

BOOK REVIEWS

Akiyoshi Shu (秋吉收), *Rojin: Yasō to Zassō* (『魯迅—野草と雑草』), *Lu Xun: Wild Grass and Weed*. Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press (Japanese), 2016. 375 pp.

Lu Xun's (鲁迅) prose poetry collection *Ye-cao* (《野草》, *Wild Grass*), has been acclaimed his masterpiece in China, and many scholars, including Zhou Jianren (周建人), Wang Yao (王瑶), Tang Tao (唐弢), Wang Shijing (王士菁), Deng Yizhong (邓仪中), Qian Liqun (钱理群), Sun Yushi (孙玉石), Chen Shuyu (陈漱渝), Liu Zaifu (刘再复), and Wang Hui (汪晖), have been publishing excellent and important scholarship on the poems.

Ye-cao's reputation in Japan is similar. Many studies of it have been done, and at least thirteen translations of it into Japanese have been published since 1928. The number of studies and publications on *Ye-cao* shows the great value that has been placed on the collection in Japan and simultaneously that the collection is dense or difficult. The poems in the collection allow for multidimensional readings, as if the texts were made of many-colored lights like the beads in a kaleidoscope. Because of this multiplicity, study of *Ye-cao* has gradually developed various topics and themes. In the course of this development, Takeuchi Yoshimi, a distinguished Japanese scholar of Sinology, wrote that a new generation of scholars would surely propose innovative perspectives.

One such innovate perspective in the long tradition of Japanese research on *Ye-cao* might be Akiyoshi Shu's recent work *Rojin: Yasō to Zassō* (*Lu Xun: Ye-cao and Za-cao*). Employing meticulous research in primary source materials, including letters, magazines, and newspapers, as well as a detailed examination of socio-cultural reality in China, the monograph proposes the view that Lu Xun's *Ye-cao* is a kind of pastiche of other literary texts from East and West, including works by authors who Lu Xun criticized in public and whose works, according to Akiyoshi, have not been noted as compositional elements of *Ye-cao*.

Akiyoshi's most notable source in his research is the *Supplement to the Morning News* (晨报副刊, *Chenbao Fukan*). He takes notice of literary works in the supplements from 1919 to 1920, when Lu Xun was preparing to write *Ye-cao*. Such literary works are as follows: "The New Ghost Association" (<新鬼匯>, "Xinguihui") by Chen Xi' (晨曦) (July 30 and 31, 1919), "A Strange Boy" by Alexander Efimovich Izmaylov (May 3, 1920), *Poems in Prose* by Turgenev (June 12 to October 9, 1920), "Why Do You Love Me?" (<你爲甚麼愛我>, "Ni weishenme ai wo"), a poem written by a Latvian poet in Esperanto and translated by Lu Xun's younger brother, Zhou Zuoren (周作人) (October 2, 1920), and "Ye-cao" (「野草」, "Wild Grass") written by Yosano Akiko (与謝野晶子) and translated by Zhou Zuoren (October 16, 1920). With minute analysis and on-target comparison of styles, contents, themes, metaphors, words and phrases, rhythm, and translations, the author found that those texts are surprisingly consistent with the poems in Lu Xun's *Ye-cao*: "The Dog's Retort" (<狗的駁語>, "Goude bojie") with Chen's "The New Ghost

Association,” “On Expressing an Opinion” (<立論>, “Lilun”) with Izmaylov’s “A Strange Boy,” “The Beggars” (<求乞者>, “Qiuqizhe”) with Turgenev’s “The Beggar,” “The Vibration of the Decrepit Line” (<頹敗線の顫動>, “Tuibaixiande chan dong”) with Turgenev’s “The End of the World,” “The Passerby” (<過客>, “Guoke”) with Turgenev’s “Alms” and “The Old Woman,” “The Good Story” (<好的故事>, “Haode gushi”) with Turgenev’s “The Realm of Azure,” “After Death” (<死後>, “Shihou”) with Turgenev’s “What Shall I Think?,” “Shadow’s Leave-Taking” (<影的告別> with the Latvian poet’s “Why Do You Love Me?,” and *Ye-cao* with Yosano’s “Ye-cao.” The original Japanese title of Yosano’s “Ye-cao” is “Zassō” (「雜草」, “Za-cao”: “Weed”): Zhou Zuoren translated “Zassō” (“Weed”) into Chinese as “Ye-cao” (“Wild Grass”). Akiyoshi notes the meaning of *Ye-cao* in Chinese, which is similar to that of zassō (za-cao: weed) in Japanese, and Lu Xun himself elsewhere uses the word *Ye-cao* to mean the Japanese word *zassō* in his essays and in translations of literary works by Japanese authors like Kikuchi Kan (菊池寛) and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (芥川龍之介). Furthermore, the image of *Ye-cao* in the foreword to Lu Xun’s prose poetry collection evokes *zassō* in Japanese, the way Yosano used it in her poem. Akiyoshi shows, using Lu Xun’s letters, that he read the *Supplement to the Morning News* and paid close attention to it. He concludes that the *Supplement to the Morning News* was a quarry for Lu Xun’s *Ye-cao*.

For sources of other compositional elements of *Ye-cao*, Akiyoshi Shu finds Xu Yunuo (徐玉诺), Akutagawa, Satō Haruo (佐藤春夫), and others. It is further interesting to note that Akiyoshi found in the densest of Lu Xun’s prose poems, “Shadow’s Leave-Taking,” similar images, themes, words, and phrases to those in works by Rabindranath Tagore, Xu Zhimo (徐志摩), and his brother Zhou Zuoren, although Lu Xun criticized these figures in public. He had hostile relations with them, but communicated with them through his literary texts.

Akiyoshi states that Lu Xun’s *Ye-cao* is a pastiche of literary works from East and West, especially those published in the *Supplement to the Morning News*, but his purpose is not to undermine the value of *Ye-cao* by disclosing its deficiency of originality. He proposes a fundamental question on the way to approach Lu Xun and his work. Lu Xun respected originality but denied that he was a poet, like Akutagawa did, or a writer of literature. Lu Xun chose to write miscellaneous impressions and thoughts as the best way to proceed, as he noted in the Foreword to *And That’s That* (《而已集》, *Erjiji*, 1926), written after he finished writing *Ye-cao*, and later in other essays as well. He preferred to be a miscellanist. Nonetheless, he has been elevated to the status of a great poet by critics in the East and the West as well.

Akiyoshi thus proposes that Lu Xun should be studied from the viewpoint of a miscellanist but not of a poet or an author; otherwise, he thinks, it might be difficult to approach Lu Xun and his works. With this perspective, thanks to his meticulous research, and with the support of the different characters “leave” (《往》) and “stay” (《住》) in different versions of “Shadow’s Leave-Taking,” representing an indecisive shadow, rather than regarding them as a mere corrigendum, he proposes a new

Japanese translation of Lu Xun's *Ye-cao* as his last chapter. Together with this translation, his recent book *Rojin: Yasō to Zassō* might give Lu Xun studies the breath of fresh air that Takeuchi Yoshimi expected.

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