A Note on Taiwan Literature: Three Works by Taiwanese Writers

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Translated by Richard John Lynn

1.

We have to ask if the term "Taiwan literature" is really suitable, for its status is not comparable to Japanese, Chinese, or American literature but actually resembles, say, Irish or Ainu literature. Lu Hsün might have written in Japanese and Oscar Wilde might have published in French, but what they had written would still be works of Chinese and English literature respectively. But what should we make of works written by Taiwanese and published in Japanese during the time of Japanese rule or works by Koreans in Japanese published under similar conditions? This problem is fundamentally different from the question of whether it is appropriate, for example, to assign the works of the Pole Joseph Conrad to English literature because he became a naturalized British subject and published his works in English. The literature of an oppressed people, be it those of Taiwan or Korea, is full of images of both resistance and submission to colonial rule, which, moreover, could not be expressed in their own languages but only in the language of the colonial masters—or, at least, such writers felt compelled to write in this way. And this, in my opinion, constitutes the

most serious problem in considerations of colonial literature.

Even now in the post-war era, this problem still drags on, perfectly obvious in the persistent controversy over whether the works of Korean writers who live in Japan and write in Japanese belong to Korean literature or Japanese literature. A piece published by Nihon Kikanshi Tsûshinsha (The Japan Bulletin News Agency), August 1959, "Nihonjin no mita zai-Nichi Chôsenjin" (Korean Residents in Japan as Seen by the Japanese), edited by the Rôdôsha Ruporutaaju Shûdan (Labor Reportage Group), presents the distress of Kim Tal-su, "an author who addresses himself mainly to Japanese readers," "who is trying to move beyond appeals and establish a field for creative activity in Japan." Kim, who "is only too proficient in the Japanese language and writes literature in Japanese only too well," expressed his state of mind in a reply he issued to critical circles regarding his own work, *Genkai Nada* (The Sea of Genkai):

> Formerly—and to a lesser extent even now—I was able to learn this language of Japanese this "well" because of this inequality. However, I have never thought of putting this Japanese of mine to any other purpose than wanting to use it to achieve equality for our people and to bring about understanding between human beings. And even if I wind up getting revenge that way on those who pushed us down into inequality and lack of understanding, surely you will understand.

Japanese control over Korea, which lasted more than thirty years, inflicted spiritual pain not just on Kim Tal-su but on many Koreans then living in Japan. Writers who became "really good at Japanese" under conditions of inequality in that society, literary talent that can invoke through the Japanese language even the atmosphere of such Japanese feelings as *wabi* [beauty to be found in poverty and simplicity] and *sabi* [elegant simplicity] —on all those writers was cast the deep, dark shadow of Japanese colonial domination. This is not a problem of Korean writers but, as it stands, a Japanese problem, and needs to be treated as a matter of concern for us Japanese who deal with literature. I myself feel their scars on my own skin. I could not give an account of colonial literature if I left them out. The same thing can be said of Taiwanese literature.

According to the *Hsin wen-hsüeh hsin-chü yün-tung jen-*

ming-lu (Role Call of People Involved in the New Literature and New Drama Movement) compiled by Jung Feng and contained in *T'ai-pei wen-wu* (Taipei Culture) 3:3 (1954), published by the Taipei City Literature Commission, there were, by the time of liberation, 170 figures active in cultural life, of whom fifty-three published in Chinese, seventy-three in Japanese, and thirty-four in both languages (the other ten are involved in the new drama). These numbers indicate that 107 individuals, including those who wrote in both languages, understood Japanese and that they had, in fact, achieved a high level of proficiency, high enough to write fiction or criticism—clearly more than half the total number of 170.

2

In my possession now are three works by Taiwanese writers: Yang K'uei's *Shinbun haitatsufu* (The Newsboy), Lü He-jo's *Gyûsha* (The Oxcart), and Lung Ying-tsung's *Papaiya no aru machi* (The Town with the Papaya Trees).

"The Newsboy" was published as the second place selection in *Bungaku hyôron* (Literary Review) 1:8 . The original name of the author, Yang K'uei, was Yang Kuei, and his native place was Hsin-hua town in T'ai-nan prefecture (the former Hsin-hua village, Hsin-hua county, T'ai-nan prefecture). He was for a long time the leader of the "Taiwan New Literature" movement, and "The Newsboy" is not only the work by which he made a name for himself, but also the work representative of his writing as a whole. "The Oxcart," inspired by the appearance of "The Newsboy," was published three months later in *Bungaku hyôron* (Literary Review) 2:1. "The Newsboy" appeared in October 1934, and "The Oxcart" appeared in the following January issue. The writer Lü He-jo was a native of Feng-yüan town, T'ai-chung prefecture (the former Feng-yüan district, Feng-yüan county, T'ai-chung prefecture). "The Oxcart" was his first work; he later published *Arashi no monogatari* (Tale of the Storm), *Seishû* (Clear Autumn), and other stories, and a collection of short stories also exists.

Lung Ying-tsung's original name was Lung Jung-tsung, and he was born in Bei-p'u village, Hsin-chu prefecture (the former Bei-p'u village, Chu-tung county, Hsin-chu prefecture). Lung Ying-tsung turned to writing as a profession when "The Town with the Papaya Trees" was selected as the best entry in the ninth fiction prize contest held by *Kaizô* (Revisions). According to the April 1937 issue of *Kaizô*,

Lung was born as the child of an impoverished merchant in Meiji 44 (1911), and at nine years of age began his education at a public school (an elementary school that accepted Taiwanese). After having completed an advanced course at the same school, he entered the Taiwan Commercial and Industrial College, and, when he graduated, he found employment in the Bank of Taiwan. He first served in the Nan-t'ou branch, and then was transferred to the Taipei main office. It is said that he began practicing writing in Japanese from the time he was fifteen. Lung is mentioned in *III: Kassenka no Taiwan bungaku* (III: Taiwan Literature Under Conditions of Decisive Battle) as one of the Taiwan delegates to the first Greater East Asia Writers Convention held in Tokyo and Osaka from November 3 to 10 in Shôwa 17 [1942] along with Nishikawa Mitsuru, Hamada Toshio, and Chang Wen-huan.

"The Newsboy," "The Oxcart," and "The Town with the Papaya Trees" are all written in Japanese. Although Lung also has works published in Chinese, there are very few works in Chinese for Yang K'uei and Lü He-jo. If we read through these three works in chronological order, we get a sense of being able to follow in some degree an awareness of Taiwanese writers shying away from resistance and tending toward resignation and even submissiveness.

The "I" who is the protagonist of "The Newsboy" is a young Taiwanese who went to Tokyo after his family was scattered following the appropriation of their farmland by a sugar production company as part of its land acquisition scheme. After posting what little money he had for the security deposit, he was given a job as a newspaper delivery boy, but he was soon fired because his first twenty days' work only netted four yen twenty-five sen. His father, who, up to the time when the family land was appropriated, served as the village headman, was locked up in the local police station because he refused to impress his seal [i.e., refused to sell the land], and this was the reason for his death; the land, then valued at 2000 yen, was appropriated with a compensation of only 600 yen, and the family had no recourse but to disperse. His sick mother, who put all her dreams in her son's future, sold off the family home, realizing 150 yen, and after she sent almost all of it for school fees to her son, who would not give up the hope of going to school, hard as it was, she committed suicide by hanging herself. The "I" of the story, bearing up under all this trouble, eventually met a character named Itô, to whom he was introduced by his friend Tanaka, and he joined them in a strike against the newspaper agency that had fired him. After that, on board the ship that was taking

him back to Taiwan, he expressed his conviction: "Such a lot of hard work as in these last months! That was the way most faithful to my mother's dying words."

This is only a summary of the story, which does not convey the rage of the author, but, in selecting it for publication, the judges unanimously evaluated it as a work overflowing with real human feeling that is sure to engage the reader. Miyamoto Yuriko said of this work, "It overflows with real human feeling," and wrote, "We understand that it is necessary for the author to achieve a higher degree of artistic craft, but this is beyond his present powers. Read and appreciated for the good things that are present in it as it is, it still has the power to captivate the reader's heart completely." And Takeda Rintarô tells us, "It has a childlike subjectivity throughout, but that results all the more in a pleasant honest face revealed, and there is none of the false sophistication of facile workmanship as seen in many of the other entries; hence it leaves one with a very favorable impression, and the degree to which it achieves expressiveness is also great." Tokunaga Tadashi, Kamei Katsuichirô, Fujimori Nariyoshi, and Kubokawa Ineko all submitted criticism of a similar drift. Certainly there was depicted here the sad situation of the mass of common people in a colonial land. Not even its immaturity works as a hindrance to its expression of true feelings. The only thing is, a bad influence lingers in the form of schematic presentation borrowed from proletarian literature, especially in the last part of the stony where the strike occurs. Reading this, one feels that the plot of the strike is contrived. However, this work should be remembered as the first embodiment of the sense of resistance to appear in Taiwan literature. What engages my interest is the creative intention that Yang K'uei, despite his immaturity, tried so hard to realize in words. Not only did he understand the oppressed people of Taiwan simply by their being oppressed, he also brought on stage village headmen and police officers in order to understand how from the same Taiwanese population people could emerge who truckled to the Japanese ruling powers, people who turned themselves into the running dogs of oppression; and he depicts a mother who promptly disowned her eldest son, a policeman—the elder brother of the "I" of the story—when he bullied a villager and was shunned by the rest of the villagers, endeavoring in this way to see from all possible angles the condition of a people as they exist in a colonial land. It is a pity that the characters are not well-rounded. In a few casual lines the author Yang K'uei will give us a peek at a somewhat cerebral consciousness, but that rather

strikes me as proof that he cannot depict what he wants to and is marking time with artless expression, unable to do anything use. Let me cite some examples. "Now when I think of it, if there had been an opportunity to have mother read . . . , it would have had the kind of effect that Old Lady Tse To-kin had." "It is because in everyone's memory there remains fresh as ever the bloody spectacle of the suppression of Yü Ch'ing-fang, Lin Shao-mao, and the others who plotted against the government."

The names of Yü Ch'ing-fang and Lin Shao-mao are the same for the Taiwanese as the names of the communists Ichikawa Shôichi and Watanabe Masanosuke are in Japan. More than that, perhaps it would be better to refer to them as fallen heroes in the struggle to liberate their people. For the Japanese people, both Lin Shao-mao and Yü Ch'ing-fang are vaguely familiar names, but even if some of them know who they were, they would only know enough about them to recognize that they were the ringleaders of "rebels" who opposed Japanese rule. During the fifty years of Japanese rule, there were many incidents of resistance to Japanese control; they were especially fierce during the first part of the Meiji 30s [1897-1906] and first part of the 40s [1907-11]. Upon entering the Taishô era [1912-26], resistance did not take the form of direct armed uprisings, but, influenced by the Taishô Democracy movement in Japan and the May 4th Movement in China, it became educational and was switching to a movement to establish a Taiwan National Assembly. The Wu-she incident of Shôwa 5 [1930] was an armed uprising of nearly a thousand tribal aborigines against Japanese rule; even so, there was no direct connection to the Taiwan Democratic Party or the Taiwan Communist Party. Just to mention the representative anti-Japanese guerilla fighters recorded in history, the following names come to mind: people such as Lin Huo-wang, Chen Ch'iu-chü, Chien Ta-shih, Lai Fu-lai, Lin T'ien-fu, and Lin Shao-mao, who, in the initial period of the Japanese takeover of Taiwan, started putting together an army of resistance in such places as I-lan, Tou-liu, and Feng-shan; or Ts'ai Ch'ing-lin, Lin Ch'ing-yü, Huang Ch'ao, Li A-ch'i, Lo Fu-hsing, Chang Ta-lu, Yü Ch'ing-fang, Chiang Ting, and Yang Lin, who took part in such events as the Pei-p'u Incident, the Liu-chia Incident (these during the tenure of Governor General Sakuma), the Hsi-lai-an Incident, and the Hsin-chuang Incident (during the tenure of Governor General Andô).

Lin Shao-mao at the end of Meiji 31 [1898] got into a battle with the Third Brigade in the lower part of the Tansui River region. When defeated, he hid out for a time, but, influenced by the Boxer

Rebellion in China, he started up another revolt in May of Meiji 35 [1902]. He was killed at Hou-pi in T'ai-nan prefecture in the southern part of Taiwan. Yü Ch'ing-fang's incident is also called the Hsi-lai-an Incident, because the plot to raise troops occurred at Hsi-lai-an in T'ai-nan city. Inspired from afar by the 1911 Republican Revolution in China and near at hand by the Twenty-one Demands that Japan made upon China [in 1919], this was an organized and armed guerilla affair. Not surprising for an event that produced a high number of death penalties unprecedented in judicial history, the total number of people arrested was 1,957: 866 were executed, 453 were sentenced to imprisonment for a definite term, 217 were subjected to administrative disposition, 333 had their cases dropped, 86 were judged innocent, and the disposition of the others is unknown. However, actually the number of those slaughtered by the Second Regiment near Tamai (Yü-ching) alone is said to have been at least 1000.

Although I have let the discussion digress in this way, a sentence that seems casually written such as "It is because in everyone's memory there remains fresh as ever the bloody spectacle of the suppression of Yü Ch'ing-fang, Lin Shao-mao, and the others who plotted against the government" must hearken back to bloody memories of things that the author Yang K'uei had seen and heard when he was young—memories made of images superimposed on earlier images. It goes without saying that this uprising had as its center the former Hsin-hua county in which he was born.

Moreover, the consciousness of the author has moved to a perspective that enables the oppressed person to transcend ethnic differences and advance hand in hand with members of the other group. When the "I" of the story says, "When I was in Taiwan, I always thought all Japanese were bad, but Mr. Tanaka is really a very kind person," Itô is made to say, "You're right. Most Japanese workers are good people like Mr. Tanaka . . . . Come, let's join hands! It's all the same kind of people who make you people suffer and us too." These words in the mouths of "I" and Itô certify the high level of political consciousness at which Yang K'uei had arrived. (It is worth noting that about four years later, when writing down his random thoughts under the title *Yuketsu* (Blood Transfusion) he mentioned the degeneration of literature and advocated reportage as a necessary blood transfusion from the masses in order to rejuvenate literature.)

Let us shift our attention now to Lü He-jo's "The Oxcart." This work is a short story that depicts the wretched life of the family of Yang T'ien-ting, an The Oxcart driver. When his livelihood was taken

away from him by the advent of bike-trailers and trucks for delivering goods, the Yang family, now largely unable to find work, could not stop quarreling because they were so poor. His wife, Ah-mei, left the children at home and went out to work in a pineapple cannery, but eventually things got so bad that she had to sell her body in prostitution, so life just became more miserable with each passing day. Direct criticism of Japanese colonial rule does not appear in this story, but an indirect expression of it occurs in such passages as: "Everything from the old Ch'ing dynasty—none of it's any good in this Japanese era . . . . Japanese things are nothing to sneeze at." "The farmers thought that all the conveniences of civilization came uniquely from Japan." Yang thought he would change occupation by saving up enough for the deposit needed to become a tenant farmer. However, even if he changed occupation, that did not alter the fact that he was hemmed in by wall after wall of other troubles besides his problems with the carting business. The fact that in Taiwan semi-feudal high rents for tenancy entangled small farmers in a miserable situation is evident from the rate of tenancy rents alone, which ranged from fifty to sixty percent of the harvest. Added to this high tenancy rent was the heavy burden of the deposit; and on top of that, tenancy contracts were arranged verbally to the advantage of the landlord and renewed on a yearly basis. All this unconditionally allowed landlords to increase their profits unfairly. In addition, intermediary exploiters existed parasitically between landlord and tenant farmer. Large colonial landholdings appeared in Taiwan especially in connection with sugar production, and an example of how land was appropriated for them was described in "The Newsboy," as I mentioned earlier. As far as colonial control extended, wherever one might go, there was no window open for the mass of the common Taiwanese people. It is not surprising to find people like Old Lin, one of Yang's fellow oxcart drivers, who had been sent to prison for stealing. "It just seems stupid. It's stupid to work these days. It's smarter to have a good time, let me tell you," he said. "Look at this Japanese era. All the work where you can make a lot of money, they've taken it all away. Right? I say it's stupid for us to work." (The "they" are probably " Japanese.") "Rice is cheap, fertilizer is dear." Everything was the fault of the Japanese era. Since the author has not made the mistake of artlessly laying bare his consciousness, the wretchedness of life he describes here is all the more true to reality. However, the meticulous attention to detail that strikes us in the works of Yang K'uei is something that we cannot hope to find in Lü He-jo. When we come to "The Town with

the Papayas," the anguish resembling anger has changed to resignation and the empty sorrow that comes after defeat.

Ch'en Yu-san, who got through five years of school with scholastic honors and was chosen from among many applicants to take the seat of an accountant's assistant in a town hall at a salary of twenty-four yen, was confronted there with a stagnant pool of corruption and degeneration. There were Tai Ch'iu-hu, an assistant official, who behaved obsequiously to higher officials and people from the mother country (Japanese) but was indiscriminately arrogant to the people below him, who, dazzled by the prospect of reputation and money, foisted his younger sister onto a debauched young man; Su Te-fang, barely thirty years old yet surrounded by five children and just about at his last gasp because of his poor salary; Hung T'ien-sung, who, dreaming only of the joy of living in a house in the style of the mother country and leading a life in that style, tried to marry for money; and Liao Ch'ing-yen, who led a life of pleasure and devoted himself to inducing a mindless lethargy. Among all these, Ch'en Yu-san, who had passed the general civil service examination and had his sights set on becoming a lawyer in ten years, when he planned to be ready for the bar examination, pursued this path with all his might; but when a young woman colleague of his with whom he had fallen in love, Ts'ui-o, was sacrificed for the sake of her family and sold to a wealthy man in a neighboring village, he could think of no better solution than to get drunk in order to dispel the shattered hope and emptiness. "Although the power of the individual is weak and insignificant, one must improve life and live correctly as far as possible." So said Ts'ui-o's tuberculosis-stricken elder brother in his personal journal, which he left to Ch'en Yu-san after he died. And Ts'ui-o's father also fared badly; he went crazy and took to wandering around the lanes and alleys.

At the beginning of autumn, when the papayas are ripening in this southern land, a chilly wind fills Ch'en Yu-san's dark and empty heart as he stares at a boundless sky of a deep celadon hue. While all living things betray a gradual waning in their expressions, most young people with tuberculosis, hastening to an early grave, throb painfully with life, heated with a passion that does not seem possible in the sick. Without money for medical treatment or the means to purchase books, all the while hoping to follow the movements of society by purchasing back issues of the journal XX (very likely Kaizô), hoping to read Lu Hsün, to be moved by Engel's works on the family, private property, and the origin of the state, to read Gorky and Morgan [Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881), American anthroplogist and sociologist] . . . .

> Until the instant my body and soul vanish into the void of eternity, I shall pursue the truth. . . . Our benighted and hopeless age, with the view ahead obstructed, will it last forever like this? Or is the happy society we imagine as Utopia going to appear as an inevitability? Only rigorous scientific thought unadulterated by sentimentality or fancy is going to answer this for us.

This is the faith of a young man suffering from tuberculosis "moved by the nearness of death." Even Ch'en Yu-san's ambition to make a name for himself and establish himself in the world gets bogged down bit by bit in an ashen reality, and his dream is nothing more than to "wear Japanese clothes and always speak Japanese, to burn with idealism and feel a kind of self-consolation in finding himself in an existence different from that of their people." Outward happiness is also only an "act of self-consolation" by a subject people made to swim within the confines of a colonial society.

> Now we have endless dark sadness, but eventually a beautiful society will arrive. . . . While calling to mind the different aspects of an earth overflowing with that happiness, I will pray that I may go to an everlasting sleep in the cold ground.

In the innermost depths of the author's heart, perhaps two things existed simultaneously: this wish that the elder brother of Ts'ui-o just stated and the cherishing of a vain hope: "If I'm lucky, I'll fall in love with a girl from the mother country and marry her," while living in the midst of a reality where everything is gloomy and oppressive. This probably does not misrepresent the state in which the unfortunate common people of Taiwan found themselves. The Taiwanese Chen Yu-san, who "frowned darkly and frankly expressed his displeasure" when addressed by a Japanese with "Hey you," unconsciously let this contradiction sneak into the depths of his consciousness. In a conversation with Yang K'uei, Lung Ying-tsung, after censuring the Taiwanese critics, said that he had created Ch'en Yu-san as a negative character and the older brother of Ts'ui-o as a likeable, positive character. See the July 10, 1937 issue of *Nihon gakugei shinbun* (Japanese Arts and Literature News).

The year 1937, when the "The Town with the Papayas" was published, was also the year in which Japan launched its full-scale invasion and occupation of China. In Taiwan in this year, the prohibition against writing in Chinese was issued; Shinto shrines were increased as Chinese temples were reduced in number, and the prohibition against staging Chinese opera was issued. Familiar folk practices were eliminated from the lives of the Taiwanese. Instead, a large increase in the number of special political police and the shrill sloganeering of the movement for transforming colonials into imperial subjects hovered over the heads of the six million island people. It may be said that Lung Ying-tsung's "everlasting sleep in the cold ground" had already begun. "Even in such a nihilistic reality as this, one must not lose sight of elements that leave us seeds of hope somewhere." In such words did Lung Ying-tsung express his innermost thoughts.

The Chinese critic Hu Feng included Yang K'uei's "The Newsboy" in his anthology, *Jo-hsiao min-tsu hsiao-shuo hsüan* (Selected Short Stories of Small and Weak Peoples), which was published in Shanghai. But in Japan, work that properly evaluates the writings of those authors in historical perspective has not yet been done. That those concerned with literature in Japan should become conscious of that obligation and take a hard look at those scars is one of the fundamental tasks for considering the state of literature from now on in Asia and Africa. This note is nothing more than a step in the direction of realizing what I believe needs to be done for that purpose. Should we not reconsider as our own scars the pain those authors felt under Japanese domination, which they could express only in the Japanese language!

Supplementary Note: The activities of those writers during the war is briefly touched upon in "III: Taiwan Literature Under Conditions of Decisive Battle." What happened to them after the war is very difficult to determine. After the war, Yang K'uei was active in such publications as the *Ta-kung pao* (Impartial News) and *Hsin-sheng-bao fu-k'an* (Supplement to the New Life News), but after the February 28 Incident he was suspected of leading the Normal School Strike and was arrested together with his wife. Released after a time, he was again arrested in 1949 and was incarcerated in the prison for political criminals on Huo-shao Island. After his release, he managed a farm. Lü He-jo, after the February 28 Incident, was about to be arrested in the Ta-an Printing Shop Incident (a shop watched as a secret printing shop for Communist works),but he fled and nothing more is

known of him. Lung Ying-tsung participated in the editing of the Taiwan Cooperative Bank magazine *Ho-tso-chieh* (Cooperative World).

[Selected from *Kindai bungaku no shôkon* (The Scars of Modern Literature). Tokyo: Iwanami, June 1991.]

Ozaki Hotsuki, born in Taiwan in 1928, has been recognized as the leading specialist in Shôwa popular literature and Japanese colonial literature before the war. His major works include *Kindai bungaku no shôkon* (The Scars of Modern Literature), *Taishû bungaku no rekishi* (A history of Popular Literature), and *Rojin to no taiwa* (A Dialogue with Lu Hsün).

Modernist Poetry in Prewar Taiwan: Yang Ch'ih-ch'ang, the Feng-ch'e (Le Moulin)* Poetry Society, and Japanese Poetic Trends

Ch'en Ming-t'ai

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1

The new poetry of Taiwan was fated at its inception to be a "transplant from elsewhere," that is, to come under the influence of poetic trends from abroad, as was true also for Korea and Japan. In order for the new poetry of Taiwan to present new forms and new content out of reaction to the exhaustion of classical poetry, it of course needed to receive the baptism of a new technique and a new spirit. A glimpse of what was coming can be had at the earliest stage of the new poetry in Taiwan. Chang Wo-chün energetically introduced the new poetic trend of the period of the May Fourth Movement (1919) in China, which had received influences from Europe, and Yang Yün-p'ing translated the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). In

* The characters for *Feng-ch'e* 'windmill' are transcribed here by convention in the Mandarin pronunciation, though they were probably more often pronounced *fûsha* in the Japanese manner. The members of the society preferred the French translation "Le Moulin," which is the name by which we usually refer to it in the translation of this article. —the editors