***Kanaka* Portraits: Indentured Labor in Colonial Australia**

Max Quanchi

University of the South Pacific

The individual and group portraits of indentured Pacific Island laborers, known in the British colony of Queensland between 1863 and 1904 as *Kanakas*, conform to late-nineteenth century portraiture conventions. These one hundred or so extant portraits, mostly taken in studios in nearby towns or by travelling photographers passing through the sugar cane districts, do not constitute a single archive but are scattered about in private albums, museums, galleries and archives or in leather bound series of illustrated colonial newspapers. They depict only a fraction of the 50,000 laborers who came to Queensland on three-year labor contracts, mostlyfrom Vanuatu or the Solomon Islands, and at the time mistakenly called Polynesians, Melanesians or South Sea Islanders.[[1]](#endnote-1) The photographs from the 1870s through to the 1906 are mostly of long serving, time-expired men and ticket holders that had been christened, educated and married in Australia. Other portraits were of the 1400 that were pardoned and remained in Australia after the deportations of 1906-1908, or the 400 or so who illegally avoided deportation. Family albums from 1910 and onwards depict these men and women and their Australian born descendants. These *Kanakas,* now known as Australian South Sea Islanders, appear in portraits on face value as a sturdy, healthy and prosperous immigrant community. This means the laborers who returned home after their three year term, the many who died during indenture (20% within the first year), or those who could not afford the cost of a portrait cannot be recovered from the visual evidence. This essay analyzes this small collection of portraits as a form of historical evidence, offers a case study of thephotography of colonial subjects, and suggests limits on the use of photography for the making of a holistic visual history of the Queensland labor trade.

A visual history of indenture in Queensland might reveal, as James Ryan argues, that “photographic images do not simply speak for themselves or show us the world through an innocent historical eye. Rather they are invested with meanings framed by and produced within specific cultural conditions and historical circumstances” (Ryan 1997:19). Coercion was probably used, for example, in 1874 to line-up seventy *Kanaka* laborers at Fouldon plantation. The faces, expressions, demeanor and posture of the line-up indicate a pliant, subjected labor force. The individual *Kanaka* is obscured and the group portrait is lifeless and dehumanizing. The symbols, artifacts or clothing in the frame cannot indicate the home island of the men, their age, marital status, whether they lived regimentally in the lines (or barracks) or freely in local material men’s houses on the river bank. It cannot reveal what tasks they performed, whether they were first-indenture, ticket-of leave men or had signed on for a second or third time. But portraits, if compared over a long period and a wide distribution, might reveal whether certain laborers moved up and down the coast from the Torres Strait to the Tweed River and changed jobs, working variously in cane fields, mills, brickworks, railways and pastoral properties.

By looking outside the frame, or looking-though the image, research might reveal the power relations of each photograph’s production. As Elizabeth Edwards argues, the inscribing of multiple spaces and multiple histories has “the potential to contest or subvert the ideological discourses of the image’s creation” (2001: 109). When tracing the public usage of an image, Paul Landau suggests “the role of photography in the colonial project emerges not from who made images, nor even … from the graphic content of the images themselves. Rather it lay in the appropriation of tribal images into structures of distribution and interpretation” (2002a: 161). Because *Kanaka* portraits generally did not enter the public domain, a group portrait c1874 at Fouldon plantation, or William Boag’s scientific reference portrait of “Grisi, native of Eddystone, Solomon group”, or a commissioned family portrait c1910, therefore might seem of limited value as historical evidence.

The portraits of *Kanakas* who were dispersed across northern New South Wales and Queensland,[[2]](#endnote-2) raise several questions relating to photographs as objects, and the function of portraits in individual and community biographies. As Gen Doy notes portraits “show us the subject, the self, of another person” (2005: 22) or in the photojournalist Cartier-Bresson’s gendered terms “they enable us to trace the sameness of man” (Cited in Lutz and Collins 1993: 97). The depictive function of portraits in representing the external appearance of an individual or member of a class (in this case, of indigenous indentured workers) or a social group (in this case, of a kin or language group), acknowledges that portraits are historically and socially constructed. Looking-through-the image beyond the depictive function reveals cultural texts. Questions asked about meaning bring to the foreground subjects who were written about extensively during the debates on the Pacific Island labor trade but who were otherwise relegated to the margins, socially, culturally and politically in ‘White Australia’.[[3]](#endnote-3) Of equal concern is the photographer’s and sitter’s motivation in choosing what Stephen Sprague calls the “traditional formal portrait” (2003: 244). A further, incomplete area of research might tackle the visual economy of these portraits. As Deborah Poole suggests, visual images reveal a comprehensive systematic organization of people, ideas and objects. They reveal social relationships, inequality, power, class structures and the production and exchange of material goods and commodities. (1997: 6, 8) To analyze this “comprehensive systematic organization” it is necessary to draw on art history, economic history, Australian and Pacific histories, the history of photography, anthropology and the life histories of indentured laborers and their descendants.[[4]](#endnote-4) This essay therefore is a contribution to the overlapping history of photojournalism, documentary photography and portraiture. The visual economy approach to portraits also raises questions about circulation and consumption which remain unresolved because *Kanaka* portraits generally were not published or made into postcards or stereographs and have only recently been retrieved from family albums and catalogued archive collections. In only a few instances is it possible to trace the distribution, publication and transfer from the private to the public domain. The extant portraits therefore provide only a partial history of the indenture system, and only hint seductively at ideological debates and political maneuvering on a colonial frontier, and at only some of the indentured laborers who ‘signed on’ for Queensland.

The indenture of Pacific Islanders, mostly from Vanuatu (then known as the New Hebrides), and the Solomon Islands, with lesser numbers from Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and the Loyalty Islands, began in 1863 and continued until 1906-1908 when the last 4,500 laborers were forcibly deported under legislation passed by the parliament of the recently federated Australian colonies. Pardons were given to those who could prove ownership of property or had families, or had more than 20 years residence or whose lives were endangered if they returned home. They became the forebears of the Australian South Sea Islander community of today, numbering around 15,000-20,000, mostly in northern New South Wales and Queensland. (Moore and Mercer 1993)[[5]](#endnote-5) In 1996, they were granted formal recognition as an immigrant indigenous community by the federal government and in subsequent years by both state and local governments. A cache of benefits flowed to the community to alleviate a century of marginalization, discrimination, low socio-economic status, and poor education and health provision. (Moore 1997; Quanchi 1998)

**Studio Poses and Line-Ups**

The pictorial archive of conventional *Kanaka* portraits is small.[[6]](#endnote-6) Individuals standing, sitting and front-on, and three-quarter portraits, are far fewer in number than group portraits. Both types offer indexical reference as these *in situ* portraits often doubled as a panorama of the cane fields, sugar mills, industrial buildings, worker’s quarters and planter’s mansions. There are few intimate, close-up compositions offering the formal, conventional style of painted portraits that project a likeness, and beyond to a person and their life. The few photographs in this category do faithfully represent an unmistakable individuality and allow access to an individual configured in a “concrete spatial and temporal setting” (Jacques LeGoff cited in Pinney 1997a: 207), but those few that entered the public domain in illustrated newspapers in the 1900-1914 period, or those used in recent times for academic monographs and museum or gallery exhibitions, are mostly un-named individuals. The suffering, emotion, and expression of the person in these studio portraits is often less noticed by readers or audiences than the painted backdrops, particular poses, chairs, a slight smile, a clean shaven face, stoic demeanor or their fashionable clothing.

Indigenous Australians, then known as ‘Blacks’ or Aborigines, had already been photographed as a part of an expanding commercially driven portrait trade. When Pacific Island laborers started arriving in 1863 they also attracted the attention of photographers. It is not possible to date the first *Kanaka* portrait but it is likely this occurred along the Queensland coast in the 1870s possibly taken by the travelling photographer William Boag.[[7]](#endnote-7) He took several scientific reference studies, views and group portraits of laborers at Fouldon and Pleystowe plantations in the Mackay district c1873-1874. (Byrne 1994: Plates 100 to 103)[[8]](#endnote-8) Group portraits with forty to a hundred workers in a ‘line-up’, smaller groups sitting casually on the veranda with a farm owner or outside a ‘Melanesian’ hospital were taken on the Herbert River and Burdekin River in north Queensland the 1880s. The remainder of the individual and group portraits, family and wedding portraits, church congregation and school class portraits are dated mostly after the deportations of 1906-1908. Extant family albums indicate that during World War 1, some portraits were taken of South Sea Islanders in military uniform.

The early one-term, three-year indentured laborers of 1863-1890, as distinct from the later, longer-serving, time-expired and ticket-of-leave workers, are depicted in group portraits and line-ups, often in loose cotton or calico loin-cloths and posed in the fields or in front of mills, barracks and sheds. But by the 1890s and later, some *Kanakas* had become a permanent feature of the rural labor market and they began to pose in studios in the port towns along the Queensland coast. They commissioned portraits as an active expression on their part to be seen and remembered in the present and the future. These ego-documents or swagger portraits,[[9]](#endnote-9) possibly were posed as a “before-I-go” declaration of identity, or given to clan, kin or friends who stayed in Queensland, or were pasted up as a personal record of community, personal and family life. The great majority of extant portraits were pasted in family albums. There is no evidence of self-portraits or of owning a camera by *Kanakas* or their descendants until well into the twentieth century. Individual or group portraits therefore were taken *of Kanakas* rather than *by Kanakas*.

Photographic portraiture, particularly commercial portraiture, has a long history in Australia.[[10]](#endnote-10) The first photograph, taken by a visiting French naval officer in Sydney on 13 May 1841, was not long after Talbot and Daguerre’s amazing announcements. This was quickly followed by the opening of the first portrait studio in November 1842 by George Goodman,[[11]](#endnote-11) the first collodion positive or ambrotype in 1854 and the rapid expansion of paper (after 1858) rather than glass plate photography. The first *carte de visite* appeared in 1859. By 1860, the newly settled region of Western Australia could boast 100 or more amateur and professional photographers and by the 1870s, travelling “correspondents” in the six colonies were sending photographs to their city editors for publication, after conversion “from a photograph” into an etching. In the 1880s, the *carte de visite* was replaced by the larger cabinet format and city studios began producing large quantities of portraits. Wet plate collodion glass negatives and the roll film and Eastman “Kodak” camera after 1888 made family portraits more accessible to the expanding population. By the 1890s, photographs were being reproduced in newsprint using the new halftone process and a new market for portraits commenced.

Several motivations for the taking of portraits emerge from the archive. Group portraits of laborers, commissioned by sugar cane plantation owners, mill operators and small farmers, were used to highlight the opening up of a new industry and the owner’s success in the tropics in what was a relatively new settler colony. Other individual and group portraits were taken by travelling photographers for pictorial features and human-interest stories about rural life, a popular theme in illustrated city newspapers and weekend magazines. For example, *Kanaka* weddings, children, church groups and family portraits appeared in the pictorial weekend newspaper *The Queenslander* in 1901, 1906 and 1909. A few conventional ethnographic front and side portraits, often in front of calibrated backdrops, were taken in the “scientific reference” category. (Edwards 2001: 141)[[12]](#endnote-12) Mostly the portraits seem to be have been commissioned by *Kanakas* to record a special event, marriage, a presence or a departure. These studio portraits conform to those found throughout family albums of that era. Finally, because the Pacific Island Labor Trade was controversial, widely debated in parliaments and in society generally, and was the subject of a political and journalist gaze, some portraits entered the public domain prior to the deportations of 1906-08 as illustrations in propaganda and political campaigns for and against the labor traffic.

A man or woman dressed in fine clothes with a hand resting on an empty chair was a common, world-wide, studio portrait pose. Portraits using a chair as a device to hold the subject stationary were used for individual, husband and wife and wedding portraits. For example, the undated portrait of two un-named young men, one well dressed in European clothes and the other in workman’s clothing (circa early 1900s), the portrait in 1902 of John Mann, Peter Knowles, and Jix Thinee, all well dressed in fashionable, ‘fancy’ male attire of the day, and the portrait taken in 1916 of Willie Querro, Harry Andrew, and Cedric Andrew, all well dressed in European clothes, were typical of the studio photography taken of indigenous people in the colonies in late 19th century Africa. The Queensland examples rely on the same pose, use similar props and in the style of swagger portraits, which Christopher Pinney has shown in India, “exaggerated the glamour and theatricality of the individuals” (1997a: 74). There are many compositional similarities with African portraits, for example, with the self portrait of Herzekiah Andrew Shanu c1897 in the Congo Free State, or “A group of Ngala” c1900, or an unnamed woman from Kasai province, Belgium Congo in 1915. (Geary 2002: Plates 6, 121, 122 and 141) The practice of *sañse* in Senegal, in which Dakar women photographically crafted an elegant and refined presentation of self and their social personae (Mustafa 2002: 173), was similar to the dressing-up of *Kanakas* for portraits. This was not evidence of colonial domination or oppressive commodification but of the action of “agents who deliberately engage with practices of wealth, transnationalism and charisma” (Mustafa 2002: 173-4). As Hudita Mustafa has shown in Dakar, dress was central to portraits. When Pacific Islander field laborers could go to town and dress in the studio as well as teachers, bank clerks and shop-owners, the “double reality of photographs is manipulated and the photograph as a façade indexes another façade, dress” (Landau 2002b:17).[[13]](#endnote-13) When Pacific Islander laborers dressed themselves photographically, they distanced themselves from their daily lives and created alter-ego selves. (Landau 2002b: 17) *Kanaka* children were also photographed in the studio, externally and in front of temporary backdrops, but these portraits of children are mostly from the post-deportation period when marriages with Indigenous Australians, Torres Strait Islanders, and the few remaining female former indentured laborers created the two hundred or so families from which contemporary Australian South Sea Islanders trace their ancestry.

Studio wedding and family group portraits were popular among the wider Australian population and travelling photographers often staged these wedding and family portraits in outdoor settings. The normalcy of the wedding and family group photographs disguises the marginalized status of Pacific Islanders who remained after the deportation period, racially discriminated against, living in the low socio-economic fringe of Anglo-Celtic mainstream society, physically on the edge of town, and politically powerless despite their recent victories campaigning against deportation. The wedding and family portraits identify *Kanakas* as well dressed, presumably Christian, sober, hard-working and aware enough of the medium to be using portraiture to claim a space in mainstream society. This was a usage of studio photographic portraiture to show their aspirations and modern lifestyle in a collectible and exchangeable format. Apart from evidence in family albums we cannot be sure if these portraits were distributed to friends, given away as gifts or sent back home to the islands. The number of studio portraits in extant family albums suggests that *Kanakas* were recording a rite of passage such as a marriage, or gaining a ticket-of-leave, or perhaps merely recording their personal delight at experiencing modern technology, as were most Australians in that period as they discovered the studio, photography and portraiture. The *Kanaka* portraits suggest that Pacific Islanders had, as had Europeans, Africans and South Asians, a good sense of what constituted appropriate pose, gesture and appearance (Geary 2002: 103, 110), no doubt with guidance from the photographer and from witnessing portraits previously taken of their friends.

**Workers and Propaganda**

The line-up of workers forms the largest category of extant ‘portrait’ photography. William Boag’s group portrait at Pleystowe plantation c1874 includes 78 male and female laborers, children and babies and an owner or overseer posing in the back row looking away from the camera. In a similar group portrait taken at Macknade plantation, Herbert River c1880s, 45 male adult laborers are situated in front of the manager’s residence, with the European manager in the center above the group on top of the stairs. In another, 38 men and one female Pacific Islander lined up outside a sugar mill at Hambledon in 1891. These line-up or group portraits confirmed a master-servant relationship and contractual obligation by placing the European in the center of the frame, looking off camera, or physically above or to the side of the laborers. Group portraits taken in the field showing laborers lined up with tools, often with a mounted overseer, also suggested the pliability of the labor force and the surveillance and discipline which controlled their daily tasks. These were taken as propaganda images, possibly to attract investors, or convince skeptical southern critics that laborers were sturdy, healthy and happy in their work in Queensland. Several group portraits of female laborers were also photographed. In the absence of first-hand reportage or photographer’s diaries, it is not clear whether male and female *Kanakas* ‘dressed up’ for photography sessions but in the 1860s-1880s, indentured laborers were more likely to wear loose loin clothes in the fields. This suggests the line-up or group portraits taken in the 1870s and 1880s with workers dressed in shirts and trousers and in the case of women, full length dresses, had been carefully staged. Later, in front of a travelling photographer’s portable, canvas, painted backdrop or in studio portraits taken in the 1890s and 1900s and after deportation, dress was nearly always formal and in the full European style of the day. Historically these line-ups and group portraits of workers are important because they document the size of the work force, geographic distribution, specific plantation locations, gender, and working conditions of the indentured labor force in Queensland. They also provide insights into social relations and the racism underpinning authority and working conditions. They suggest but provide limited evidence of cross-cultural tensions between laborers from different islands, language groups and cultures forced to work and live as a team.

**School and Church Portraiture**

A further category is school and church group portraits. One of the earliest appeared as an etching in the *Illustrated Australasian News* in October 1884. Possibly based on a photograph at Oakenden plantation near Mackay, it depicts three rows of converts - 30 men and women - with their female Sunday-School teacher, Miss Jobson, the manager’s daughter. (*Illustrated:* 27)[[14]](#endnote-14) The most favored composition was a congregation in front of a church or church hall such as those photographed at St. Mary’s Anglican Church, Mackay in 1907 and the Seventh Day Adventist Church at Farleigh, Mackay in 1925. The men, women and children in these portraits are now being identified by descendants as part of a community engagement project across Queensland. For example, 38 of the 70 men, women and children in a group portrait at the Seventh Day Adventist Church at Dumbleton, Mackay c1930 are named in the commemorative publication *Fields of Sorrow*. (Andrew and Cook 2000) These group portraits also reveal the racist segregation of ‘black’ congregations who were forced to, or independently created separate Sunday School classes, congregations and even church buildings. They also reveal the differences in wealth among the Pacific Islander community with many in the congregation attending church in basic working-man’s clothes, while others are fashionably dressed in three piece suits and ties or dresses. Bicycles piled up against the church wall suggest that South Sea Islanders had acquired social status or were wealthy enough to take up the cycling craze, and perhaps that long distances were pedaled to attend Church and to enjoy the familiarity of language, community and same-island origins.

The school classroom portrait also reveals the extent of the *Kanaka* presence in coastal Queensland.Early in the 20th century travelling photographers and town-based studio photographers began taking class photographs of school children and these indicate the post-deportation presence of Pacific Islander families in the wider community. Class portraits in many north Queensland coastal towns usually included two or three *Kanaka* children. At Etworie School in 1936, the five part-Indigenous Australian and part-*Kanaka* children from the Mooney family fitted easily into a multicultural community with the seven Sologenkins, four Camerilli and the Borg, Formosa, Mifsud and Gauci children, all from European immigrant families of non-British origins. As Henry Reynolds and Regina Ganter have recently argued, Northern Australia had a distinctly multicultural history, quite different to the Anglo-Celtic, urban, conservative tradition of the southern British colonies and then states of the federated nation after 1901. (Reynolds 2003; Gatner 2005; 2006.)[[15]](#endnote-15)

A further category of portraits might be termed *opportunity portraits,* or photographs taken by chance by a travelling photographer in front of a laborer’s makeshift house, a farm owner’s more substantial dwelling, in front of barracks, a mill or wider industrial scene. These images could be initially regarded as documentary but they served multiple purposes of highlighting the *Kanaka’s* bodies, or as individual human-interest subjects, or as propaganda concerning their role as available labor supply*,* or as pictorial industrial evidence. For example, three *Kanaka* males posing in front of the ‘Melanesian Hospital’ on Pioneer plantation on the lower Burdekin c1884 could be regarded as a group portrait to keep or send home, or as propaganda against southern colony accusations of inhumane treatment, high death rates and allegedly poor food, housing and health provisions. The photographer might be showing audiences the muscular bodies of the hard-working laborers or alternatively merely adding human interest to industrial documentary photograph. There are many examples of multiple purpose imaging.

**Multiple Trajectories, Individuals and Memory**

Portraits provide face-value evidence of the indentured laborer’s colonial relationships, and outside the frame, suggest other individual motivations and personal aspirations.[[16]](#endnote-16) In the indentured laborer’s desire to possess a studio portrait in European style clothing, presumably for taking back to the islands, if before 1906, or pasting in a family album after 1906, we can see an “accommodation to colonial society” (Moore 1993: 71). Geoffrey Batchen calls the popularity of a well-dressed studio portrait among the British working class the adoption of a “cheaper version of the visual affectations of their betters” (1994: 35). The dress, pose and format suggest that Pacific Island laborers were borrowing a British emphasis on proper conduct, identity and social position. But as proper conduct, identity and status also were acknowledged as highly valued in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, an alternative reading suggests the continuation of island *kastom (*customary practices), or agency, rather than borrowing. The decision to have a portrait made might be regarded as demonstrating autonomous island-centered agency emerging from the cultural values and perceptions of clan or language groups, for example, of young men from the northeast coast of Malaita, Tanna Island in southern Vanuatu or the Louisiade Archipelago.

Stephen Sprague’s study of Yoruba photography showed how the traditional formal portrait in Africa played a similar role to that in British society. Sprague noted many Yoruba (and British) were unsophisticated and unable to articulate what the portraits meant to them, and instead accepted “the photographic image as a visual record which serves as a device to bring to mind at some future time the people and events depicted” (2003: 246, 251). In another interesting comparison, Sprague notes the Yoruba had a strong figurative art tradition in anthropomorphic carving and this aesthetic value translated to an interest in the body, posture and dress in portraiture (Sprague 2003: 257). Vanuatu and Solomon Islander laborers also had a similar figurative art tradition, and this may have motivated Pacific Islanders in Queensland towards photographic portraiture. However there is danger in imposing a common cultural background on the immigrant indentured population and categorizing the archive of portraits as ‘Melanesian’ and, and secondly, in attributing deep, symbolic meanings to what were primarily a memory device.

As historical evidence, a portrait is important in an indexical sense because propaganda and photo-journalism overlapped when the intention was to demonstrate the physical and practical advantages of an indigenous labor market and promote capitalist enterprises based on that labor, or alternatively when the intention was to demonstrate the exploitative and oppressive nature of indenture systems. Portraits of indigenous imported labor, similar to those taken in Africa[[17]](#endnote-17) and South Asia,[[18]](#endnote-18) can offer access to the life histories of the living, the strong, happy and married and their relatively affluence can be traced through this visual evidence, but not the high mortality, oppressive conditions and racial discrimination felt by a black minority in what was being governed as, and promoted as a European settler society.

The *Kanaka* portrait gallery is a very small but informative archive. Each image tells us about a person, their individual response to new situations and spatially the place *Kanakas* occupied as a community. The proliferation of accoutrement, artifacts and adornment in individual studio portraits, and the *mise en scène* or staged exterior group portraits are important in revealing both the character and interests of the sitters, and contextually the wider history of the indenture traffic. But while the external appearance, rhetorical gesture or the figure of the portrait subject is revealed, the interior or soul is not. As Gen Doy notes, “the true self of the sitter is ultimately inaccessible” (2005:22). One challenge for Australian South Sea Islanders today, who consistently claim their descendants were kidnapped, treated as slaves and suffered poor health, malnutrition, arduous working conditions and violence, is that the visual evidence at face value when browsing through family albums or exhibition displays is mostly from the later period of indenture or the post-deportation era. As this photographic record depicts mostly healthy, well dressed individuals and families and a vibrant community life, claims today of despair, exclusion, marginalization and discrimination by Australian South Sea Islanders are not supported visually.

The observations of *Kanaka* descendants that have travelled ‘home’ to Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and the Loyalty Islands in the 1980s and 1990s, suggest that very few portrait photographs of the colonial era survived the trip back, inadequate storage and a tropical climate. Further research by Australian South Sea Islander families today, and the communities in the Pacific from which their descendants signed-on, might reveal more of the history of the sitters, and the journeys made by individual photographs. Further institutional and community searches hopefully will reveal a larger archive of conversation pieces,[[19]](#endnote-19) investigative photo-journalist ‘line-ups’, staged *tableau vivant*, and commemorative group portraits to support the writing of a more comprehensive visual history of Pacific Island laborers in Queensland.[[20]](#endnote-20) Although *Kanaka* portraits were not widely published, sold as prints or made into postcards they are important for several still un-researched discourses – the reception of the portraits in villages after laborers returned to the islands, the meanings and interpretations attributed today by Queensland descendants looking at portraits in family albums generations after their taking, and the multiple uses made of these portraits today in exhibitions, school texts and commemorative publications.[[21]](#endnote-21) For indentured Pacific Island laborers, portraits were mnemonic, simply something to take home to the islands, but for those who stayed, they helped *Kanakas* claim a place in their new home in northern Australia.

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1. Today the term Australian South Sea Islander is preferred in community nomenclature, but descendants tend to maintain an identity with, for example, Vanuatu or the Solomon Islands or a particular island, and a village if they have been able to trace their family histories. I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for providing several helpful suggestions. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For an argument that photographs dispersed across archives, libraries, galleries, museums, and in private hands still constitute an ‘archive’ see Quanchi 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For the depictive function and interpretive analysis see Trachtenberg 1989: xiii-xiv and xvi. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The labor trade is extensively documented. For a review of the literature see Moore 1990; Munro 1993; and Munro 1995. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Four major studies have covered the history of indentured Pacific Island laborers in Queensland: Moore 1985; Fatnowna 1988; Mercer 1995; and Gistitin 1995. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. For example, the John Oxley Library holds only 225 photographs of “Kanakas”. Sixty of these are accessible through the Library’s digital picture portal. The Australian National Library holds another 30 images. Roughly 15% are portraits. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. For the history of Queensland photography see Brown 1985. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The Oxley Library, Brisbane, holds 300 of Boag’s glass plates c1871-75, and thirteen other *Kanaka* portraits by known and unknown photographers, and sixty group portraits*.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. For “ego-documents” see Burke 1997: 25-6. The term “swagger portrait,” coined by Andrew Wilton, is discussed in the context of Indian photographic portraits in Pinney 1997: 74. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The following section is based on Davies 2004 and Newton 1988. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. A daguerreotype of the Sydney merchant and pioneer Thomas and his wife Theresa Mort, c1847, is often claimed to be one off the earliest photographs and portraits. See Sayers 2004: 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. The only photographer known to have taken ethnographic or ‘scientific’ portraits was William Boag when he visited several Mackay sugar plantations, c1874. For example, he took a “before-and-after civilization” series showing *Kanakas* in loincloths and then dressed in a worker’s shirt and trousers. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. See also Buckley 2008: 183-192; and Buckley 2001: 71-91. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Clive Moore suggests this might be Mrs. Donaldson’s Presbyterian Mission at Sandiford plantation, near Homebush, Mackay. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Reynolds includes twenty photographs of South Sea Islanders. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. For the constructed nature of photography see Tagg 1993 and 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. For Africa see Sprague 203; Viditz-Ward 1987; Prins 1990; Faris 1992; Ballerini, 1993; Allina 1997; Hartman 1998; Geary 2002; Landau and Kaspin 2002; Porto 2004. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. For South Asia see Pinney 1992: 165-73; Pinney 1997. For India see Gutman 1989; Falconer 1984; Mackenzie 1987; Worswick 1990. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. The term ‘conversation piece’ is borrowed from painted group portraits popular in 18th century English art. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. There are only a few photographs of recruiting, the passage to Queensland, disembarkation and deportation or return to Vanuatu or the Solomon Islands, the main source of laborers. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. For example, the cover of the catalogue for the *Across the Coral Sea; Loyalty Islanders in Queensland* exhibition was a portrait of a young man in working clothes posed before a stand of uncut cane. (Department 2001) Portraits are used uncritically and often unlabeled throughout a Queensland Sugar Industry curriculum package for schools. See Berry 2000.Similar imagery was used in *Behind the Cane* a musical stage production in Bowen, north Queensland in 2011. See Wills 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)