-provoking and unexpected connections across the collection. For example, a chapter about the continuing use by the author's whanau of his great-great-grandfather's kahu kiwi (which graces the book's cover) is followed by one about a 1918 wedding hat trimmed with ostrich feathers, purchased in South Africa by a New Zealand soldier (now held by Te Papa). Readers encounter multiple and richly textured colonialisms, as the lives of the colonists and the colonized unfold at many different scales and locations. *The Lives of Colonial Objects* blurs the orthodox, homogenizing categories of Crown, iwi and settlers; 'colonial' here is diverse and layered – but also hard to pin down.

The biographical metaphor in the book's title is a nod to existing disciplinary ways of thinking about objects, articulated in publications such as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's influential collection *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986). Yet for the most part, *The Lives of Colonial Objects* does not overtly engage with this scholarship. For a start, its format clearly marks it out as a 'treasure' book intended for a general audience. (The editors note the influence on their book of the very popular *The History of the World in 100 Objects*, London, 2010, based on the radio series written and presented by the director of the British Museum.) I suspect that in order to meet these readers' expectations, authors were encouraged to downplay academic concerns in favour of narrative, of 'telling

the stories of how people used or interacted with ... items, and perhaps continue to do so' (p.13).

As a rule, readers of this type of publication expect high production values, and the design of *The Lives of Colonial Objects* goes a long way towards satisfying this often exacting audience. However, the book's diverse photographic styles and their mixed quality, creates a slightly haphazard, 'scrapbooked' feel. Unfortunately, this weakens the overall impact of some of the main object images. And the captions, another critical interpretive feature of this genre, lose their independent storytelling potential due to unevenness in length and tone. This could put off readers who use them as the main point of entry into the book's content

The book's ambitions are clearly demarcated in an accessible introduction. Here, instead of outlining a theoretical approach, the editors enthuse about material culture, and emphasize how objects and their stories can 'inform and enrich major themes in the colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand' (p.19). They repeat this straightforward proposition – that the value of objects for historians and history-lovers derives from their ability to enrich existing historical themes and narratives – several times. Admittedly, it is a tall order to expect a multi-authored volume of very short essays written for a general audience to revolutionize the existing historiography. However, the book's main proposition raises several related questions: does New Zealand's colonial history need enriching? If so, why? And do objects as sources enable historians to enrich, retell or upset that history in an innovative or particular way? A more theoretical afterword is a roll call of relevant academic literature, largely generated by museum studies, cultural studies and anthropology, but touches on these questions only in passing.

The Lives of Colonial Objects achieves what its editors hoped it would: it enriches and complicates New Zealand's colonial past – and with a deft and light touch. It is a first step along a path towards history with a material turn: the work for historians exploring the potential of objects as sources, to unsettle and reconfigure New Zealand's history, has just begun.

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Post Marks: The Way We Were – Early New Zealand Postcards, 1897–1922. By Leo Haks, Colleen Dallimore and Alan Jackson. Kowhai Media, Auckland, 2015. 327pp. NZ price: \$69.99. ISBN: 9780987654663.

Post Marks seeks to introduce readers to New Zealand picture postcards and invites them to consider what they reveal about life here at the time. The book focuses on the 25-year period from 1897, the year New Zealand's first official picture postcard was released, until 1922. It includes the peaks in New Zealand postcard production between 1903 and 1910 and again during the First World War. New Zealand postcards