

Ryota Nishino

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Subject: Reminder - today's seminar

Place: School of Social Sciences Conference room (091-113)

Time: 12.30-2 pm on Friday 25 October 2013

***Pacific Island women in the eyes of a Japanese travel journalist:
Impressions from Kanetaka Kaoru's journey in 1961.***

Ryota Nishino

School of Social Sciences, USP.

A Japanese travel journalist Kanetaka Kaoru (b. 1928) is best known for her weekly television documentary programme *Kanetaka Kaoru sekai no tabi* [Kaoru Kanetaka's "World around Us"] which ran from 1959 to 1990. On her sixth filming trip in 1961, she visited the South Pacific islands for the first time – when foreign travel was still beyond the reach for many Japanese people. Her itinerary included Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The trip resulted in several programmes and a travelogue, *Sekai no tabi: Oceania* [Travel around the world: Oceania] (1962). Kanetaka's travel-writing is noteworthy for her candid aesthetic judgements on women she met in Fiji and PNG. The presentation asks what messages and implicit assumptions of beauty her writing conveys. While Kanetaka is flattering about Fiji's women's

natural beauty, she is concerned the encroachment of western aesthetic values would harm the women's self-worth. At the same time other episodes underline commonality between her aesthetic values and the western imagining of 'the South Seas maiden'. Kanetaka's aesthetic vision is challenged by the sight of the women in PNG. She then asks herself "What is to be human?" Her conclusion – however problematic it may be – informs us how she attempts to resolve her seemingly inconsistent, if not paradoxical, aesthetic judgements.

Ryota Nishino joined the USP in July 2011 and teaches History. Previous research interest in history of education resulted in *Changing Histories: Japanese and South African textbooks in comparison* (2011). He is now working on a contemporary history of Japanese travel-writing on southern Pacific islands.