

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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A 'MAD' age: War, Student Protest and Consumer Culture in 1960s Japan

In the late 1960s, student protests in various countries dominated much of the media debate over national and international politics. While the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia pushed for serious and overtly Cold War ideological goals, in Japan, France and the United States the protests of the mid-60s complicated notions of a postwar consensus on the freedom of the individual and economic growth as a national goal. In postwar Japan the gradual emergence of a social structure geared towards producing rational, bureaucratic workers to fuel high-speed economic growth faced a backlash as young, middle-class students began to analyse and criticise their own role in the political and economic system. In this context, the quest for individual subjectivity and the position of Japan in the international politics of the Cold War were brought together in large-scale, violent opposition to the Vietnam War. In this talk I will examine the ways in which the written media worked to undermine the important political issues raised by the student protests and the anti-war movement by incorporating them into consumer culture. By juxtaposing articles in magazines such as *Fujin Kōron* and those such as *Heibon Punch* aimed at the students themselves, I examine how popular magazines driven by the growth of a consumer society helped to frame protest within Cold War discourse as it emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

Martyn Smith is a Senior Teaching Fellow in history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He studied European history and politics before recently completing his PhD in Japanese History at SOAS and is interested in postwar Japanese history, the history of the Cold War and consumerism, postwar East and Southeast Asia and theories of nation and nationalism.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum for early/mid career researchers and Ph.D. candidates in the field, organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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