

**The Birth of “Rokuon Kosei” —
Radio Programs Composed of Recorded Voices
- An Origin of NHK Documentaries -**

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(Summary)

When tracing back the history of Japan’s broadcasting documentaries, we find a lineage of a radio genre called “rokuon kosei,” or societal programs composed of interviews recorded outside the studio. This article looks into the very first steps of “rokuon kosei” programs that blossomed in the period between right after the end of WWII and the late 1950s.

Immediately after the end of war, Japanese broadcasting was put under the supervision of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of Allied Powers, and a genre of societal programs aiming for “generating and nurturing a good, democratic citizen” was established in NHK’s radio broadcasts. Among them, *Gaitou rokuon* [Street Recordings] (1946-58) achieved high popularity shortly after the end of war under the banner of “liberation of the microphone.” The program introduced candid opinions of the public on social issues, with a specific theme for each installment, by recording their voice outside the studio. The first episode using the “rokuon kosei” method was broadcast on April 22nd, 1947, as a special edition of Street Recordings. Titled *Street Recordings: Girls under Tracks*, the program was designed under the theme of “how to prevent juvenile delinquency” and, instead of inviting people to an out-of-studio discussion—the way they had recorded opinions in early days—, a reporter, equipped only with a microphone, sneaked in a dark corner under elevated railway tracks and talked to so called pan-pan girls, or street prostitutes. Utilizing his skill of unfettered interview, he successfully reported the genuine voice of the young women.

This article presents the historical developments of Street Recordings, which gave birth to “rokuon kosei,” from its pioneer days through around autumn in 1947 and analyzes the characteristics of the content, using several indices. The author elucidates what features this program had and how and why they were shaped into this form by examining the interaction of the three key components—the content, the real situation of the time, and the people engaged in the production.