

BOOK REVIEW of *Desire, obligation and familiar love: Mothers, daughters and communication*

Linitā Manu'atu

‘Api Fakakoloa Educational Services: NZ: drlmanuatu@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEW: Nishitani, M. (2020). *Desire, obligation and familiar love: Mothers, daughters and communication*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. ISBN: 9780824881771. 191pp.

I read this book from multiple standpoints: a Tongan woman who is a migrant to and has been a resident and citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand for over 40 years; an academic who is bi-literate and bi-numerate in Tongan and English; someone who has never married; a teacher by profession; and the carer of late parents. My father died at the age of 94 in 2017.

The aforementioned history places me in a particular position to review this book about Tongan migrant mothers and adult daughters in an Australian city that is based on ethnographic field work. Anthropologist Makiko Nishitani provides readers with insights into what she calls the Tongan social field, through an exploration of kin and kin-like relationships in people's everyday lives and the information flows through the communication technologies they use.

Desire, obligation and familiar love: Mothers, daughters and communication is driven by two main questions. The first asks where Tongan migrants and their descendants direct their interests, and the second explores how their sociality has been shaped and maintained. Nishitani located the families, mothers and daughters willing to participate in the study at a Tongan church in Melbourne, Australia, and then conducted intensive fieldwork in the Tongan social field there from 2006 to March 2009. In exploring the Tongan social field, the study treats communication technologies in the Tongan households as part of their sociality, including social media, mobile phones, and landline telephones. Each chapter in the book provides different perspectives of the mothers and daughters in their engagement with the Tongan social field in their everyday living. In analysing the ethnographic details of the lives of the Tongan mothers and their daughters, Nishitani illustrates how they deal with their relationships and create their social fields in ways that do not necessarily coincide with territorial boundaries and cannot be described by, for example, transnational and local scales. She argues that the distinction between the local and the transnational becomes ambiguous in the Tongan social field.

Nishitani's book has brought countless smiles to my face, which is an acknowledgement that her commitment to write about the Tongan social field in the way she shapes it has been successful. For example, much of the discussion about

communication technologies in the Tongan social field in Chapters 5 and 6 emphasises cultural specificity in the use of technologies. The section on mothers and daughters on Bebo and Facebook in Chapter 5 still rings true today, as does the everyday politics in the lives of women in the Tongan social field described in Chapter 6. It is also true that the mothers' and daughters' education levels make a difference in shaping their relationships and experiences. In most parts of the book, I enjoyed the simple, clear articulation of mothers' and daughters' situations, comments and experiences. Nishitani's accounts have resonated with my own observations of close relations and friends over many years of living as part of the Tongan diaspora in a large city in Aotearoa New Zealand. For me, the materials that have been documented and discussed are not new, since similar experiences exist about migrant mothers and their daughters in Aotearoa, but I found the book's analysis of how the field was shaped through relationships to be excellent. The explanation of this process, in my view, is the author's most significant contribution to understanding the complex Tongan social field.

Nishitani articulates many experiences that I and others of my generation can easily relate to. This will be an interesting and thought-provoking read for the younger generations who were born and raised inside and outside of the Kingdom of Tonga. The final chapter offers a stepping-stone into a much-needed deep analysis of the migrants' Tongan social field in the diaspora.



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