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Review by Dustin Wright, Connecticut College

Chelsea Szendi Schieder’s essay, “To Catch a Tiger by Its Toe: The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, Moral Re-Armament, and Cold War Orientalism,” is an exciting contribution to the complicated socio-political relationship between two of the Pacific’s most powerful countries. The piece adds a refreshing view of U.S.-Japan diplomatic relations, the recent writing on which has felt somewhat like a languid river of bilateral security analysis. In particular, Schieder expands our understanding of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo) protests, which were a generational moment in Japan. The original 1952 security treaty gave the U.S. permission to keep and expand its massive military presence in Japan and, most egregiously for many Japanese, allowed the U.S. military to suppress domestic protests without the consent of the Japanese government. While the 1960 revision did revoke the right for the U.S. military to intercede in domestic issues, it more firmly committed Japan to American foreign policy and did nothing to minimize the military footprint. Throughout Japan, millions of people took to the streets in opposition to a security treaty that they saw as undemocratic and disturbingly reminiscent of the heavy hand of the regime that led their country and the rest of Asia to wartime ruin only fifteen years prior. Importantly, Schieder reminds us that anti-Anpo protests had an impact far beyond Japan’s shores and was widely reported in newspapers throughout the world.

At the center of the piece is Moral Re-Armament (MRA), a Christian group founded in the U.S. that, among other things, mediated labor disputes and supported cultural productions that promoted the moral authority of the capitalist West. This included funding traveling theater troupes that featured “non-Western actors and locales, throughout the Cold War, claiming to exert ideological influence in the fight against communism and their productions” (145). Schieder links MRA with Christina Klein’s concept of “Cold War Orientalism”, described as “ideas of racial equality and integration” that supplanted “racial difference and territorially
imperialism” (146). Schieder takes care to explain the origins of MRA, which we learn was an organization that was not necessarily founded on pro-American ideologies but quickly took advantage of the political tide of the postwar to capitalize on anti-communist sentiment, or “the values that became important to those close to power in the postwar United States” (150).

One of MRA’s productions was *The Tiger*, a play that “repeated and reinforced the widespread misconception that mass demonstrations in Tokyo in 1960 were the result of a Communist conspiracy” (153). MRA staged *The Tiger* for over one million people over the course of 190 shows throughout western Europe and the Americas. Producers operated on the understanding that show’s audiences were, most likely, profoundly ignorant of what had happened in Tokyo during the anti-Anpo struggle. Widely reported in the west as “riots,” Schieder reminds us that the protests were “less one of Communist control and more one of protest on behalf of democratic procedure and Japanese autonomy from U.S. influence” (155). For an American audience, *The Tiger* was a “chance for Asian actors to ‘apologize’ for protesting against their government and its role in bolstering the U.S.-imposed military framework of the postwar period” (146). It also offered the promise of redemption, since activists could be forgiven for falling for communist ploys and redeemed, completing a transformation from cold war “bad guys” to “good guys.” In this way, perhaps *The Tiger* was also the type of feel-good drama that American audiences often crave at a molecular level.

MRA sought to reduce Japan’s complicated domestic politics to a gravy that could be easily ladled onto uncomplicated ideas that Communism was the driving force against any opposition to American militarism. The organization “was able to utilize ignorance in the United States about domestic politics in Japan to bolster the common misconception that riots under the direction of the Soviet Union and Communist China,” which made it a powerful force in the American geopolitical stratagem (146-147). Even the U.S. president, Dwight Eisenhower, had taken the simplistic view that anti-Anpo protests were all part of a wider Communist plot, which is all the more surprising given the central role the U.S. played in Japan’s postwar democratic transition. As Schieder explains,

“The irony of Eisenhower’s and MRA’s black-and-white analysis of the event was that much of the protest ultimately rallied around arguments to protect Japan’s nascent postwar peace and democracy, which the Allied Occupation had delivered in the immediate postwar period. The Japan Communist Party (JCP) itself became legal under U.S. Occupation policies as part of an initial drive for democratization and demilitarization of Japanese politics and society. The JCP and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) acted as key opposition parties to Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during the process of treaty revision; however, contemporary observers and subsequent scholars also illuminate the multitude of citizens’ groups that participated in the protest and demonstrations of 1959 and 1960” (155).

Schieder’s piece energizes scholarship on Anpo and helps to highlight the protest’s global significance. At the same time, “To Catch a Tiger by Its Toe” reminds us that art is always political, sometimes subversive, but very often leans toward reactionary propaganda tailored to “win hearts and minds” (160). Readers with an interest in the political art of the Cold War will be particularly well-served to include this piece in their winter readings lists. Others will be interested in the most recent issue of *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics,*
and Culture, which was edited by Schieder and centers on “other transpacific alliances” between Japanese and U.S. peace activists.\(^2\) Finally, William Marotti’s recent book, Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan, compels readers to appreciate how post-Anpo artists were, despite what the characters in The Tiger might have said, far from willing to apologize for their struggle.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture 10:2 (2017). Full disclosure: I also have an essay in this special edition entitled “From Tokyo to Wounded Knee: Two Afterlives of the Sunagawa Struggle.”