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Liberalism on the Edge: Tachibana Shiraki's Theory of International
Order from the End of World War I to 1923

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This paper focuses on the discourse of Japanese journalist Tachibana Shiraki, who is mostly known for his “Asianist” regional vision following the Manchurian Incident. It will elucidate the liberal theory of international order that Tachibana held in the early 1920s when he served in a Japanese newspaper published in Beijing and Tianjin. By identifying both the critique and endorsement of imperialism inherent in his discourse, this paper will explore the possibilities and limits of liberalist theory on Sino-Japanese relations during the interwar period.

Becoming a focal point in Sino-Japanese relations after World War I, Tachibana acknowledged that the so-called Twenty-One Demands were outdated, bearing in mind the changes in the international environment after the war and the rise of nationalism in China since the May Fourth Movement. Tachibana argued that Japan should cooperate with relevant countries to respond to Chinese demands for the abolition of the leased territories. During the “Recovering Lüshun (Port Arthur) and Dalian Movement” and the Boycott of Japanese products in 1923, he criticized Japan's Manchurian policy, which

sought to maintain its interests by supporting Warlord Zhang Zuolin. He also argued that the deployment of a huge army in Manchuria was a factor that worsened Chinese sentiment toward Japan, and that the army should be reduced to the size it was before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Tachibana radically criticized Japan’s ambitions for territorial expansion in China and its self-righteous economic activities.

On the other hand, Tachibana was optimistic that Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment would disappear if a bourgeois democratic government was established in China, and advocated cooperation between the Japanese and Chinese bourgeois. However, this did not address the ongoing competition and friction between Japanese and Chinese capitalists, hence it was not an effective measure to restrain the anti-Japanese movement. Furthermore, Tachibana, who deemed the Chinese people’s desire for social reform to be more fundamental than their opposition to foreign interference in internal affairs, argued that the only way for the weaponless Chinese people to subvert the warlords was to receive financial and military assistance from foreign countries. Following the breakout of the Lincheng Incident, he came to deny the legitimacy of the Beiyang government and to advocate a joint military deployment by the powers. Ultimately, Tachibana’s liberalism was ambivalent and could easily be transformed into a device generating a cycle of violence.

Daily Life and Labor Movement of Rickshaw Men in Chengdu in the Mid-1920s

LI Yutao

This paper focuses on the social relations established by rickshaw men (*chefu* 車夫) in their work and daily life, and attempts to clarify their responses to urbanization and the intervention of political forces.

Previous studies have mainly analyzed the mobilization efforts of polit-

ical forces and the geographic and kinship ties among rickshaw men, focusing on major port cities such as Shanghai 上海. Chengdu 成都, located in south-western China, experienced road construction in the mid-1920s, which led to the rise of rickshaws as a popular mode of transportation and positioned rickshaw men as the most important members of the working class. However, unlike other cities, most rickshaw men in Chengdu did not rent rickshaws directly from rickshaw garages; instead, they rented them through middlemen or brokers (*gongtou* 工頭). As a result, rickshaw garages could not serve as patrons for rickshaw men. However, brokers could provide financial support to rickshaw men, which often led to the cultivation of patron-client ties between them.

In late January of 1926, high rents and deposits caused dissatisfaction among rickshaw men toward rickshaw garages, resulting in conflict. This conflict prompted the formation of the rickshaw men's union, which quickly garnered over 5,000 members, more than half of the rickshaw men in Chengdu. Notably, labor activists of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) rightists succeeded in controlling the union.

Why the KMT was able to mobilize the seemingly scattered rickshaw men? Brokers between rickshaw garages and rickshaw men should be noted. The patron-client ties were often stronger than the connections among the rickshaw men. During this period, brokers faced with a potential ban chose to cooperate with political forces to secure their social status and rickshaw men. Consequently, the labor movement of rickshaw men in Chengdu in the mid-1920s was primarily driven by brokers, led by the KMT rightists, who mobilized rickshaw men through established patron-client ties.