Paper Title:
Kanetaka Kaoru and the South Pacific Islands: Travel documentary and travel-writing in the early 1960s.

Name of Author 1 Nishino Ryôta

Institutional Affiliation
The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.
Email: Nishino_r@usp.ac.fj

Proposed Program Stream:
Interdisciplinary or History

Abstract
Abstract text (no more than 500 words with no figures or tables)

In the English-speaking academy travel writing has grown into an interdisciplinary scholarly field. The scholars apply the discourses of Orientalism, post-colonialism and counter-hegemony to analyse to better understand the subtle and not-so-subtle descriptions of the destinations and the people and about themselves. Numerous scholars have demonstrated the
image of the Pacific Islands as idyllic paradise is a most potent and enduring trope European travel-writing and novel. The analyses of Japanese literary representation of ‘the South Sea’ islands by Faye Yuan Kleeman and Naoto Sudō (Taiwan and Micronesia respectively) reach similar conclusions. Yet, as the theorist Kang Sang-Jung finds, ‘Japanese orientalism’ has mutually enhancing role of defending colonialism by the West, and imposes Japanese hegemonic power over Asia Pacific.

Kanetaka’s approach is largely ethnographic. She reports the culture and societies of the South Pacific Islands, but does not present the Pacific Islands as one monolithic paradisical zone. Some, but not all, Pacific Islanders developed capacity to progress and to engage in trade and business. In particular she admires ethnic Fijian chiefs and urbane ethnic Fijians. She maintains that they had struck a fine balance between their own culture and western civilisation. She seems to vindicate her self-image as a globe-trotting ambassador of postwar Japan clad in kimono. Rather she paints a nuanced picture informed of her values in civility and respectability. By contrast Kanetaka is appalled and annoyed by debauched and arrogant westerners she encountered in Suva. In Papua New Guinea she is impressed with a Papuan coffee grower. However, she doubts whether some rural Papuans would evolve from their own civilisation, and achieve the same attainment as the ethnic Fijians. Kanetaka presents Vanuatu as a contact zone between the newly-established Japanese fishery station and the undeveloped tropical forest. Kanetaka finds the Japanese fishermen had ‘gone native’ to the local conditions and the demands of work. She revises her preconceptions of the ‘rough and ready’ stereotypes of fishermen.

Kanetaka depicts a sanguine impression of the islands and their future. While she reports former soldiers who fought the Japanese in the Pacific War, she does not dwell on their wartime memories. Rather she seems to suggest the Japanese could compensate the wartime disrepute through cultivating new collective and individual character.

Keywords: Kanetaka Kaoru, travel documentary, travel-writing, Pacific Islands.