

Ryota Nishino

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Sent: Monday, September 17, 2012 4:01 PM
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Subject: This week's seminar

Dear Colleagues,

Details of this week's seminar

School of Social Sciences

Friday 14 September at 12.30pm in the Seminar room in the CELT Building

Dr Ryota Nishino

Ukiya Tōjiriō's 1500 kilometre motorcycle journey in August 1957: An analysis of the incipient identity of an adolescent motorcyclist traveller.

Motorsport fans in Japan remember the motorcar racer Ukiya Tōjirō for his talent, resilient performance and colourful personality. His potential life came to an abrupt end at the age of 23 years following a fatal accident in a practice session in August 1965. This article focuses on an earlier, less known, side of Ukiya's life. In August 1957, Ukiya made a return-journey from his hometown near Tokyo, to Kobe on a German 50-cc moped, Kreidler.

Ukiya's eight-day, 1500-kilometre journey resulted in *Gamushara 1500-kiro: Waga seishun no kadode* [My frantic 1500 kilometres: The beginning of my adolescence]. Of a few published motorcycle travelogues in the 1950s and 1960s, Ukiya's travelogue makes a notable exception. The book was printed in 1958 as a private publication, and by a commercial publisher in 1972. That the paperback edition has had thirteen print runs by 2009 underlines sustained interest in and popularity of Ukiya's travelogue. Of two biographies on Ukiya, Katsuragi Yōji's work focuses on his racing career. Iwasaki Kureo's biography discusses his life from childhood to his fatal accident. However, few have analysed Ukiya's travelogue as a subject of scholarly analysis.

Ukiya's age and background add extra layers of originality to his journey, and raise the suitability of *Gamushara* as a subject for a detailed analysis. Ukiya's travel took place at a time when the popular media portrayed the motorcycle as a symbol of new status identity and status amongst the youth. Ukiya benefited from his affluent family and could travel at a younger age than many riders. This was an opportunity that many of his contemporaries could dream of.

As with many analyses of travel writing, it is vital to place Ukiya's travel in an interdisciplinary context. This article seeks to demonstrate that *Gamushara* reveals Ukiya's emerging identity and his forming of values from three angles. First, Ukiya's travelogue has much to inform us about adolescence. Known as *seishun* in Japanese it is a popular literary and sociological concept in the vein of 'subject-in-making' and *bildung*. Through the description of the people he meets and the places he visits, Ukiya's self-portrayal tells us not only about his impressions, but also how his travel helped him discover his emerging subjectivity and draw life lessons. Second, this article analyses *Gamushara* as a motorcyclist-traveller. The essayist and motorcycle traveller Saitô Makoto conceives of three stages of meditation from self-absorption in the motorcycle, interaction with the immediate surroundings, and to transcendence beyond the motorcycle and the surrounding. Saitô's concepts are useful in charting Ukiya's progress from a novice to a confident rider. Third, as with many travelogues, Ukiya begins to notice the differences between himself and others. His seeing ordinary children and manual labourers challenged his *raison d'être*. Ukiya's growing awareness as a privileged adolescent led him to a resolution.

Dr Ryota Nishino is a lecturer in the History Division at the University of the South Pacific. He is currently working on a contemporary history of travelogues on the Pacific by Japanese travel writers.