



## Special Articles:

- Masayuki Yoshinaga presents an exhibition of his *boso* photos
- The Future of the *bosozoku*: Decline or Evolution?
- Jamie meets with manga artist Hamanakko Taisa
- A review of Ikuya Sato's "Kamikaze Biker"



## Capturing Images of *Bosozoku*

From February 4 to March 5, Masayuki Yoshinaga will be exhibiting some of his photographs of *bosozoku* in New York.

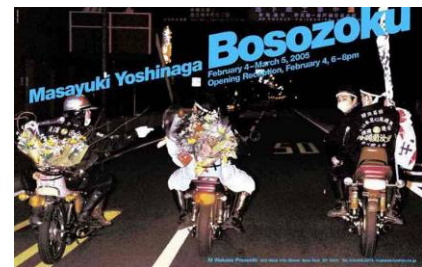
This exhibition is the first in the United States featuring Yoshinaga's photos of Japanese teen motorcycle gangs. His color photographs honestly tell the sensational stories of the bike gangs who dedicate their energy to the thrills of breakneck speed driving on city streets at night.

Yoshinaga has been photographing *bosozoku* for eight years. He was first drawn to their outlandish costumes and general appearance. According to Yoshinaga, "*bosozoku* must be the youngest age group in Japan to create

a scene solely for the expression of a public spectacle."

The gallery is located on the second floor of 453 West 17th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, New York City. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 6pm.

For further information, please call Mako Wakasa at 212-979-8631, or e-mail at makowk@yahoo.co.jp



## The Nail That Stands Out Gets Hammered Down

This is a famous Japanese saying, which emphasizes the importance of conformity to ensure "*wa*" (harmony) throughout society. Anyone who does not bend to its will, shall be molded back into shape.

However, from a western perspective, it often seems that the Japanese police are very tolerant of *bosozoku*.

There is a big difference between Japanese and American police tactics: the police in Japan rely heavily on intelligence gathering and oblique outlawing of the *bosozoku*. Laws making certain modifications to bikes for sound and speed, for example, allow the police to catch the "off duty" *bosozoku* on their bikes while away from the safety of their group or gang.

Thus, the police have been effective over the last ten years and more specifically we have noticed a huge decline in activity.

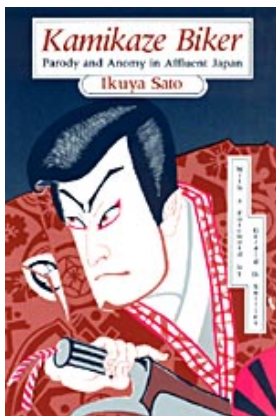
On New Years Eve, Mt. Fuji is usually a favorite place for the bikers to watch the first sunrise of the year. This year, few tried and only a handful made it. Police road blocks and vigilant apprehension of their illegal bikes deter most from even trying to reach the area.

Or, are the *bosozoku* now *passé*? Might it be that conformity is more powerful than the police? Figure 8 is confident that we are documenting some of the last of these kamikaze-suit clad rebels and are coming close to shedding light on why they are becoming extinct.

## Jamie Meets A Manga Artist



**“Most informants came to call me ‘occhan’, ‘old man’ in the Kansai dialect.”**



“*Champ Road*” is a publication targeting bosozoku and ex-bosozoku members, with articles about bike modification and various bosozoku gang members around Japan.

There are pictures of outrageous bikes and, of course, pages and pages of catalogues for ordering bike parts and the latest *boso*-fashions. “*Champ Road*” is a beacon to the waning groups of youngsters who still want to be Saturday-night heroes, or at least famous in one issue.

As is the case with most magazines in Japan, there is a monthly *manga*.

Thanks to Roger Smith, of [jingai.com](http://jingai.com), Jamie met with one artist Hamanakko Taisa, to discuss his monthly *bosozoku manga* in “*Champ Road*.” They met in Shinjuku, the busiest part of Tokyo and Jamie even had a quick word with the editor of “*Champ Road*” on the phone.

Jamie had a chance to look over some of Hamanakko’s skillful *manga*, discuss the future and plan for a formal visit to the offices where “*Champ Road*” is created. Figure 8 looks forward to a creative relationship with both Hamanakko and “*Champ Road*” based on this warm first meeting in a cold and crowded Shinjuku.

## Kamikaze Bikers: a PhD in Street Knowledge

Since the inception of the “*Speed Tribes*” project, Figure 8 Productions has felt indebted to Ikuya Sato, a professor in the field of social studies, and an expert on *bosozoku* culture.

Professor Sato’s seminal “*Kamikaze Biker: Parody and Anomy in Affluent Japan*” has been invaluable to us in studying the history and psychology of *bosozoku* members.

Published in 1991 by the University of Chicago, “*Kamikaze Biker*” is an in-depth, firsthand account of youngsters who engage in the high-risk world of the *bosozoku*.

The intriguing argument that Sato puts forth is that the “folk devils” have been spawned by the affluence and consumerism of Japan’s economic bubble years.

Although Japan is often successful at masking its social problems for the sake of appearances, Professor Sato peels away the layers of Japanese society to explain how and why the *bosozoku* phenomenon came about.

The book is available online from such distributors as Amazon and the University of Chicago Press (keyword: *kamikaze*): <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/>

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### Jamie’s on the move

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While he is in Japan, you can still reach him by e-mail: [jamie@figure8productions.com](mailto:jamie@figure8productions.com)

In Jamie’s absence, our Public Relations Manager, Jean-Marc Moorghen, will be glad to answer your questions.

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