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Hiroshi Kitamura. "Runaway Orientalism: MGM's Teahouse and U.S.-Japanese Relations in the 1950s." *Diplomatic History* 44:2 (April 2020): 265-288. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhz059>.

Masaru Nishikawa. "The Origin of the U.S-Japan Dispute over the Whaling Moratorium." *Diplomatic History* 44:2 (April 2020): 315-336. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhz062>.

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It is hard to imagine two fields being more unlike than the glamorous and glitzy world of Hollywood's Golden Age and the more prosaic domain of early-1970s inter-state environmental diplomacy. However, Hiroshi Kitamura and Masaru Nishikawa illustrate how these served as settings for relations between the United States and Japan in the decades after the latter's defeat, occupation, and rehabilitation. In both cases U.S. power, whether expressed in the form of cultural hegemony or diplomatic influence, is key to understanding and mapping this complex and changing relationship. Each article also illustrates the importance of ordinary people as mobilized diplomatic actors, whether as a movie-going public or as voters engaged in an environmental cause. Kitamura's article focuses on the production and reception of MGM's *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956, hereafter *Teahouse*). He successfully integrates a multilayered international history and demonstrates the importance of *Teahouse*, and cinema more broadly, for understanding how power relations were both understood and enacted. Nishikawa shows how the cynical embrace of a whaling moratorium at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972 by the administration of President Richard Nixon should not be regarded as part of an anti-Japan conspiracy. Rather, it was the result of shifting domestic politics on environmental issues in the United States and illustrates a failure of communication and indeed of diplomacy between the two nations. Nishikawa concludes that, rather than a calculated affront, this was at its base a divergence of views between two peoples. Both articles have much to offer in terms of adding to a greater understanding of postwar U.S.-Japanese relations. At the same time, both deserve a wider readership than only those who are interested in this bilateral relationship, since they push beyond a traditional conception of diplomatic history encompassing the realms of popular culture and public opinion.

Kitamura sets out three main objectives for his article. First, to illustrate the nature and importance of Hollywood's "runaway" productions in foreign locations in the 1950s. Second, to expand the theoretical framework of Orientalism to include East Asia and also by the "positioning of Orientalist texts in an international and transnational framework" (268). Finally, he seeks to highlight the importance of public opinion and mass cultural consumption in U.S.-Japanese relations, especially the philo-Americanism that was present in Japanese popular attitudes from 1945 onwards. On this last point, Kitamura is following on from his own monograph, *Screening Enlightenment*, and also adding to a growing literature focusing on the role of mass culture, its production and consumption, in U.S.-Japanese relations.¹ Kitamura deftly weaves together these strands with a light touch and has produced an article that is informative, rigorous, and highly readable.

¹ Hiroshi Kitamura, *Screening Enlightenment: Hollywood and the Cultural Reconstruction of Defeated Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Andrew C. McKeivitt, *Consuming Japan: Popular Culture and the Globalization of 1980s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Meghan Warner Mettler, *How to Reach Japan by Subway: America's Fascination with Japanese Culture, 1946-1965*

Readers are shown the financial reasons for “runaway” productions: In addition to satisfying an American audience’s wanderlust in an age before affordable international travel, these shoots in foreign locations were a way for a studio to spend its foreign currency earnings which would otherwise have been laying idle in overseas bank accounts. We also learn how the Japanese studio Daiei was able to leverage MGM’s ambition to capitalize on the popularity of Japanese cinema – and MGM’s desire to cast Daiei’s Kyō Machiko in a lead role – to secure a partnership with the Hollywood studio. *Teahouse* centers on the efforts of an American occupier, Glenn Ford’s Captain Fisby, who is dispatched to a small rural village with orders to Americanize the locals through the construction of an improbably pentagon-shaped school. His plans are resisted and ultimately thwarted, and the villagers instead build a traditional teahouse. The Japanese characters accomplish this by employing the occupiers’ own language of democracy.² Crucial to this success are the “Oriental” characters of Lotus Blossom, a *geisha* played by Kyō Machiko, and Sakini, played, in yellowface, by Marlon Brando who act as intermediaries between the local community and the foreign occupiers (276). Ford’s character, and through him the American audience, come to appreciate his charges’ puckish spirit. Such “managed subversion” allowed for a measure of local agency but only within the overall structure of a supposedly benign American hegemony (274).

This framing was crucial in ensuring the film’s appeal to both Japanese and American audiences and Kitamura shows this was largely successful. American critics praised the film, especially Brando’s performance, for authenticity and exoticism, showing how hidebound they were by these particular features of U.S. Orientalist discourse. Japanese critics were also generally positive in their appraisals, though they highlighted the film’s humor and welcomed its portrayal of subversion. Surprisingly, they excused Brando’s performance as being appropriate to a “fictitious ‘fairy tale’” (282). Absent from any of the contemporary criticism was an acknowledgement that neither Daiei nor MGM had made efforts to incorporate Okinawan traditions and culture – for example “standard Japanese” was used rather than the Luchuan dialect of the Ryukyus (278). This was in marked contrast to the more sensitive and culturally aware approach of the novel on which the film was based. That the film was appreciated in the United States because of its Orientalist approach and was also popular in Japan despite of this was a testament to the film’s success in walking a narrow line. This serves to underscore one of Kitamura’s main contentions; that Orientalism can and ought to be seen as operating beyond the confines of a single nation or culture, as something which, like *Teahouse*, is international, transnational and, co-created. In this case, an imagined Okinawa served as a space for both Americans and home-island Japanese to construct and consume this Orientalist fantasia.

Masaru Nishikawa’s equally well-written and compelling article makes a welcome addition to the literature on environmental diplomacy and to the role of public opinion in interstate relations.³ He has drawn on an impressive range of archival sources, including the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Diplomatic Archive (Gaikō Shiryōkan) and the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, as well as interviews with former policy makers and personal diaries. He dismisses as unsubstantiated conspiracy theories the charges that the Nixon administration embraced the whaling moratorium at the UNCHE in Stockholm as a way to divert attention from the U.S.’s environmental destruction in its wars in southeast Asia and as a way to undermine Japan’s economic power. Rather, as he demonstrates in his main scholarly intervention, policymakers in Washington had their eyes on an easy domestic political win. He assigns a measure of blame to Japanese

(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018); Naoko Shibusawa, *American’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

² For an excellent study on the role of democracy in U.S.-Japanese relations in this period see Jennifer M. Miller, *Cold War Democracy: The United States and Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

³ Earlier works include James Cameron, “From the Grass Roots to the Summit: The Impact of US Suburban Protest on US Missile-Defence Policy, 1968–72,” *The International History Review* 36:2 (2014): 342-362; J. Brooks Flippen, “Richard Nixon, Russell Train, and the Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (2008): 613–638; Stephen Macekura, “The Limits of Global Community: The Nixon Administration and Global Environmental Politics,” *Cold War History* 11:4 (2011): 489-518. On the role of whaling in Japan’s post-war international relations see also Christopher Aldous, “The Anatomy of Allied Occupation: Contesting the Resumption of Japanese Antarctic Whaling, 1945-1952,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 26 (2019): 338-367.

officials for underestimating the growth in concern for anti-whaling sentiment in the U.S. and around the world and these officials' "naivete" in not anticipating the issue would be raised at the conference (335).

Nishikawa's narrative moves easily between Washington, Tokyo and Stockholm. He describes how U.S. policy took shape in response to campaigning by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the promptings of Congress. Membership in environmental advocacy groups had climbed through the 1960s and 1970s, partly in reaction to warnings contained in Rachel Carson's influential *Silent Spring*, which had been published in 1962.⁴ Japanese officials failed to appreciate how these pressures were moving U.S. policy from apathy towards the championing of environmental protection and, especially, whale conservation in the lead-up to the UNCHE. To be fair these officials, Nishikawa shows how they received no clear warning from their American counterparts that they were likely to embrace an international moratorium on whaling. The lack of sensitivity went both ways; American officials assumed, without any evidence, that Japan's own position on the issue would change in response to public pressure just as Washington's had.

Events at the UNCHE in Stockholm went decidedly against Japan. As one of the few remaining whaling nations it found itself isolated on the issue, all the more so since whales had come to have an almost totemic importance to the environmental cause. Attempting to salvage something from the situation, Motoo Ogiso, a senior member of Japan's delegation and ambassador to the United Nations, proffered an amendment to the moratorium confining it to endangered species only. This was roundly rejected by Robert White of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmosphere Agency. In a full-throated defense which was greeted with a standing ovation, White condemned this as only delaying the destruction of a species which had come to represent the cause of conservation. The call for a full moratorium was passed unanimously with only twelve abstentions.

For Nishikawa this was more than a failure of diplomacy but "a disagreement between the two nations in the truest sense" (318). While careful not to overplay the importance of the incident he notes that it doubtlessly fed into a growing divergence between the two countries – more specifically between the two *peoples* – in the 1970s and 1980s. It followed close on the heels of the brouhaha over Japan's textile exports and was itself followed by assertions in the United States that Japan was enjoying a 'free ride' when it came to defense. Though the disagreement at the UNCHE certainly did not contribute to closer relations, it is hard to see it as a divergence between two peoples. Certainly, as Nishikawa demonstrates, this was a mobilizing issue in the United States, but we are not shown that this was also the case in Japan. Nishikawa shows how Japan's senior officials were themselves divided on the relative importance of whaling. Members of the powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) downplayed its economic importance, while Foreign Ministry diplomats worried that a continuation of whaling would damage Japan's international reputation. For Saburo Ohkita, an influential economist and advisor to the delegation at Stockholm (and future Foreign Minister), the stakes were higher still. As he argued, Japan was poised to assume a greater role in helping to solve global problems of economic development and sustainability. Taking an unpopular stand on whaling would jeopardize its chances of success. Given these factors it is unclear why the Fisheries Ministry was able to take the lead on Japan's approach to the issue. One suspects it was because this matter lay within its purview, but the question of why the concerns of one small and declining industry were allowed to undermine Japan's bid for a more expansive global role is one that deserves a clearer answer. Another fascinating aspect of Nishikawa's piece is the extent to which senior Japanese figures were appalled that the Nixon administration would choose political expediency and its own interests over the concerns of a close ally. Coming so soon after the "Nixon Shocks" of the previous year, when Washington had twice done exactly that in surprising Tokyo with major U-turns on relations with the People's Republic of China and on international economic policy (please add a descriptive phrase for them), this shows the extent to which Japan had yet to fully adjust to a new reality, or to re-calibrate its intelligence gathering and analysis of the United States.⁵

⁴ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

⁵ On the "Nixon Shocks" see Fintan Hoey, *Satō, America and the Cold War: U.S.-Japanese Relations, 1964-1972* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 138-177. On the fallout from the Nixon shocks and the perception that Japan needed to improve its intelligence gathering in the U.S. see Hisahiko Okazaki Oral History Interview, conducted by Akihiro Tanaka, Makoto Iokibe and Koji

Both articles are well researched, written, and argued. Kitamura's rich and multilayered approach reveals much about the workings of U.S.-Japanese relations through the lenses of mass-culture and consumption. Nishikawa shows Japan's foreign policy apparatus as being slow to adapt to changes in the international currents of the 1970s, specifically a growing global environmental consciousness and the propensity of Washington to prioritize its own concerns, and indeed what role Japan itself should assume given these wider changes. Both articles have a contemporary relevance: Japan is one of only a tiny number of countries to engage in commercial whaling, earning it continued international opprobrium.⁶ Kitamura places *Teahouse* at the start of a longer history of globalized Hollywood productions which continues to the present as anyone who has seen the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise (2008, 2011, 2016) can attest. Naturally, these articles will find a readership among those interested in U.S.-Japanese relations, but both deserve wider audiences and will be useful and stimulating to those interested in film history, environmental history and the role of ordinary people as diplomatic actors.

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Murata, 18 Dec. 1995, U.S.-Japan Project, National Security Archive, accessed 16 June 2020, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//japan/okazakiohnterview.htm>.

⁶ See for instance the reaction to the recent decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission, 'Japan: Stop Slaughtering the Whales,' *New York Times*, 31 December 2018.