

The Etymology of Cooperation: Sino-Japanese Relations and Arao Sei

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The formation of strong, mutually beneficial relations, between Japan and China, beginning in the late 19th century, ended in tragic failure. This failure was, in part, due to the inherent limits of cooperation. What was the nature of this cooperation? Who cooperated, for what goals, and at what levels? These are all crucial questions for an understanding of the dynamics of modern Sino-Japanese relations.

A standard definition of cooperation is: "joint or collaborative behavior that is directed toward some goal and in which there is common interest or hope of reward."¹ Within a social science context, five types of cooperation can be discerned: automatic, traditional, contractual, directed, and spontaneous. The distinguishing features of each type are as follows.

Automatic is instinctual and arises, in part, from perceived threats to mutual security. Automatic cooperation is therefore ecologically based.

Traditional is neither instinctual, volitional, nor ecological but rather regulated by social norms.

Contractual is a type of cooperation that is specific, conditional, and legalistic.

Directed cooperation arises by way of command, i.e., any large organized project or enterprise.

Spontaneous cooperation is unprescribed by tradition, contract, or command. It arises clearly when there is a prior basis for amity.² Cooperation is also contextual and may be viewed as operating within "an ethical norm, as a social process, or as an organizational structure."³

Again, although we can delineate five types of cooperation, as Robert Nisbet reminds us, "it is equally important to emphasize that rarely, if ever, does any one of them exist in isolation."⁴ This point is especially important to remember when analyzing the paradox of Sino-Japanese cooperation.

In Japanese, there is more than one specific word for "cooperation." Both kyōryoku 協力 (Ch., xieli) and teikei 提携 (Ch., tixie) are used, although they are not interchangeable, for the differences between them are substantial. This essay only briefly touches upon the psycho-social-linguistic and political difficulties of using Chinese characters across a trans-ideographic cultural zone, but the dilemma is fascinating and begs for research. Japan's domestic use of what Thomas Huber has called "spiritual charisma"--namely, the use of classical Chinese expressions to legitimize unorthodox or politically dangerous proposals as an effective modernizing tool during the

Meiji period--was carried over into the international arena.⁵ Using Chinese characters, however, to sanctify and explain Japanese policy toward China was fraught with perceptual difficulties. For example, did Japan's use of Chinese characters as a policy tool with respect to China assume a universality when in fact the usage was particularistic to Japan and its needs? Needless to say, the power of the written word as a conveyor and facilitator cannot be underestimated.

As far as kyōryoku and teikei are concerned, the former is more volitional, open, harmonious, and unplanned. Another distinction is that rarely would the process of teikei take place on an individual level; it is more an organizational term. There is no mistaking the intention or application of each expression. Anyone who has had the pleasure of standing on a crowded train platform in Japan well knows the difference between the above two terms. One's kyōryoku is requested when there is a certainty that compliance, based on automatic mutuality and harmony, will be immediate. There are no need for sanctions because the environment is volitional.

Within what context were Japanese and Chinese cooperating in the decades leading up to the Pacific War? Was it teikei or kyōryoku? Were the terms, so clear in implication and operation, ultimately confused to the point where they became falsely interchangeable? Was Japan expecting kyōryoku while demanding teikei? The record is mixed. At times, a romantic and utterly idealistic notion of spontaneous and naturally harmonic cooperation based partly upon a dōbun dōshū 同文同種 (common culture, common race) formula was hoped for, while at other times legalistic and involuntary norms based on obligation and hierarchy were championed. The coercive could be couched in the linguistically harmonious. Accurately identifying and labeling the type of cooperation and the perceptions involved of any one individual or group is immensely difficult. As far as Sino-Japanese relations are concerned, generalizations should be eschewed for a case-by-case analysis of groups and individuals.

This case-by-case approach is especially necessary for Japan's China activists. Lumping them all into one large, rightwing cabal divests them of any meaning and vitiates historical inquiry. Even calling them Shina rōnin 支那浪人 or tairiku rōnin 大陸浪人 should be approached cautiously. What separates, for example, Miyazaki Tōten 宮崎滔天, Ura Keiichi 浦敬一, and Arao Sei 荒尾清 is more instructive than a dubious label that treats them as a group. Is it any better to say that Miyazaki was a "revolutionary rōnin," Ura a "reckless rōnin," and Arao a "commercial rōnin." In each, a barometer of cooperation must be measured before any effective historical judgment can be levied.

What kind of China activist was Arao Sei (1858-1896)? Arao provides the researcher with a good case of the problems of looking at Sino-Japanese relations from a framework of cooperation. Arao was certainly one of the most active figures in the mid-Meiji debate over Japan's relationship with China. His entry in the Tō-A senkaku

shishi kiden 東亞先覺志士記傳 (Stories and Biographies of Pioneer Patriots of East Asia) is the longest of any individual.⁶ Tōyama Mitsuru 頭山滿, the doyen of the right wing, eulogized Arao by stating that he was "the type of great man who came about only once every five hundred years" 偉人は五百年に一度降又, while the alumni of the former Tō-A Dōbun Shoin 東亞同文書院 (the Koyūkai 滬友会) hail him as "the single red flower in the midst of green foliage" 萬綠叢中一點紅.⁷ These statements obscure more than they illuminate. How can Arao be both a spy-expansionist and, as the Koyūkai would have us believe, a tireless advocate of peaceful trade relations with China? What did Arao really mean when he mentioned such terms as dōshin itchi 同心一致, shinshi sōi 唇齒相依, and yūgi 友義? What type of relationship was he calling for when he insisted on labeling Japan a kōkoku 皇國 (divine imperial state)?⁸ Finally, to what degree would he allow China to grow and prosper? Was cooperation going to be between two equal partners (kyōryoku) or would it be a contract between a patron and a client (teikei)?

One can identify three streams of thought in Arao. One was clearly the encouragement of Japan's trade relations with Asia. The second was the goal of a reconstructed China. Third was ultranationalism. There are conflicts within these three impulses which deserve our attention. For example, Arao's goal of cooperative Sino-Japanese trade relations and the 1890 establishment of his Nis-Shin bōeki kenkyūjo 日清貿易研究所 (Japan-China Trade Research Institute) seem very positive, but questions must be asked about the extent to which Arao envisioned Japan's role in China's economic development. Was he willing to allow China to become an equal commercial partner, or was China only to be exploited as a treasure trove of resources and as an economic buffer for Japan? To what extent was Arao willing to allow China's economy to develop independently?

Also, Arao's concerns for a reconstructed China were not unique in the Meiji period. Such goals, for the most part, were not spurred by altruism or romance, but by sharp fears of a dismembered China within the grasp of a ravenous West. As with trade, to what extent would Arao applaud the creation of a vibrant and efficient Chinese central government, free from all outside manipulation?

Finally, Arao's ultranationalism must be taken into strict account. Although we may find it positive that, unlike his contemporaries who flocked to the West in order to find the path to wealth and power for Japan, while Arao instead turned back to the Asian mainland as a source of inspiration, it must also be recognized that Arao always looked at China through the refracted prism of Japanese power and advantage. His vision, although at times precocious and prescient, was nevertheless ultimately unfocused and flawed. See, for example, his Fukumeisho 復命書 (A Report on My Mission), an 1889 report to the Japanese General Staff on his three-year mission to China.

Arao's career taken in carefully constructed, isolated segments can give the hasty reader a variety of mixed impressions. A careful

reader, however, of his two most important essays--"Tai-Shin iken" 對清意見 (An opinion concerning China, publ. October 15, 1894) and "Tai-Shin benmō" 對清辨妄 (Refuting Japan's China logic, publ. March 16, 1895)--leaves little doubt that, when he talked of Sino-Japanese cooperation, it was of the teikei variety: directed, controlled, and planned.⁹

Within a typology of cooperation, Arao assumed Sino-Japanese relations would be based on an automatic or traditionally cooperative type while, in fact, what was actually demanded was contractual and directed. This contradiction is best seen in a statement from "Tai-Shin iken": "But, here is one thing that we cannot help considering very seriously, that is, the unfavorable effects that a wealthy and powerful China might have upon Japan's position and influence."¹⁰ It is fascinating that at the very point of perigee in the orbit of the Qing, Arao as perhaps Japan's leading China-hand was raising the spectre of a resurgent and threatening China. Arao and others never seemed to be able to escape from the feeling of Japan's vulnerability. In the final analysis, cooperation was no more than a tactic, a means to an autarchical end. Although Arao did dream of Sino-Japanese cooperation based on trade and did realize the folly of Japanese military adventurism on the Asian mainland, he could never see Japan acting outside a model of hierarchy and Darwinian competition. His "cooperation" would always remain limited and self-serving. The paradox of Arao is that he wanted too much. He wanted Chinese cooperation based on Japanese power. He confused the operations and requirements of teikei and kyōryoku.

Notes

1. Robert A. Nisbet, "Cooperation," in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1968), vol. 3, p. 384.

2. Nisbet, pp. 385-386.

3. Nisbet, p. 384.

4. Nisbet, p. 385.

5. Thomas Huber, The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p. 59.

6. Kuzuu Yoshihisa 葛生能久, Tō-A senkaku shishi kiden, 3 vols. (Tokyo, 1933-1936). Hereafter, TSSK.

7. The quotation by Tōyama can be found in TSSK, vol. 1, p. 413. The "single red flower" reference is from Ekō 回光 (March 1984), p. 2. Ekō is a monthly newsletter published by Murakami Takeshi 村上武 who runs the Sei-A Shrine 靖亜神社 in Saitama Prefecture which is dedicated to Arao and Nezu Hajime .

8. Arao dedicated a whole chapter of "Tai-Shin benmō" to explaining why Japan deserved the appellation of kōkoku. Standard English renditions of the term do not significantly differentiate it from teikoku 帝国 and merely translate both as "imperial state." I would argue that it is more appropriate to translated kōkoku as "divine imperial state." For a further discussion, see my Japan-China: Arao Sei and the Paradox of Cooperation (Osaka: Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1988), pp. 130-134.

9. I have stuck with Hashikawa Bunzō's 橋川文三 translation of the title of "Tai-Shin benmō" which is found in "Japanese Perspectives on Asia: From Dissociation to Coprosperity," in The Chinese and the Japanese, ed. Akira Iriye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 333.

10. Scott, p. 126.