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To cite this article: Ryota Nishino (2016) The self-promotion of a maverick travel writer: Suzuki Tsunenori and his Southern Pacific Islands travelogue, Nanyō tanken jikki, Studies in Travel Writing, 20:4, 378-391, DOI: [10.1080/13645145.2016.1264356](https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2016.1264356)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2016.1264356>



Published online: 02 Feb 2017.



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The self-promotion of a maverick travel writer: Suzuki Tsunenori and his Southern Pacific Islands travelogue, *Nanyō tanken jikki*

Ryota Nishino *

Suzuki Tsunenori (1853–1938; also known as Keikun) was one of the pioneering writers on Pacific Islands in the Meiji period. Recent scholarship has exposed flaws in his representation of Pacific Islanders in his landmark travelogue, *Nanyō tanken jikki* [A True Chronicle of South Seas Exploration] (1892). While the criticism undermined his reputation for his ethnographic eye, this essay employs an alternative critical angle on self-presentation. Suzuki promotes himself as a shrewd multi-talented traveller, culturally astute and willing to venture into the wild. First, this essay sketches the circumstances under which Suzuki embarked on his southern Pacific Islands journey of 1889–1890. Then it analyses how Suzuki projects his desired persona in *Jikki*. He seeks to develop and exploit these attributes to advertise his performance as a reporter, a cultural interlocutor and a grassroots ambassador. An inward-looking orientation helps us to present a clearer picture of Suzuki's life and travelogues.

Keywords: Suzuki Tsunenori (1853–1938); South Pacific; Japan; travel writing; self-representation

Suzuki Tsunenori (also known as Keikun, 1853–1938) was one of the several travellers to, and travel writers on, Pacific Islands in the early decades of Meiji Japan (1868–1926). The author of three published books, numerous articles and reports, he is known for richly detailed writing on fauna, flora and sociocultural descriptions, often with the accompaniment of his skilful hand-drawn sketches. Of his three published travelogues, *Nanyō tanken jikki* [A True Chronicle of South Seas Exploration] (hereafter *Jikki*) (1892) is arguably the best known.¹ *Jikki* contains two travelogues. The first derives from his journey to the Marshall Islands from September 1884 to January 1885. The second, the focus of this essay, occurred between August 1889 and February 1890. He visited Hawai'i, Fanning Island, Samoa, Fiji and Guam.

Suzuki was one of several pioneering Japanese writers who called for Japanese expansion to the Pacific Islands. He shared common “fringe liberal” traits of fellow South Seas writers of his time. These observers did not come from the top echelon of the Japanese society of the era: they saw themselves as *déclassé* or as facing the possibility of losing their socio-economic status in the Meiji reform (Yano 1975, 64–65, 1979, 59). In 1886, Suzuki's contemporary, Shiga Shigetaka (1863–1927), travelled on a navy ship and visited Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Hawai'i. His reportage, *Nanyō jiji* [Current affairs of the South Seas] (1888) proclaimed the South as an alternative geopolitical realm (Gavin 1998; Yano 1979, 24–28).² However, Suzuki seems oblivious of Shiga's writing. Nakajima Hiroshi (1983a, 32) finds little trace of Shiga's travelogue in Suzuki's *Jikki* and suspects that Suzuki did not even consult it. This may have helped

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Jikki to distinguish itself from Shiga's travelogue, and to enjoy reasonable commercial success. *Jikki* had two additional print-runs within six months of publication in 1892; two separate publishers republished it in 1937 and 1938 (Esaki 1944, 5; Takeshita 1943, 213). Writers and surveyors often cited *Jikki* for its ethnographic information when the political and commercial interest in the Pacific Islands grew in the wake of the Japanese takeover of them after the First World War (Nakamura 1997, 82–83).

What make Suzuki unique are the dramatic falls in his reputation. The re-issues of *Jikki* in the 1980s opened it to new criticism that exposed Suzuki's evident prejudice against the Pacific Islanders and his depiction of their customs without scientific or philosophical underpinning. More criticism emerged in the 1990s. Takayama Jun's 400-plus pages study exposed fundamental flaws in the Marshall Islands travelogue in *Jikki* and established plagiarism of Western travelogues in his descriptions. These faults led Takayama (1995, 384) to suspect that Suzuki's intention lay in promoting himself as a pioneering traveller to the Marshall Islands rather than as a dispassionate reporter of the facts. Similarly, Kawamura Minato (1996, 150) questions Suzuki's integrity and dismisses Suzuki as "a mischievous bluffer – a trickster of Pacific Island ethnography".³ Mark Peattie (1988, 11) finds that in Suzuki's senior years he reinvented himself as "a great raconteur who, often aided by the friendly ministrations of *sake*, never let the truth get in the way of a good story" even if his embellishments created contradictions in his accounts.

These caveats are valid but raise new questions about Suzuki and *Jikki*. This essay draws on English-speaking scholars of travel writing to ask a question other scholars have ignored: what does Suzuki aim to achieve as a "bluffer" and a "raconteur"? Holland and Huggan (2000, xi), in a comment resonant of Takayama's suspicion, assert that travel writing has earned notoriety as "a practiced art of dissimulation [...] generally elusive and empirically disingenuous, deliberately disabling and unclear". However, dismissing travelogues as a genre of "pseudos" – pseudo-ethnography, pseudo-biography, pseudo-literary and pseudo-historical – is not helpful for a more textured appreciation of them. Travel writing scholars recognise the diversity of travel writers' backgrounds, styles, themes and content that renders the travelogue a hybrid genre best suited to multiple analytical strategies other than fact checking or lie-detection (Youngs 2013, 174). A viable alternative is to shift the focus and to tease out what personality and attributes Suzuki hoped to project in *Jikki*.⁴ After all, it is the main text upon which the ordinary reader makes judgements about the author. Put differently, this essay attempts "a revision of revisions" by probing Suzuki's self-presentation as it emerges from his text.⁵

Carl Thompson (2011, 119) points out that travel writers have projected certain sets of personae in travelogues for centuries and has analysed several travelogues for their (pseudo-) autobiographical element, whereby authors "usually offer a carefully staged presentation of the self" and seek to boost their social status. This is precisely why a re-evaluation of *Jikki* can help us to a better understanding of what travel writers hope to achieve from carefully staged presentation of the self emerging from the episodes and narrative strategies. This essay initiates an "inward turn" (Thompson 2011, 54, 99 and 108) in the study of Japanese travelogues. It argues that Suzuki writes about himself as a traveller *par excellence* with an array of attributes such as shrewdness, familiarity with Western languages and Christianity, ability to act as a grassroots ambassador for Japan and fortitude to venture into the wilderness. Before analysing *Jikki*, it is necessary to place his journey in the context of his life and times, to appreciate the possible motivation for his journey and the persona he seeks to present in *Jikki*. The question of self-presentation matters to Suzuki's voyage, which has received less attention than his Marshall Islands travelogue. It is hoped that this essay advances the present scholarship on Japanese writing on the Pacific, which is currently dominated by Micronesia.⁶ This journey occurred at a time of crisis in Suzuki's personal life and when Pacific Islands were faced with varying and unrelenting forces of western imperialism.⁷

Suzuki Tsunenori: why write?

Secondary sources agree that Suzuki's life was unconventional and eventful. Yet his life trajectory shares traits in common with his contemporary South Seas writers. It has to be remembered that in challenging the elites, those South Seas writers imagined the South Seas as an alternative sphere to exercise Japan's fledgling imperial influence. Their position, though marginal, came to represent the dissenting voice of "fringe liberals" (Yano 1975, 64–65, 1979, 63). Born into a low-ranking samurai family in 1853, Suzuki received Western language training between the ages of 12 and 14. In 1872, his family fortune dwindled after his father suffered a severe cerebral haemorrhage. To make ends meet, Suzuki helped run a school taught by French Catholic missionaries. The enterprise did not sufficiently ameliorate the reduced family finances; Suzuki left for Tokyo, and in 1876 found work on a boat operated by an Englishman. Unbeknown to Suzuki, the boat engaged in illegal fur trading. He wrote an exposé, which aided the hiring of the 27-year-old as a translator in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1879 (Takayama 1995, 219). In September 1884, the Ministry charged Suzuki and Gotō Taketarō, the son of Suzuki's father's friend, the politician Gotō Shōjirō, with the task of investigating the murder of castaway Japanese pearl divers earlier that year. This voyage spelt Suzuki's fall from grace. As Peattie documents (1988, 9–13), on Ailinglaplap atoll, Suzuki had the Japanese flag hoisted at the local chief's house. The Foreign Ministry was outraged. At that time, Germany was consolidating its colonial presence. The Japanese did not wish to provoke a troublesome diplomatic row out of Suzuki's mischievous gesture. The Ministry demanded that Suzuki return to the atoll to take the flag down. He resigned from the Ministry, presumably to take responsibility for his act. Upon his resignation, he received a schooner from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, possibly as an olive branch for his resignation.

Unemployment in no way dampened Suzuki's passion for sailing and the Pacific Islands. He went on several voyages on his schooner until it was damaged in storms in 1887. In July 1889, Suzuki turned to the Ministry of Navy and requested a passenger's berth on navy training vessels, the *Kongō* and the *Hiei*, bound for the southern Pacific (Kaigunshō 1889). This voyage began in August 1889 and lasted six months. Newspapers in Hawai'i (Katō [1984] 1987, 114) and Fiji (*The Fiji Times* 11, 14, 18, 21 and 25 December 1889) reported the arrival and the departure of the Japanese vessels and naval officers. Such evidence helps dispel suspicion about whether he ever even undertook the journey. Following his return to Japan in February 1890, he tried his hand in South Seas business ventures but failure obliged him to sell his assets to pay his debts. In 1890, his friend, Nozawa Tōkichi, recognised that Suzuki had valuable tales to tell, listened to his stories and published his travel account, *Nanyōshi* [Observations on the South Seas]. In 1891, aged 39, he married and decided to devote himself to writing his travelogues to relieve his financial burden. *Jikki* was the first of the three travel monographs Suzuki authored (Nakamura 1997; Takeshita 1943, 210–213).

On its surface, *Jikki* comes across as a dry account of his travel, lacking stylistic finesse and disclosure of feelings. Suzuki neither rhapsodises the pleasures nor complains of the pains of his journey. The only complaint he has written is a minor one of waiting for three weeks to eat a substantial meal of beef on his voyage to Hawai'i ([1892] 1980, 107, 109–110). Nor does he indulge in what later became the standard motifs of the Pacific Islands: the tropical climate, the idyllic beaches and the alluring women. Moreover, possibly out of concern for confidentiality, he writes very little of his interactions with others and the activities of the navy officers and trainees. Suzuki does not acknowledge the sources of information he consulted before and after the journey to corroborate his observations. His choice of subject matter and omissions can give *Jikki* an air of self-absorption and makes *Jikki* fit with the "pseudo" epithet of travel writing. However, a survey of his life story can provide a plausible rationale for regarding *Jikki* not merely as a travelogue, but as his crucible for testing whether he should be taken seriously amongst the intelligentsia and

policy-makers. Read through the lens of self-presentation, *Jikki* features episodes and recurring motifs that advertise his attributes as a Pacific Islands traveller nonpareil. Specific incidents in *Jikki* underscore self-promotion as a significant driving force behind the narrative, an endeavour that begins from the first destination, Honolulu, where he exhibits his shrewdness in operating to achieve his objective.

Suzuki as a shrewd traveller

Only one day after arriving in Honolulu, on 24 September, Suzuki wasted little time in insinuating himself into a meeting with Robert William Kalanihiapo Wilcox – a Hawaiian of mixed-descent, who had returned to Hawai‘i from study and work abroad in April 1889 with political ambitions. At the time of Suzuki’s visit, the Hawaiian Kingdom was in deep political turmoil. As well as pressure from Britain and the United States, the local planters (*haole*) threatened King Kalākaua (r. 1874–1891) into signing the Bayonet Constitution in 1887. It stripped the Hawaiian royalty of sovereign rights and accorded decision-making power to the cabinet, which was elected by Europeans, the *haole* and wealthy Hawaiians. Thus, the Constitution represented a significant step towards the overthrow of the Kingdom. Wilcox saw King Kalākaua as ineffective and backed his sister Princess Lili‘uokalani to be the next monarch. Wilcox succeeded in garnering many supporters for his “fiery, magnetic style of oratory” (Kuykendall 1967, 418). In July 1889, he assembled a small but committed association of part-Hawaiians and *haole* to challenge Kalākaua’s legitimacy and restore the royal sovereignty. Wilcox’s revolt on 30 July culminated in American naval intervention, and his own imprisonment, which significantly weakened the protest movement (Andrade 1996, 44–48, 55–65; Kuykendall 1967, 416–425).

Suzuki related his meeting with Wilcox to promote his ability to think and act quickly to achieve an aim of meeting a famous person. To seek an audience with Wilcox, Suzuki went to the police station by himself. He gained permission to visit the cells upstairs but two junior constables escorted him. Suzuki understood that the senior constable had instructed the two junior constables that they were not to let him meet Wilcox (Suzuki [1892] 1980, 113). Upstairs and away from the senior constable, Suzuki proposed a payment of a dollar each to the two constables if they took him to Wilcox’s cell. The constables initially hesitated. Suzuki promised secrecy and gave them the bribe. The constables then took the him to Wilcox’s cell (113). Here, Suzuki learnt the subordinate position of the junior constables and showed his willingness to take the risk of employing unethical means to defeat bureaucracy – within a day of arriving in a foreign land. Suzuki’s meeting with Wilcox says much about his motivation to raise his stature in Japan’s high society.

Suzuki’s description of meeting with Wilcox advertises Suzuki’s ability to create a favourable impression in an instant. Wilcox looked gloomy and even commented that he could receive a death sentence. Suzuki conveyed his admiration for Wilcox’s political cause and encouraged him not to lose hope for himself and for Hawai‘i. Wilcox thanked him for his empathetic words and acknowledged Suzuki as the first “Japanese gentleman” (114). The conversation came to an abrupt end when the constables intervened for fear of the senior constable coming upstairs. In parting, Suzuki and Wilcox exchanged their addresses and promised to meet again. The description aims to create a melodramatic end and hopeful promise. Suzuki made a good impression on Wilcox as the first Japanese he had ever met and a political sympathiser. To reiterate the importance of Wilcox, Suzuki’s closing comments noted many indigenous households putting up Wilcox’s portrait in prominent places (114). Suzuki hoped that his encounter with Wilcox would bring future employment should the latter leave prison and rise to prominence in Hawaiian politics.

If we recall the reputation of the South Seas writers as “fringe liberals”, Suzuki’s solidarity with Wilcox could bolster Suzuki’s credentials as a kindred rebel. Such a reputation would not be likely to win the confidence of the Meiji-era elites who might not have wanted political firebrands. The remainder of Suzuki’s account of Hawai‘i toned down his political statements. Suzuki does not suggest politics was important to him. Nor does he seem to care much about Wilcox. He neglects to inform the reader of what happened to Wilcox at the pending trial, which saw him acquitted of the charges.⁸ Soon after they parted, Suzuki commented that Wilcox did not seem to suffer much from his imprisonment. He saw that Wilcox’s cell was well-furnished and his day-to-day life was not severely compromised (114). Suzuki caricatured Wilcox as a privileged political prisoner and mocked his gloomy mood as a performance to draw the visitor’s sympathy. He seemed to know enough to be able to engage with Wilcox and make a good impression. This was the versatility Suzuki promoted as a traveller with many skills to boast. His satirical description would, at least on the surface, engender an impression that politics was of marginal interest to him, but achieving tasks mattered more. One question we can ask is: has Suzuki’s self-presentation worked? Contemporaneous assessments are absent. However, when a reassessment of Suzuki was occurring in the 1980s, sociology professor Katō Hidetoshi traced back Suzuki’s Hawaiian journey and critiqued his Hawaiian chapter of *Jikki*. Katō was impressed by Suzuki’s “quick grasp of Hawaiian politics within a day of his arrival”, and with his “instinctively identifying Wilcox as the most important person in Hawai‘i” ([1984] 1987, 119–120). Having examined *Jikki* here, Katō’s comments seem naively flattering. However, his appraisal testifies to Suzuki’s success in promoting his resourcefulness. This was the praise Suzuki had coveted and hoped would come in his own lifetime.

Exploiting linguistic and religious knowledge

After Hawai‘i, Suzuki reaches Samoa and Fiji. By the time of his visit, Samoa and Fiji had come under the firmer grip of Western imperial powers. In *Jikki*, we find Suzuki repeatedly capitalising on his familiarity with Catholicism, and French and English languages. He presents himself as a deft gatherer of information and insights hitherto unavailable to the Japanese. As soon as he arrived in Apia on the morning of 28 November, he began reporting extensive damage to the harbour and the town caused by a cyclone earlier in March of the same year (Meleisea 1987, 40). Seeing bullet marks on buildings prompts him to question the local residents about them. He learns that these marks are from the civil war in the previous year. Suzuki comments: “I could not help but acting out of sympathy or stop myself from visiting a church to ask what had happened” ([1892] 1980, 152).⁹ He describes his chance meeting with Father Eugene Didier – a French priest who served in Samoa until his death in 1890 (Heslin 1995, 140). After a short conversation Didier agrees to meet him the following day and fill him in with some political background on Samoa. Suzuki claims to have mastered Didier’s account of Samoa’s plight under European imperialism. Suzuki then deduces that the rivalry amongst the Samoan chiefdoms turned into a proxy war between the Western powers – on the pretence of defending the Samoan king of their choice. He notes that the war frightened the Samoans, who fled into the mountains, and caused the destruction of Apia ([1892] 1980, 154). Suzuki has demonstrated his efficient gathering of local information, and presented himself as such. It took nearly a century to uncover that Suzuki has mistaken the names of Samoan chiefs (Mori 1980, 188–189, n. 2; Nakajima 1983a, 23).

As well as displaying his information-gathering skills, Suzuki portrays himself as someone who exploits his cultural capital to strike a rapport with Westerners. It seems as though Didier has accorded Suzuki enough trust and “lent me [Suzuki] a French-speaking slave [*sic*], who gave me a guided tour of [Apia] town” ([1892] 1980, 152). Suzuki then tells of his meeting a village

chief through the guide's introduction. He is pleased to receive hospitality from the chief: a meal and a night's stay in the village (152). Suzuki's descriptions make it seem that he has initiated these interactions and gained the results without appearing to make much effort. Suzuki's past language training in French and association with the French Catholic missionaries accords him confidence in crossing significant cultural boundaries such as "race", language and religion. His securing an appointment with the priest shows the reader that such an opportunity would not have arisen were it not for his familiarity with Western languages and Catholicism. Through these descriptions, he emphasises his ability to relate to a Western priest he had never met. The meeting has led to the further unexpected and pleasant occurrences of a guided tour and hospitality at a village.

On the second day in Apia, Suzuki meets two rival kings, Malietoa and Mata'afa, separately. Upon his reaching Mata'afa's residence, a woman whom Suzuki assumes is his daughter and princess greets him. He judges she has a

gifted intellect. She is familiar with the teaching of Catholicism. I knew it from the missionaries. Then I got to meet the king by the introduction by the princess. (157)

Suzuki writes that Mata'afa was delighted to meet him, and the two discussed numerous topics ranging from the *Kongō* to the political situation in Japan. Then Suzuki turns to the princess:

First I discussed Christianity with her. I then asked her what the situation was like in Samoa. The princess looked poignant and said, "Oh, our Samoa is falling into the hands of the Germans [...] The Germans preach the good they do for us, but make things worse for us by pretending to help us." [...] Her intelligence and argument make her a matriarch of the South Seas. (157–158)

Suzuki's account of the events makes it seem all smooth, and perhaps too smooth to convince the suspecting reader that the conversation ever took place. How could a Japanese man impress a Samoan woman whom he has never met? Suzuki seems willing to show that his knowledge of French and Catholicism has paid large dividends. He has built a rapport with the Samoans, enabling him to gather more information on Samoa than a traveller without this linguistic and religious knowledge. He has gained a fine reception from a Samoan king, and also won sufficient trust from his daughter to extract an honest opinion on Western imperialism. He lets her speak rather than making his own judgement. Nor does he attempt a comparison between Samoa's predicament and Japan's foreign relations with the West and East Asia. This lack of insight may make him appear apolitical or uninterested, but it may also place him in the guise of a disinterested reporter adept at garnering more information than an average observer.

Suzuki ends his Samoan chapter by describing a *kava* ceremony he attended in Pago Pago.¹⁰ He devotes four full pages to the cultural significance of *kava* in the southern Pacific Islands, which makes it the longest exposition on a single topic in his southern Pacific travelogue. It is long partly because he does not miss the opportunity to explain how he was invited to the ceremony. During his seven-day stay in Pago Pago, he has become acquainted with Father Joseph Forestier, a Catholic priest, who invites him and his companions to the *kava* ceremony. Suzuki builds up his narrative by juxtaposing the significance of *kava* with Forestier's invitation. The day before the fleet's departure, Suzuki acts as an interpreter between Forestier and Captain Samejima Kazunori, the captain of the *Kongō*. Forestier is delighted to see the visitors and takes them to a village, where the chief invites them to a *kava* ceremony (177). At the farewell, Suzuki reports Samejima is "very happy to attend the ceremony unexpectedly, and conveyed his deep gratitude to Father Forestier" (179). Suzuki adroitly turns Samejima's appreciation into a celebration of his own performance as an interpreter. Furthermore, Suzuki's self-fashioning effort manifests itself in the structure of *Jikki*. Suzuki notes the vessels were docked at Pago Pago between 21 and 28

November, and at Apia between 28 and 30 November (143–144 and 149); yet Suzuki's Samoa chapter begins at Apia and ends in Pago Pago. This sequence can leave the reader with a lasting impression of Suzuki's calibre as an interpreter who delivers beyond Samejima's expectations. Suzuki does so not by lauding his performance as an interpreter, but by ending with Samejima's satisfaction at Suzuki's performance.

Suzuki's self-promoting narrative continues in Levuka, on the Fijian Island of Ovalau. A small frontier town, Levuka was the earliest commercial centre and was the capital of Fiji in 1874 when the Fiji island group was ceded to Britain. The transfer of this capital to Suva on Viti Levu in 1882 caused the flight of commerce and people (Ralston 1977, 216). Suzuki's four-day visit unfolds a now-formulaic plot. He meets Catholic missionaries, and lets them introduce him to the sociocultural situations and the indigenous people. Shortly after his arrival he meets the 72-year-old Father Jean-Baptiste Bréhéret, whom Suzuki describes as the best-known Catholic missionary of the time. Bréhéret spent 40 odd years in Fiji and tirelessly proselytised the Islanders. Suzuki writes that Bréhéret lends him "a dinghy and three slaves [*sic*]", and the entourage visits the village of Tokou, six kilometres south of Levuka ([1892] 1980, 203). There he meets Monsignor Julien Vidal, and visits a boys' and a girls' school run by the Catholic Church (205–206).

After visiting the boys' school, he walks into the girls' school nearby. In the classroom, the teacher has a pupil point to Japan on a world map. The pupil does so promptly and correctly, and asks Suzuki which city was the capital, pointing at Edo then Kyoto. This simple confusion has occasioned Suzuki to explain to the class why the capital shifted from Kyoto to Edo, and why the name of Edo changed to Tokyo (206). Suzuki seems to enjoy his impromptu role as a grassroots ambassador between Japan and Fiji, and teaching the students about Japan. The episode could spur Suzuki to evaluate the effects of mission education in Fiji and Japan, given his previous involvement in administering a mission school in Japan. Yet, Suzuki does not credit the Catholic missionaries for teaching even the basic knowledge about Japan when the Japanese knowledge about Fiji (and the Pacific Islands) was assumed to be negligible. A social commentary would be only of secondary interest to Suzuki who seems more content to impress on the reader his ability to educate foreign pupils. We find a further fillip to Suzuki's newly found role:

Then the girl asked, "Do you have coconuts in Edo?" I said "No". She then listed names of fruits and vegetables in Ovalau, and asked me if Japan had any of those. I answered, "We do not have any of those". "So Japan does not have as much food as in Fiji", she said sympathetically. Everyone, the teacher and myself included, laughed loudly. Then the teacher got me to talk about the customs in Japan; everyone listened in silence. I then offered a box of Western sweets to the students. Everyone was so delighted. The students then enthused, "Japan is a rich country". Everyone laughed. (206)

Suzuki's elaborate descriptions demonstrate his capacity to sustain a meaningful interaction with the pupils. What emerges from this interaction is his spontaneous role as a grassroots ambassador who can rectify misunderstandings about Japan. To this end, he features his explaining to the female pupil about the capital of Japan and the discussion of food items. The pupil's remark reveals an innocent assumption that Japan would have the same food crops as Fiji, and marks a comical moment. Scholars of English-speaking travel writing notice that travel writers have long reaped profit from this function of humour. Though seemingly harmless, laughter and humour in travel writing defuse tension created by conflicting cultural differences and expectations. Travel writers across centuries have made those differences, even those that appear trivial, grounds for showing their superiority over others (Holland and Huggan 2000, 77–78; Lisle 2006, 101).

Suzuki's light-hearted exchange is no exception. He laughs off the girl's ignorance but masks his anxiety about how the pupils will remember Japan. Witness his offering to the students Western confectionery made in Japan. Historians of Japan would register this exchange as representing an ethnography-in-reverse moment in which the observer becomes the target of the local people's curiosity. In 1871, the Meiji government sent out influential members of the new oligarchs and elite students on an 18-month world tour. Iwakura Tomomi and his associates witnessed first-hand numerous sites of Western industrialisation, including a biscuit factory in London (Cobbing 1998, 32). With this in mind, Suzuki's gift becomes an instrument to impress the students, to convince them that the Japanese mastered Western culinary traditions and industrial production sufficiently to enable Japan to turn out her own factory-made treats. Suzuki's laughter undoubtedly gives the episode an amiable air and boosts his status as a cultural conduit. Inadvertently or by design he advertises his calibre as a grassroots ambassador for his homeland, thinking to impress the pupils by his presentation of Japan's own industrial revolution.

Seeking adventure and calculating risks

Suva is the last Pacific Island destination where Suzuki spends substantial time. His description of a 15-day stay there unfolds in a pattern similar to his accounts of Apia and Levuka. He visits the Catholic Church to meet the priests and to learn about the socio-political conditions and relies on the priests' introduction to meet colonial officials and local chiefs. In the chapter on Suva, Suzuki narrates a hiking trip to a nearby sugar refinery. He seizes an opportunity to promote himself as an explorer. He is brave but sensible, as if to demonstrate that he has matured since his earlier voyages. He describes taking precautions before venturing into a wilderness. At a hospital, he reports that the largest number of inpatients are admitted for an eye infection caused by a poisonous insect he calls *kawasu* (a millipede) that lives on tree branches:

Upon touch by humans and by sticks, the *kawasu* releases yellow vapour to protect itself. The vapour causes much irritation to the eye. After several tens of days one can lose the sight. Hygienists and doctors are researching the cure. They have yet to develop it. ([1892] 1980, 212)¹¹

The serious damage *kawasu* can inflict upon humans has no cure despite the efforts to develop an antidote. This exposition fits with Thompson's observation (2011, 159) about the ways travel writers use danger as "the necessary backdrop against which [they] can construct an image of themselves as an intrepid adventurer". Suzuki then moves to recount his meetings with high profile figures of colonial society, including the Governor of Fiji and botany enthusiast, John Bates Thurston (1888–1897). It is upon Thurston's recommendation that Suzuki decides to visit a sugar refinery in Koronivia, to the northeast of Suva. Thurston suggests two routes to the refinery: a direct land route or a boat ride around the coast and up the river. Suzuki learns that the former is 13 miles (21 km) long and the latter is 30 miles (48 km). Then, Thurston cautions that the paths are lined and overhung with thorny plants replete with thorns; there are few bridges over rivers and bandits and "natives" pose the risk of attacks. Reportedly, a French missionary in Suva gives Suzuki the same advice on a separate occasion ([1892] 1980, 216). These tales help Suzuki to signal that his expedition will be a challenging one with attendant risks. Undeterred, he decides to go to the refinery by land, the seemingly more challenging trip than the shorter boat ride.

Subsequently he approaches the well-known local planter Jacob Storck, who suggests that he hire a guide called Langen. Suzuki narrates his meeting with Westerners and his preparations as a smoothly managed succession of events. He spares little space for his anxiety or the effort behind the preparation. More than presenting his courage in embarking on a recognisably arduous

bush walk, Suzuki convinces his reader that he is a competent and resourceful traveller. He puts in place the logistical necessities with ease, and seeks advice where necessary. This is a quality that Suzuki rates highly in an intrepid but sensible traveller. He takes initiatives, but not in too reckless a fashion that would expose him and his party to an unacceptable level of risk. Thus, his decision to hire a guide is not a sign of his weakness; it bespeaks his pragmatism in pursuing maximum success. Moreover, Suzuki introduces Langen as a “French-speaking native from Bourbon Island [Réunion] in India [*sic*]” (216). This mention of Langen’s language prods our recognition of Suzuki’s linguistic abilities, though he makes a glaring mistake about the location of Bourbon Island. This is the kind of error that undermines Suzuki’s reputation as a factual reporter, but does not seriously dent his name as a raconteur. His carelessness is one example typical of several in his Marshall Island chapters of *Jikki* and in his lecturing in senior years: his priority lies less in the accuracy of information than in the drama and vibrancy of the story-telling.

After this elaborate prelude, the excursion finally gets underway, and Suzuki colourfully reports its progress:

We packed canned food and bread. The guide led us into hilly paths in the northeast of Suva. It rained a little but it was steamy hot and still. The whole body gave out sweat like a natural spring. After two miles there was no sign of people. A small path was in sight. Continued to walk in some arbitrary direction. Waded through shoulder-high grass, scrambled our way to mountaintop, and rested a little. Then went down a valley and crossed a river that looked about 17 to 18 metres wide. As soon as we began fording it, we realised how deep the river was. On the other side of the river was a mark of human traffic. This must be the natives from the hills who came to collect water. Nevertheless the rocks [at the bottom of the river] are so slippery that they can cause us to fall over at the slightest error in stepping. How dangerous. (216)

A few miles into the bush Suzuki and his party realise that they are now cut off from the European settlement of Suva. His narrative has him getting on with the journey without growing overly concerned about the climate and the difficulty of negotiating the terrain. The account evidently shows his selection of details to illustrate how far he has travelled and to cut out his derring-do figure. The only allusion to potential risk he makes is the absence of fear and anxiety about meeting “the natives”, even if only a few of his contemporaries have visited the South Pacific Islands at that time. This almost unsentimental tone lends Suzuki the persona of a determined explorer who is not easily stirred by the potential encounter with “the natives” and by the challenging conditions. However, Suzuki does not admit to the disparity between the persona he wants to project and the ways he travels. It has to be recalled that he travels in a group and relies on a local guide who clears the path for them and can mediate and defuse potential conflict with the “natives”.

The party continues to walk amid the thick bush full of the singing of birds. After a mile, the group reaches another river, and takes a rest, bathing:

We mustered our courage again and began to proceed. Then we saw three natives. They were naked and had grass on their heads and wore loincloths around the waist. They were approaching us holding large machetes in their hands. This sinister sight chilled our spine. The natives were also surprised to see us. The guide [told them and] pointed at us: “These men are the crew of Japanese navy vessels.” The natives laughed: “Ah, we are on our way to Suva to see the navy vessels.” I could relax for the first time. We offered them cigarettes and parted ways. (217)

This episode exposes the limit to Suzuki’s intrepid traveller persona. Suzuki acknowledges that he and his group needed to muster their courage before forging ahead. The encounter with indigenous people may be a frequent feature in Western travel writing, but is still new in Japanese writing about the South Pacific. Suzuki assumes the “natives” are naturally hostile to the foreigners, and

implicitly barbarous in (un)dress and demeanour, and intent on attacking Suzuki's group at the slightest provocation. Yet, the Fijians Suzuki has met turn out not to be hostile or threatening. He quickly deduces that they are simply surprised to see foreigners, especially a group of Japanese, unexpectedly in the middle of the bush. The guide's intervention dissolves the tension. Suzuki draws a sigh of relief. The scene heightens something of the comic relief. Suzuki notes the incongruous discovery that the Fijians are heading to see the Japanese vessels. As with the western confectionery impressing the school girls, the now-relieved Suzuki intimates his encounter has enabled him to advertise Japan to the Fijians. He can boast about Japan's progress into a modern nation state with sufficient means to maintain a navy and to purchase battleships built in England.¹² Suzuki's ability to form good relations with "the natives" comes through his presentation of cigarettes – perhaps making him as generous as Europeans. Discovering that the Fijians are eager to see the Japanese vessel, Suzuki suddenly relaxes and accords them a modicum of respect: he offers cigarettes to the Fijian party. This gesture of camaraderie constitutes Suzuki's recurrent self-fashioning as a grassroots ambassador who is willing to dispense a foreign commodity. As with the school episode earlier, Suzuki, a traveller from an industrialising nation, exhibits Japan's manufacturing capacity. The gift secures his prerogative to shape the relationship on his terms – no matter how fleeting the encounter is. Moreover, the humour he employs gives him a friendly air of magnanimity that buttresses his sense of superiority over the Fijians. Suzuki's portrayal comes with an element of self-deprecating humour. He suggests he has conquered his own fear and anxiety towards the Fijians to the point of insignificance, and even managed to buy off friendship – in a manner not too dissimilar to bribing the constables in Honolulu. What comes through very strongly is that his writing is more concerned with presenting himself as a dashing and affable person. Beyond introductions to the islands he visits, Suzuki offers little more substance of interest to those with analytical and academic minds. He is a performer projecting chosen light-hearted images of himself to an audience with which he is at ease.

Suzuki's success in overcoming his anxiety and striking a rapport with the Fijians does not necessarily lead him to reflect on his disrespect of them. While we rarely come across blatantly racist comments in *Jikki*, Suzuki exhibits a contemptuous attitude towards the Fijians. He refers to them as "natives" (*dojin* 土人). Today the term is considered derogatory and offensive. However, it was a common nomenclature in Japan when referring to indigenous people in Japan's newly colonised territories of Hokkaidō and Okinawa in the late nineteenth century, and later in the Pacific Islands during the Japanese mandate years. Suzuki merely follows the convention of the time. Nevertheless, his travel experience and interactions with the Islanders have failed to cause him to challenge his own assumptions about peoples different from his own. At the same time, Suzuki's subliminal attitude emerges in his language use in his counting of them as *san ko no dojin* (3個の土人). In Japanese, the counting unit *ko* is used for inanimate objects – as in three pieces; for people one uses *nin* (人). This putatively mundane linguistic technicality reveals Suzuki's unthinking prejudice that classifies the "natives" as non-human objects. Meanwhile, Suzuki ventures into unknown terrain. The laughter he manages shows he has overcome his initial fear of the "natives" by striking up friendly relations with them, but he still treats them as ultimately inferior.

Suzuki's party continues walking and reaches the Rewa River, the major river in Fiji. They proceed three more kilometres to a village, where they rest at a French missionary's house. The villagers inform Suzuki's group to keep on walking because there is no boat at the pier to take them directly to the refinery. Suzuki notes the discomfort of walking another three kilometres:

We were tired from walking. Then we had to go up and down the ladders [between paddocks] several tens of times. This was quite difficult. But when I think of it now, I can laugh about it. (218)

Suzuki's recollection creates a temporal distance between the real-time difficulty he faced and the time of his writing. His self-effacing admission of the difficulty advertises his growth into a man, not just a traveller, of mental and physical prowess who can withstand the hardship.

At the sugar refinery, Suzuki talks with the managers, who tell him about the equipment and machinery. Yet, his impressions are brief and superficial, only noting the enormous equipment and the vast number of labourers. On a political level, such pedestrian descriptions suggest that those symbols of Western industrial empire and strength no longer capture Suzuki's interest. On another level, Suzuki's omission of the details effectively tells us that those details are irrelevant while he hopes to present his party's achievement in initiating and completing the hike, under his able leadership. Such display of achievement continues on his return journey. In Koronivia, the Indian labourers treat him and his party to a meal and dance. On the following morning, Suzuki and his party decide to take a boat back to Suva. Soon, though, they find out that poor conditions in the rivers force them to walk back to Suva anyway. He tells us how he feels about the sudden change of plan:

[We were] accompanied by four or five natives and Indians who wanted to see the Japanese navy vessels. Now that we had those several unexpected companions, I felt encouraged and happy. This day was an idyllically fine day. Each told tales and even began singing songs from their country. When the front of the pack began singing songs from Fiji, those at the back began singing songs from Calcutta. One sang a song from Bourbon [sic] and another sang a love song from Malabar. I sang several Japanese songs and had them listen to them. I did not even remember how tough going the hike had been. (225–226)

Suzuki presents himself as a calm and collected traveller and the leader of a group. His composure underlines his confidence in making the best of the situation. He decides to use the occasion to reciprocate the hospitality shown by the local residents and offers to take them on a tour of the Japanese navy vessels, which they are curious to see. Conversely, Suzuki feels "encouraged and happy" to make friends with a group of people – though some of them have caused him anxiety earlier. This serendipitous turn of events helps Suzuki to demonstrate his ability to win the hearts and the minds of complete strangers in a strange land. This is not a new attribute as he has demonstrated elsewhere in *Jikki*. What is different here is that he orchestrates a happy occasion of cultural exchange where each group contributes to spontaneous and continuous singing. This episode is no mere footnote. It reinforces Suzuki's special qualities. In relating this episode as well as others, Suzuki's narrative is devoid of meaningful reflection but seeks to impress on the reader his growth as a traveller. He has now become someone who can command his resources to his advantage; he has used the vessels to win new friends. Suzuki's trip to the sugar refinery attempts to convince the reader of his ample attributes as a fine traveller who can last the distance. As with the *kava* ceremony in Samoa and his school visits in Levuka, Suzuki continues to present his ability to garner strangers' trust. The trust he has earned enables him to take his mind off the dangers on the road, and replace it with fun. Although he has failed to present himself as a physically fit traveller, Suzuki tries to convince the reader that none of these events would have been possible without his cultural acumen and his willingness and ability to act as a grassroots ambassador.

Conclusion

Suzuki's reputation as a pioneering travel writer and proto-ethnographer has crumbled under criticisms since the 1980s. A new understanding of *Jikki* emerges if the book is investigated from the perspective of self-presentation. This revision is necessary. It does not probe how and why Suzuki got so many things wrong. But the new angle asks how Suzuki commands his authority as a travel

writer and inscribes his relationship with the reader as opposed to that between him and the Pacific Islanders. To place *Jikki* in a context, this essay has considered the available information on Suzuki's personal circumstances in the days before his South Pacific journey. It seems plausible that he should try to convince the readers of his talents and attributes as a competent travel writer – albeit risking a potentially adverse reception as a maverick or an eccentric. We have seen various modes of self-posturing Suzuki has deployed in *Jikki*. He carves out a set of personae to appeal to the readers, presenting a case that he deserves recognition in the elite society of policy-makers and industry to resuscitate his career. The episodes discussed point to three major attributes that Suzuki seeks to advertise.

The first is the shrewdness to achieve his ends, despite the questionable means and motives, as his episode in Hawai'i has illustrated. The second is his cultural capital – especially his familiarity with Catholicism and his linguistic command. The examples from Samoa and Fiji have shown that his cultural capital has enabled him to gather important information about the islands. He has even assumed additional roles of an intermediary and a cultural interlocutor that an ordinary Japanese traveller could not readily achieve – although the efficacy of his interactions with the local people demands proof. Third, Suzuki shows maturity as an adventurous yet resourceful and cautious enough traveller. He takes calculated risks to avoid putting himself and his party into unnecessary danger. Furthermore, a more subtle measure Suzuki employs in his self-fashioning are his narrative strategies. Suzuki brings himself into the spotlight and consigns the Pacific Islanders to the background. Rendering the facts and keeping chronological sequence become less important than creating a great impact and an air of adventure from his tales.

One must ask whether *Jikki* managed to salvage Suzuki's career. It is plausible that *Jikki* may have elicited different responses. Re-prints and re-issues may testify to his popularity, but not enough to redeem his tarnished reputation after his failed business ventures. Taken together, Take-shita's conjecture (1943, 211) that Suzuki wrote his travelogues to bring a closure to his South Seas pursuits seems apt. It is likely that the now married Suzuki felt the rather urgent need to settle down and make ends meet. At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Suzuki reinvented himself as a war correspondent for a Japanese newspaper. He spent his senior years in insurance firms and served on the Public Hygiene Association. Between 1937 and 1938, he wrote nine retrospective essays in a historical magazine, *Meiji taishō shidan* [Historical Journal of Meiji and Taishō Eras]. None of this reflects on his seafaring days or gives us clues to his motivation for writing his travelogues (Suzuki 1937–1938). These were the last of his writings, before his death in December 1938, the day before his 86th birthday (Nakajima 1983b, 32).¹³ Suzuki's writing may lack the scholarly intellect the elite circles of Meiji Japan needed. He may not have used his talent prudently. As a result, he may have failed to achieve the status of the iconic travel writer of the South Seas in his lifetime or posthumously. Nevertheless, his quirks make him a maverick whose flaws make him an ordinary and affable human. While many casual readers can identify with his personal circumstances, ambition and imperfection, he has left scholars with the task of disentangling his ruse from the truth.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by a research grant from the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education at The University of the South Pacific.

Notes

1. This essay follows the East Asian convention of surname–given name order when referring to works by Japanese authors. Exceptions apply to the authors who publish their original works in English.
2. Yano Tōru (1979, 54) makes a crucial but under-appreciated distinction between two sets of writing about the south. Naming the earlier writing, of which Suzuki’s *Jikki* was a part, *nanyōron* (南洋論), Yano claims it built the Japanese awareness of the south between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. As the symbol *shin* (進) indicates “advance”, *nanshinron* intimated the Japanese interest in colonising the south.
3. This and all other translations from Japanese secondary sources are my own.
4. The secondary sources examined have made, at best, cursory remarks on how *Jikki* came to be published. Takeshita Gen’nosuke’s biography (1943) is the most comprehensive one, though it says scarcely anything about the stories behind Suzuki’s publication. It is hoped that this essay provides impetus for a new biography.
5. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this phrase.
6. Though outside the purview of travel writing, in recent years there has been a quiet resurgence of historical works about the Japanese who worked and lived in the South Seas (Okaya 2007; Shōguchi 2011). The English-language academy has generated a handful of seminal works on the Japanese literary representation of the South Seas. These works examine a broad range of writing including fiction and memoir but travelogues are treated as a subordinate genre (Kleeman 2003; Sudo 2010; Tierney 2010).
7. Takeshita (1943) provides a most detailed biography on Suzuki, though lacking in critical appraisal.
8. Andrade (1996, 66) states that from the legal viewpoint, the evidence was compelling enough to prove Wilcox’s role in inciting of an insurrection, but he was fortunate to face a Hawaiian jury whose decision swayed in his favour.
9. This and all translations from Suzuki are my own.
10. *Kava* (*piper methysticum*) is a plant grown in southern Pacific Islands. The Islanders dry and pulverise the root and make a drink in ceremonious occasions. It has a bitter taste and induces a mild anaesthetic effect.
11. In central Vanua Levu, the insect is known as *kasiwalu* and *kasuwalu* as opposed to how Suzuki recorded the name. (Prof. Paul Geraghty [an expert linguist in Fijian vernaculars], personal communication, December 2013.)
12. *The Fiji Times* (December 11, 1889, 2) reported of the vessels: “They are fine vessels, sister ships, armour plated, built in England, and are on service as training ships. [...] The complement of the *Hiei* is 333, inclusive of officers.”
13. Takeshita provides a thorough account of Suzuki’s life after his Southern Pacific Island journey (1943, 156–277) but at least in respect of his decision to publish the travelogues, the two sections of his life merit separate studies.

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