

***The Anger of the Sovereign People* – A Collective Photobook of the 1960 Anpo Struggle**

In 1960, Japan reached a boiling point. Millions took to the streets in what became one of the most decisive political uprisings of the postwar era: the **Anpo Protests**, a nationwide movement opposing the renewal of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty. These protests were not symbolic. They were visceral. Bodies pressed against police shields, voices collided in the air, and for a brief moment it felt as if the entire fate of Japan’s democracy hung in the balance.

Out of this turmoil emerged the photobook ***The Anger of the Sovereign People*** (主権者の怒り — 安保斗争の記録), published on **August 15, 1960** by the **Japan Journalists Conference** (日本ジャーナリスト会議).

It stands as one of the most important collective photographic documents of protest in Japanese history.

A Collective Vision of Resistance

Unlike most photobooks of the period, this work was intentionally created **without a single authorial voice**. It was built through collaboration — a merging of perspectives from photographers who embedded themselves directly inside the demonstrations.

The contributing photographers include:

- **Hiroshi Hamaya** (濱谷浩)
- **Shomei Tomatsu** (東松照明)
- **Ihei Kimura** (木村伊兵衛)
- **Shigeichi Nagano** (長野重一)
- **Yukichi Watanabe** (渡辺雄吉)
- **Hiroshi Kawashima** (川島浩)
- **Takeshi Takahara** (高原猛)

- **Kōichi Uchida** (内田康一)
- **Hisaya Konishi** (小西久弥)
- **Shōzō Satō** (佐藤省三)
- **Haruyasu Hiratsuka** (平塚晴康)
- *and several others*

This lineup reads like a cross-section of Japan's most important photographers — from documentary pioneers like Hamaya and Kimura to later Provoke-era giants like Tomatsu.

But in this book, none of them stand above the others. The authorship dissolves into the movement itself.

This is the power of the book:

the collective eye of a people demanding to be seen.

Inside the Photobook

The pages present a kinetic portrait of the uprising:

- Students scaling the iron gates of the National Diet
- Police phalanxes pressing against waves of demonstrators
- Workers raising handmade signs
- Women shouting with unrestrained defiance
- The funeral march for Kanba Michiko, the student killed during a clash on June 15, 1960

The images are not neat. They are not calm.

They pulse with **anger, fear, solidarity, and hope.**

There is a sense that the photographers were not observing history — they were **inside the bloodstream of it**, pushed and pulled by the same current that moved the crowds.

This rawness anticipates the visual rupture that would define the late 1960s in Japan, especially the birth of the **Provoke movement**. You can see the seeds here:

- Grainy tones
- Blurred edges
- Harsh contrast
- A rejection of stillness and neutrality

The book is not “documentary” in the journalistic sense. It is documentary in the **existential** sense.

A Record of Sovereignty

The title — *The Anger of the Sovereign People* — is not poetic exaggeration. It is a statement of political philosophy.

In 1960, Japanese citizens confronted a question central to any democracy:

Who holds sovereignty — the state, or the people?

The protests, and this photobook, argued forcefully for the latter.

In these images, the people assert themselves not as passive subjects but as active agents shaping their country’s future. That is why this book transcends its moment. It is not merely about the Anpo treaty; it is about the recurring struggle between authority and citizenry — a struggle present in every society, in every era.

Why This Book Still Matters

More than sixty years later, the book remains:

- A **historical document**
- A **visual manifesto**
- A **collective cry for agency**
- A **prelude to the radical aesthetics of 1960s Japanese photography**

It teaches us that photography can do more than record.

It can **bear witness, provoke, mobilize, and preserve** the emotional truth of a moment.

In a world still wrestling with protests, state power, and civic responsibility, this book feels as alive as ever.

Final Reflection

The Anger of the Sovereign People is not just a photobook.

It is a testament to what happens when ordinary people realize their power – and when photographers choose to stand with them, not apart from them.

It is a rare collective artifact in which image-making becomes inseparable from political courage.

To flip through it is to return to the very heartbeat of 1960:
a moment when the streets became a parliament,
and the camera became a witness to sovereignty itself.
