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### **Taiwan Fellowship 2020: Final Report**

Submitted to Center for Chinese Studies, MOFA

#### **Research Topic:**

Jue Qing's Modernist Literature and Japanese Colonialism in Taiwan and Korea

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#### **Acknowledgement:**

From January to July 2020, I was a Taiwan Fellow affiliated with the Institute of Taiwan Literature at National Tsing Hua University. The generous support of the Taiwan Fellowship enabled me to significantly advance my research on Manchukuo literature, which will be reflected in my dissertation thesis. During my stay in Taiwan, I finished two research papers and participated in many scholarly activities. I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation the role of Melodie Wu, Elaine Wu and others at the Center for Chinese Studies, who helped me to coordinate my project and invited me to scholarly events.

Furthermore, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to National Tsing Hua University and its Institute of Taiwan Literature, which provided me with wonderful conditions for research. My main supervisor, Professor Liu Shu-chin, and all her colleagues, especially professor Wang Hui-chen and professor Shimomura Sakujirō, were always ready to offer me valuable and constructive suggestions regarding my research on Manchukuo and Taiwan literature. Professor Liu Shu-chin also arranged on-campus accommodation and a study room for me and helped me arrange access to the university library and course registration. I am also very grateful to professor Liu Shu-chin and her colleagues for inviting me to participate in several colloquiums and field trips and thus introducing me to other scholars and students.

Last but not least, I have to appreciate the staff of National Central Library, National Tsing Hua libraries, Academia Sinica libraries, and National Chengchi University libraries, who greatly helped me with collecting research materials.

### **Publications:**

- 1) “Hayama Yoshiki’s ‘The Prostitute’ in Taiwanese and Manchukuo Proletarian Literature”. Submitted to *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philologica*, 2021, under review (attached below).
- 2) “Vyslanci civilizace, nebo násilní pijani? Ztvárnění Rusů v jazykově rozmanité literatuře imperiálně rasistického Mandžukua” [Envoys of Civilization, or Violent Drinkers? Representation of Russians in the Linguistically Diverse Literature of the Imperially Racist Manchukuo]. Submitted to *Nový Orient*, 2020, under review.

### **Scholarly Activities:**

- 1) “追尋中國：滿洲國作家爵青對日本帝國說 bye bye” [In Search for China: Manchukuo Writer Jue Qing Saying Bye-Bye to the Japanese Empire]. Dissertation research presented on May 1, 2020, at the Institute of Taiwan Literature, NTHU.
- 2) “‘The Prostitute’ in Manchukuo’s Proletarian Literature.” Paper presented on May 27, 2020, at Global Chinese Literature Research Seminar, Center for Chinese Studies, Taipei.
- 3) “捷克的民間謠曲” [Czech Folk Ballads]. Remarks presented on June 13, 2020, at the workshop on Atayal culture, Institute of Taiwan Literature, NTHU.
- 4) I attended four courses of the spring semester at NTHU: Comparative Literature: texts, field, implementation (4,5 ECTS), Introduction to the Japanese Scholarship about Taiwan Literature of the Colonial Period (4,5 ECTS), Beginning Japanese II (4,5 ECTS), Tang Dynasty Chuanqi Fiction (without final exam).
- 5) Among others, I also attended the following events: “Post-Election Outlook for Taiwan and beyond: Stability or Uncertainty?”, Workshop on January 12, 2020, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy; “Dragon Boats Festival”, June 24, 2020, Bitan, organized by CCS.

### **Conclusion:**

Once again, I would like to thank to the Taiwan Fellowship team and to professor Liu Shu-chin and her colleagues for the opportunity to work on my research in Taiwan and establish many valuable partnerships with Taiwanese and foreign scholars. During the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Taiwan provided me with a safe and friendly environment as well as with the world-wide unique opportunity to carry out research on campus with open libraries.

Best regards,

Martin Blahota

**Attachment:**

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## Hayama Yoshiki's "The Prostitute" in Taiwanese and Manchukuo Proletarian Literature<sup>1</sup>

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Submitted to *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philologica*, UNDER REVIEW, PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE

### Abstract

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Japanese proletarian literary movement had an enormous impact on East Asian writers who often translated and adapted Japanese tales. Amongst them, the Hayama Yoshiki's 1925 short story "Inbaifu" (The Prostitute) enjoyed great popularity. This paper focuses on the Taiwanese writer Lang-shi-sheng's adaptation of "Inbaifu", the 1935 "Yami" (Darkness), and the Manchukuo writer Yuan Xi's adaptation of the same Japanese source text, the 1938 short story "Shi tian" (Ten Days). By comparing the Taiwanese and Manchukuo stories, this paper suggests that both versions of "Inbaifu" reflect the Japanese "proletarian realism" that was fashionable in East Asia in the 1930s. However, by resetting the stories in Taiwan and Manchukuo, respectively, the authors created cultural products that defy borders and simple nationalist interpretations.

### Keywords

Manchukuo; Taiwan; Japan; China; twentieth century; proletarian literature; Hayama Yoshiki; Yuan Xi; Lang-shi-sheng.

First World War challenged the regimes of many empires around the world and put into motion a tremendous social change. In 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in the October Revolution. In the same period, workers in Spain, the USA, Brazil, and Japan launched large-scale strikes. Side by side with these events, several cultural initiatives

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<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by the Taiwan Fellowship 2020. I am most grateful to Liu Shu-chin and Olga Lomová for their thoughts and comments.



emerged in Europe that began to spread Marxist, anti-war and anti-imperialist ideas around the world. Amongst them were the first international writers' association, Clarté, which applauded Vladimir Lenin's (1870–1924) foundation of the Comintern in 1919, and the Russian proletarian cultural movement, known as "Proletkult", both of which had a considerable influence in East Asia. Although an East Asian boom in "proletarian literature" (Chinese: *wuchan jieji wenxue* 無產階級文學 or *puluo wenxue* 普羅文學, Japanese: *puroritaria bungaku* プロレタリア文学)<sup>2</sup> would not occur until the late 1920s, in Japan this genre started to develop already at the beginning of the decade (Bowen-Struyk 2006: 252–253).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan became the first modern nation-state in East Asia. Even though Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean intellectuals often felt humiliated by Japanese imperialism, they commonly looked up to Japan as a gleaming example of successful nation-building. Also proletarian literature first flourished in East Asia in Japan, and Japanese writers of proletarian literature served as role models for East Asian intellectuals. Therefore, it is not surprising that when East Asian writers aimed to resist Japanese imperialism, they used translations and adaptations of Japanese anti-imperialist proletarian literature for this purpose (Bowen-Struyk 2006: 263–264). For example, the Esperanto-named Korea Artista Proletaria Federacio (KAPF), which organised Korean left-wing writers, worked closely with Japanese proletarian writers as Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902–1979) (Thorber 2009: 47). From 1925 until its demise in 1935, the KAPF it dominated the Korean literary scene (Hughes 2013: xi).<sup>3</sup> The Japanese NAPF (Nippona Artista Proletaria Federacio), which was formed in 1928, was instrumental in spreading proletarian literature to Taiwan around 1930 (Liu Shuqin 2019: 511).

China was essential for the development of the Japanese left-wing movement. Japanese radicals, who sought to establish the Japanese Communist Party, met with Russian Comintern representatives in Shanghai in the early 1920s. However, a left-wing literary movement began in China only after 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek's (1887–1975) Guomindang violently suppressed its former ally, the Communist Party of China. As a result, the League of Left-wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 中國左翼作家聯盟) was established in 1930 in Shanghai (Bowen-Struyk 2006: 254–255).

"Proletarian revolutionary literature" (*wuchan jieji geming wenxue* 無產階級革命文學) began being discussed in China in 1927. However, most scholars assert that this so-called proletarian literary movement was proletarian in name only and that it did not produce literature worthy of the title, namely literature that focuses on factory-wage-labourers. Some scholars even suggest that before 1949, no proletarian literature was produced in China.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This term was used by self-styled "proletarian" organizations and writers in East Asia during the 1920s and 1930s in a very broad sense, and it was mostly interchangeable with the term *left-wing literature*.

<sup>3</sup> The KAPF communicated both directly and indirectly with Russian and Japanese proletarian organizations and was thus involved with the Comintern. See Kim Yoon-shik, 408.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Sylvia Chan has noted that the most influential literary and dramatic works from the early 1930s written by Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896–1981), Tian Han 田漢 (1898–1968), Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–1986), and Ba Jin 巴金 (1904–2005) are concerned with the life of the upper classes, or, when they try to reflect the life of workers, they are not written from the perspective of the working class (Chan 1983: 57–65). Volland has noted that "the majority of the leftist literary works written before 1949 depict the vast Chinese countryside and focus on the

Nevertheless, in recent years have appeared the first studies analysing the proletarian literary movement that emerged in the 1930s in China's Northeast under Japanese occupation, that is in Manchukuo (*Manzhouguo* 滿洲國, 1932–1945), the Japanese puppet state in northeast China (see Okada 2001: 115–166; Liu Hengxing 2017; and Ōkubō 2019).

In this paper I analyse the Taiwanese writer Lang-shi-sheng's 琅石生 1935 Japanese-language short story "Yami" 闇 (Darkness)<sup>5</sup> and Manchukuo author Yuan Xi's 袁犀 (1919–1979) Chinese-language "Shi tian" 十天 (Ten Days), published in 1938.<sup>6</sup> Both stories rework a classic of Japanese proletarian literature, Hayama Yoshiki's 葉山嘉樹 1925 short story "Inbaifu" 淫売婦 (The Prostitute). The results of my exploration of the context of proletarian literature in Japan, Taiwan, and Manchukuo and my comparison of the two adaptations with the Japanese story suggest that "Yami" and "Shi tian" can be read as literary answers to debates on proletarian literature in Taiwan and Manchukuo. Furthermore, these stories in an interesting way reflect the different conditions in both territories controlled by the Japanese Empire.

### East Asian Proletarian Literature and Hayama Yoshiki's "Inbaifu" (The Prostitute)

"Inbaifu" was one of the earliest and most popular works of Japanese proletarian literature. Hayama Yoshiki, who published it in 1925 in the radical journal *Bungei sensen* 文藝戦線 (Literary Front), claimed to come from a working-class background; in fact, his father was an official working in Kyoto, and Hayama himself was enrolled at Waseda University for a period of time. However, after he left the university, he worked as a sailor and held a job as an accountant at a cement factory, from which he was fired for attempting to establish a labour union. Later he was imprisoned for his association with the first Japanese Communist Party. It was in 1923 in Chigusa Prison where he began writing proletarian literature and finished "Inbaifu" (Bowen-Struyk 2016: 52).

Karen Thornber has already noted that Korean revolutionary writers reworked Hayama's stories, often emphasising Japanese colonial oppression in Korea. Taiwanese proletarian writers, such as Yang Kui 楊逵 (1905–1985), had close personal ties with Hayama and other Japanese proletarian writers (Thornber 2009: 224; 56), and it is therefore not surprising that an adaptation of "Inbaifu" appeared in Taiwan. In fact, Hayama's own essays on Taiwanese proletarian literature were published in Taiwan in 1935 (Luo Shiyun 2011: 172–175). Thanks to the numerous translations of Hayama's stories that appeared in Shanghai and Beijing in 1929 and 1930, he was not unknown in China either. Since several adaptations

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class struggle among the peasantry and on the peasants' fight against exploitation and their landlords." In his view, the few novels that take place in an urban setting do not focus on workers or on industrial development (Volland 2009: 99).

<sup>5</sup> Lang-shi-sheng is a pen name of an unknown author.

<sup>6</sup> Yuan Xi is the most prominent pen name of Hao Weilian 郝維廉, born in Shenyang. He also used other pen names, for example Liang Dao 梁稻 and Li Keyi 李克異.

of “Inbaifu” were published in Manchukuo, it can be assumed that Hayama’s works were well known in Manchukuo, too.<sup>7</sup>

The narrator of “Inbaifu” recalls a strange experience from his youth. At that time, he was nicknamed Minpei 民平 (“Commoner”). He was walking the streets of the port of Yokohama in his sailor’s uniform so proudly that he completely forgot what class he belonged to, as he recalls. Suddenly, a man jumped out in front of him and offered him a prostitute. Minpei was hesitantly going to dismiss his offer, but two other men appeared, seized him by the arms, took his money, and dragged him to nearby Chinatown.

After walking through numerous narrow alleys, he found himself in a dark warehouse. Instead of being killed for his liver to be used in Chinese medicine, as he feared, he was indeed brought to a prostitute, who was breathing heavily and resembled a corpse. Her depiction attacks the reader’s senses and evokes disgust:

そこには全く惨酷な畫が畫かれてあつた。  
ビール箱の蓋の蔭には、二十二三ぐらいの若い婦人が、全身を全裸のまゝ仰向きに横たわっていた。彼女は腐った一枚の畳の上にいた。そして吐息は彼女の肩からおのおのが最後の一滴であるように、搾り出されるのであつた。  
彼女の肩の邊から、枕の方へかけて、まだ彼女がいくらか、物を食べられる時に嘔吐したらしい汚物が、黒い血痕と共にグチャグチャに散らばっていた。髪の毛がそれで固められていた。それに彼女の (twelve characters missing; MB) ねばりついてゐた。そして、頭部の方からは酸敗した悪臭を放つてゐたし、肢部からは、癌腫の持つ特有の悪臭が放散されてゐた。こんな異様な臭氣の中で人間の肺が耐え得るかどうか、と危ぶまれるほどであつた。(Hayama 1925: 7)

The scene confronting me was an utterly atrocious one.

Behind the beer case lids lay faceup a woman of twenty-two or twenty-three; she was completely naked. She lay on top of a rotting tatami mat. Her shoulders heaved with each breath that she seemed to wring out of herself as though it were her very last.

Muck that she had apparently vomited when she was still able to take food was spattered from shoulder to pillow, intermingled with dark blood stains. Her hair was matted with it. And her XXXXXX was stuck to XXXXXX. A sour stench rose from her head, and her limbs gave off the vile smell peculiar to cancerous growths. This abnormal reek was such that I doubted human lungs could withstand it. (Hayama 2016: 59)

Minpei’s first thought was that he felt sorry for this human being. However, despite the smell of her body, he also indulged in observing her and felt sexual desire, because, as he states, he was a young seaman who was always longing for women. But he overcame his passion and realised that her condition reminded him of that of a member of the proletariat, who must also destroy his or her body in order to eat. He imagined she was suffering from tuberculosis, the consequence of breathing bad air in a cotton factory, had been fired, and ended up on the street. Eventually he decided not to abuse her but to save her.

After this point, the story becomes difficult to interpret. To Minpei’s surprise, she started to talk to him and refused his help. When the man who had brought him there, Kujiname 蛞蝓 (“Slug”), returned, Minpei attacked him with his fists, infuriated by his abuse

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<sup>7</sup> For example, I discovered that also Jue Qing’s 爵青 (1917–1962) 1937 short story “Jieji yu chuanshang” 街妓与船上 (A Hooker and a Sailor) reworks Hayama’s “Inbaifu”. However, because I consider this story to be a parody of proletarian literature rather than proletarian literature as such, in this paper, I do not focus on it.



of the woman. At that moment, the woman scolded Minpei, saying that the three men that had brought Minpei to her were her protectors. Kujiname later explained to Minpei that they were not pimping her; they were carefully choosing who to bring here. It is not clear whether through prostitution or only through tricking the men they have carefully selected, they were making money for medication, because it was not only the woman who was sick, but all of them (Hayama 1925: 1–19).

The story comes to an end when the protagonist recalls returning to see the woman the next day. This time she was asleep, and he experienced an epiphany, a sudden recognition of class consciousness:

私は淫売婦の代りに殉教者を見た。  
彼女は、被搾取階級の一切の運命を象徴してゐるやうに見えた。  
私は眼に涙が一杯溜まった。私は音のしないやうにソーツと歩いて、扉の所に立つてゐた蟬蛸へ、一圓渡した。渡す時に私は蟬蛸の萎びた手を力一杯握りしめた。  
そして私は表へ出た。階段の第一段を下るとき、溜つてゐた涙が私の眼から、ボトリとこぼれた。(Hayama 1925: 18–19)

I was looking at a martyr, not a prostitute.  
She appeared to me to symbolise the fate of the entire exploited class.  
My eyes filled with tears. I walked away, careful not to make a sound, and gave Slug, who was standing by the door, my one yen. As I gave it to him I grasped his wizened hand with all my might.  
I went outside. As I started down the stairway, tears fell from my welling eyes. (Hayama 2016: 68)

The ending explicitly explains the story as a proletarian allegory of class exploitation. Bowen-Struyk regards “Inbaifu” as “typical of a type of masculinist proletarian literature that tended to foreclose issues of gender/sex and sexuality in the service of class consciousness”. She has also observed that unlike most other proletarian stories, this one presents an interesting dramatisation of the conflict between class consciousness and sexual desire. Furthermore, the woman’s subjectivity that is mirrored in her refusal of help opens space for other alternative readings (Bowen-Struyk 2009: 10; 24). Luo Shiyun has noted that one of the reasons Hayama’s “Inbaifu” was so warmly received by critics and readers is that the author incorporated elements of the new sensation school (*shinkankaku-ha* 新感覚派) into the short story. In particular, by dramatising the main character’s sexual desire and emphasising his olfactory and visual perceptions, Hayama creates a protagonist with a distinctive subjectivity. This approach distinguished Hayama’s writing from the formulaic expression typical of the proletarian literature of the time (Luo Shiyun 2011: 183–186).

### **Taiwanese Proletarian Literature and Lang-shi-sheng’s “Yami” (Darkness)**

Ten years after Hayama published “Inbaifu”, Lang-shi-sheng’s adaptation, “Yami”, appeared in the February 1935 issue of the half-Japanese, half-Chinese literary journal *Taiwan bungei*

臺灣文藝 (Taiwanese Literature and Arts).<sup>8</sup> Lang-shi-sheng is clearly a pen name, but true identity of this author has not yet been discovered (Hoshina 2007: 115).

The story is interesting in the context of the discussion on proletarian literature that was taking place in Taiwan at the time of its publication. The same February issue of *Taiwan bungei* included “Geijutsu wa taishū no mono de aru” 藝術は大衆のものである (Art is for the Masses), written by the leading Taiwanese proletarian writer Yang Kui, whose literary work also reached audiences in Japan and China. In this essay, Yang Kui introduces the Taiwanese reader to the Japanese debate on “massification of literature” (*bungaku taishūka* 文学大衆化) and refers to several participants of this debate, among them to Hirata Koroku 平田小六 (1903–1976) and Tokunaga Sunao 徳永直 (1899–1958), prominent Japanese proletarian writers. Their arguments should be understood in the context of the debate on “proletarian realism” (*puroritaria riarizumu* プロレタリアのリアリズム), which took place since 1928, and on socialist realism (*shakaishugi riarizumu* 社会主義リアリズム) in early 1930s.<sup>9</sup>

Yang Kui’s suggestions on how to bring literature closer to the “masses” (*taishū* 大衆), in short, lie in rejecting proletarian writers as Hirata, and following those like Tokunaga. Yang Kui expressed regret that Hirata, who emphasized artistic qualities of writing, was allegedly not interested whether peasants understood his works about countryside or not. For Yang Kui, he represented those proletarian writers who became captives of “pure literature” (*jun bungaku* 純文学) and who were writing only for themselves and not for the “masses”. In contrast, Yang Kui emphasised Tokunaga’s notion that in order for art to capture high ideas, it must be at most simple and comprehensible. Therefore, Yang Kui saw Tokunaga as someone, who was stressing the importance of holding fast to the core ideas of proletarian literature, that is, especially choosing topics that were important in the real state of society and adopting the perspective of the proletariat. Only such writings could elevate the “masses” (Yang Kui 1935: 8–12).

Now let us briefly analyse Lang-shi-sheng’s “Yami”, which was published in the same issue alongside other proletarian fiction works, namely Yang Kui’s “Nanzan” 難産 (Difficult Delivery) and Yang Hua’s 楊華 “Yi ge laodongzhe de si” 一個勞動者的死 (The Death of a Labourer). “Yami” is based on the main storyline of “Inbaifu” that can be briefly described as follows: the male protagonist is walking the streets of a port, and he is involuntarily dragged to a prostitute, who is sick and resembles a corpse (Lang-shi-sheng 1935: 56–63). In “Yami” the story is reset in Taiwan: the port is not Yokohama but Dadaocheng in Taipei. The protagonist, a factory worker who was fired for organising a strike, who is called Azumi 阿泉 in this case, hates the middle class and their leisure life. For example, he swears when he sees

<sup>8</sup> See Wang Yiwen’s 王姿雯 translation into Chinese in Chen Yunyuan 2007: 185–189.

<sup>9</sup> In simple words, the Japanese proletarian realism combined realism with class perspective, and mostly it was associated with realism pursued by dialectical materialism (Lippit 1992: 70). Hirata Koroku was a prominent writer concerned with depiction of peasants and countryside. Tokunaga Sunao was an important participant in the debate on socialist realism. In 1933 he argued that because Japan had not yet become a socialist country like the USSR, it was not appropriate for Japan to directly import Soviet-style socialist realism. Instead, he advocated rethinking of proletarian realism. Most importantly, he proposed that proletarian realism should be freed from dialectical materialism that too strictly dictated the approach of an artist to reality (Bai Chunyan 2015: 62–67).



people happily leaving a theatre. One rainy night, he ends up in a narrow arcade (*qilou* 騎樓) typical of Taiwanese cities, and he encounters a prostitute. The most substantial difference between “Yami” and “Inbaifu” lies in how the prostitute is presented. Hayama’s prostitute clearly functions as a metaphor for exploitation in industrial capitalist society. Besides Minpei’s imagining that she must have been fired from a cotton factory, she is actually located in a large dark hall, where she makes money for her male counterparts. This imagery enables the reader to see her body as a possible allegorical representation of a machine in a factory (Luo Shiyun 2011: 179).

In contrast, Lang-shi-sheng’s prostitute is a poor country girl. When the protagonist’s eyes become accustomed to the darkness of the small room she is in, he realises that the prostitute is Azu 阿足, his peer from a village in southern Taiwan. She recollects how she became a prostitute:

それは一つの農村哀話だ。彼女の家は農家だつた彼女の十四の降一その年は例年にない凶作だつた。植付から二ヶ月近くも無降雨状態の天気は彼女等一家を饑餓線上の人たらしめた。

然かも強慾なる地主は事由の如何なるを問はずして租谷の納入をせき立てた。金の為ならば命すら次にする程の地主だ。

いくら頼んで見た處で駄目だと知つた時、農家のとるべき道は娘を賣るか、さもなくば耕作用の牛を賣るかだつた。

だが生活の要素たる牛を賣れば彼等は直ちに生活におびやかされるのである。

彼等の選ぶ道は殆ど前者だ。娘無き家は高利貸よりの借金に依つて一時の逃れを圖るものである。

彼女は一家の生活の犠牲となって売られたのだ。(Lang-shi-sheng 1935: 60)

It was a sad story from the countryside. Her family were farmers, and when she was fourteen years old, the harvest was unprecedentedly bad. Two months after planting the seedlings, it still didn’t rain. The family was on the verge of starvation.

Nevertheless, the greedy landlord urged them to pay the rent without caring about the details. The landlord was a man for whom even life is less valuable than money.

When a farmer sees that there is no way to agree, the only way for him to choose is to sell his daughter or sell his cow ploughing his field.

But when he sells the cow on which his life depends, he directly threatens his own life. Farmers usually chose the former solution.

Household had no daughter, but it was temporarily freed from dependence on moneylenders. Her sale was a sacrifice for the life of the family.

After Azu was sold four more times, she ended up here, in the filthy, decadent city of Taipei. It has already been noted that “Inbaifu” metaphorically depicts the adverse effects of industry and international capital on the working class, whereas “Yami” portrays the clash between colonial capital and feudal society (Luo Shiyun 2011: 177).

Considering the dominant contemporary art programme of proletarian literature that was formulated in Japan and advocated in Taiwan by Yang Kui, removing the factory motifs from the prostitute’s story and transplanting her into the Taiwanese countryside can be seen as an attempt by Lang-shi-sheng to draw Hayama’s story closer to Taiwanese reality. The encounter between Azumi, a factory worker, and the country girl Azu could be indeed more relatable to the Taiwanese “masses”, that is the exploited people, composed mainly of peasants but to some degree also of workers in small factories.

The other important part of the above-mentioned artistic programme, namely its rejection of “pure literature”, seems to be reflected in “Yami”, too. While Hayama won the affection of wide Japanese readership by using elements characteristic of the new sensationism, we find neither the dramatisation of sexual desire nor sensational depiction of the lower class or other remarkable depictions of sensual perceptions in “Yami”. It seems that Lang-shi-sheng was, in keeping with the principles of proletarian realism, concerned only with the “masses”, his intended readership. After all, the main protagonist who hates society was obviously not created to gain popularity amongst the middle class.

### Manchukuo’s Proletarian Literature and Yuan Xi’s “Shi tian” (Ten Days)

The beginnings of the debates on proletarian literature in Manchukuo can be traced back to 1929. In the 1937 essay “Manzhou xin wenxue zhi fazhan” 滿洲新文學之發展 (Development of Manchurian New Literature), published in the Manchukuo journal *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Young Man),<sup>10</sup> one of Manchukuo’s most important leftist writers, Qiu Ying 秋螢 (1913–1996), states that from 1929 to 1931 proletarian literature (*puluo wenxue* 普羅文學) was one of the major literary movements in Manchuria. Even though most of the works produced by this movement were, in his opinion, “immature”, they were still published in a number of journals (Qiu Ying 2013: 1123–1124). Hence we can assume that the debate on proletarian literature that took place in Shanghai after 1927 had a substantial early impact in the Northeast.

Taiwanese scholar Liu Hengxing has analysed the literary debates between the socialist and liberal camps that took place in the Manchukuo newspapers *Minsheng wanbao* 民聲晚報 and *Manzhou bao* 滿週報 in 1935 and 1936. He has also focused on the first literary groups that emerged in southern Manchuria in 1933. One of them, the “Piaoling” 飄零 (The Wanderer) group, established by Qiu Ying, advocated socialist literature. Liu has also noted that due to the proximity of the Soviet Union, even groups that inclined to “pure literature” (*chun wenyi* 純文藝) were strongly influenced by socialist thought (Liu Hengxing 2017: 135–136). Okubo Akio has analysed probably the most ambitious, however unsuccessful, project of the left-wing literary scene in Manchukuo – namely, the attempt to establish an independent literary association, the Mobei Literary Youth Association (*Mobei wenxue qingnian hui* 漠北文學青年會). Behind the attempt was a Manchukuo student in Tokyo, poet Luo Tuosheng 駱駝生 (1913–unknown), who proposed modelling the association, which was oriented towards proletarian literature, after the Tokyo Left-wing League (*Tōkyō saren* 東京左聯). When its establishment was announced in December 1934 in the Dalian newspaper *Taidong ribao*, many prominent Manchukuo writers of the period,

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<sup>10</sup> *Xin qingnian*, published from 1935 to 1940, was one of the most prominent literary platforms in Manchukuo. Its Chinese title is identical to the title of the famous May Fourth journal published from 1915 to 1926. The English subtitle “New Young Man” was used on the cover together with the Chinese title.

along with Luo Tuosheng, Qiu Ying, and others, signed an official declaration (Ōkubō 2019: 214–218).

The association's vision largely resembled Yang Kui's artistic programme based on Japanese "proletarian realism", which he promoted in Taiwan: writers should acknowledge the importance of the masses, faithfully depict reality, discard works that do not adhere to reality, keep the ideas of social responsibility in mind, and so on (Qiu Ying 2013: 1132). The declaration did not explicitly mention the concept of proletarian literature; however, in 1935 Luo Tuosheng began to write openly about it in *Minsheng wanbao*, where he also published several articles on the development of the Tokyo Left-wing League. He was later criticised by other Manchukuo writers, who indirectly suggested that he discussed proletarian literature too openly and could bring the others trouble. They also blamed him for insisting too forcefully on transplanting Japanese proletarian literature into Manchukuo (Ōkubō 2019: 216–217).

Even though work on establishing the association came to a sudden halt at the end of 1935, the debates instigated by Luo Tuosheng obviously had a considerable impact on the Manchukuo literary scene. Yuan Xi's 1938 "Shi tian" (Ten Days), a Chinese-language adaptation of Hayama's "Inbaifu", which was published in the February edition of the literary journal *Mingming* 明明, can be seen as one of the fruits of these debates.

Yuan Xi, born in Shenyang, was arrested in 1942 for his involvement in guerrilla activities organised by the Comintern (Li Shifei et al. 2010: 9–22). However, when he was released he became a prominent official writer of the occupied Beijing.<sup>11</sup> The only available biography of Yuan Xi describes him as a Chinese nationalist and a hidden anti-Japanese fighter.<sup>12</sup>

During his early writing career, he split his time between his hometown Shenyang and Beiping, which was not yet occupied by the Japanese, and published mainly in Manchukuo. In 1937, when Yuan Xi went back home from Beiping to Shenyang, he became associated with the above-described Manchukuo leftist literature movement. He was introduced to the leftist literary critic Meng Su 孟素 (1913–unknown), one of the members of the left-wing literary group Piaoling (Liu Hengxing 2017: 135), who also signed the 1934 declaration of the establishment of the Mobei Literary Youth Association (Qiu Ying 2013: 1132). In 1937 Yuan Xi published a poem in *Manzhou bao*, where leftist writers continued to debate and publish proletarian literature, that ends with a revolutionary couplet: "There will be a day, you will see / when iron hammers burst<sup>13</sup> on their heads" 有那麼一天，你們看吧 / 鐵鎚在他們頭上開花 (Li Shifei et al. 2010: 9). Because of his literary activities with Meng Su and Luo Tuosheng, his flat was searched twice by the police; this pressure had a deleterious effect on Yuan Xi's physical health. Nevertheless, at the end of the year, he published two stories in the

<sup>11</sup> In 1943 he attended the second session of the Greater East Asian Writers' Congress (*Da Dongya wenxuezhedahui* 大東亞文學者大會) in Tokyo, where his novel *Beike* 貝殼 (Mussel) won an award (Okada 2017: 128).

<sup>12</sup> When discussing Yuan Xi's life, scholars, including Okada Hideki, draw heavily from his biography, "Li Keyi nianpu" 李克異年譜 (The Chronological Life of Li Keyi). Li Keyi is Yuan Xi's other pen name, see above. This biography, which was first published in China in 1991, is very detailed and seems to be reliable to a large extent. However, there are reasons to treat the information it contains carefully. First, it is not signed, and hence its author is unknown. Second, the markedly anti-Japanese interpretation of most of the author's life events raises questions about the extent to which this information was constructed retrospectively under the influence of Chinese nationalism.

<sup>13</sup> Besides *to burst*, *kaihua* can also mean *to blossom* in Chinese.



prominent literary journal *Mingming*. In February 1938, he wrote and published “Shi tian” in the same journal (Li Shifei et al. 2010: 9–10).

The protagonist of Yuan Xi’s adaptation is not a sailor but a convict released from prison. After several days of wandering around the city, begging for food, and sleeping on the back stairs of a bank, on a rainy night, a prostitute blocks his way as he is walking through a narrow alley (*hutong* 胡同). Without an ulterior motive, he strikes up a conversation with her, and she, crying, tells him her story: she became a prostitute because her husband was arrested. It turns out that he was the protagonist’s best friend from prison, who had been sentenced to death and executed (Yuan Xi 2017: 53–63). Hence, we can see that, like Lang-shi-sheng, Yuan Xi created a prostitute character with whom the protagonist has a connection. Like the motif of rain that both writers also added to the original version of “Inbaifu”, this literary theme seems to be borrowed from another of Hayama’s writings about a prostitute, the 1926 short story “Minato-machi no onna” 港街の女 (A Harbour Town Woman). At the end of this story, the prostitute suggests, most likely as a metaphor, that the protagonist – the sailor – is her father (Hayama 1969: 72–80).<sup>14</sup>

But unlike in Lang-shi-sheng’s story, the suffering of Yuan Xi’s prostitute stems from the exploitation of workers, not peasants: the mother of her husband fell ill, and he wanted to borrow money to buy food for her at the factory where he was working, but the accountant there ignored him. He got in a fight with him, and the next day he was fired. Then his mother died. He had no money and became mentally unstable. The prostitute is not sure why he was eventually arrested, but she tells the protagonist that some people said he killed the accountant (Yuan Xi 2017: 59–60).

Moreover, the prostitute’s suffering was exacerbated by owner of her flat, “a fat moneylender”, who collected interest on her overdue rent in the form of daily sexual services. At the end of the story, Yuan Xi’s protagonist, like the two sailors in the Japanese and Taiwanese stories, revisits the prostitute:

到第三天夜裡我又到這巷裡去，意外的，從漆黑的窗口射出一絲微弱的黃光來，我站在簷下聽著，屋內一個啞啞的男子聲低矮的響著，她卻在尖利的哭泣，過一會忽然在屋中急劇的扭打起來。我從窗口向裡看著，一個短小的男人已騎在她身上拳如雨點似的打下去，她用啞著的嗓子痛罵著，我知道這男子就是她說的那個傢伙，一股怒氣從我心理燒起來。(Yuan Xi 2017: 62)

The third day I went back to this alley again. Unexpectedly, a faint yellow light was shining from the pitch-dark window. I stood listening under the eaves; the hoarse voice of the man in the room was low, but she was crying sharply. After a while, suddenly, a struggle broke out in the room. I looked in through the window, and a short man was already riding on her body, his fists fell on her like raindrops, she scolded him with a dumb voice. I knew that he was the guy she was talking about; anger began to burn in my heart.

The protagonist then goes inside, grabs some chinaware, and kills the owner with a blow to the head. He returns to prison ten days after his release.

Yuan Xi, like Lang-shi-sheng, seems to alter Hayama’s source story, introducing the principles of the above-mentioned Japanese version of “proletarian realism”. Like Lang-shi-sheng, Yuan Xi removes the elements that resemble the new sensationist fiction. He also tries

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<sup>14</sup> See Feng Xianzhang’s 馮憲章 translation into Chinese in Hayama 1930: 91–115. Besides being published separately as a short story, “Minato-machi no onna” is also incorporated into Hayama’s acclaimed novel *Umi ni ikuru hitobito* 海に生くる人々 (Men Who Live on the Sea).

to adapt the story to China (and the Chinese “masses”): his story is not only set in a city that somewhat resembles Beijing, but he also describes a scene of a poor father killing a new-born without emotions because he had no chance to feed him anyway (Yuan Xi 2017: 58). When the protagonist states that this was commonplace, it brings to mind Lu Xun’s well-known worries about the future of children in Chinese society.

He also adapts the character of the prostitute. Unlike the Hayama’s prostitute, who allegorically represents a machine in a factory, the Yuan Xi’s prostitute is a woman who became a widow because of the greed of an accountant in a factory. Hence, Yuan Xi simplified the motif of the oppression of the factory-wage-workers. Interestingly, the social reality of Manchukuo, where Japanese investment tripled industrial production between 1933 and 1942 (Duara 2003: 68), did not make Yuan Xi substitute the motif of a factory with the motif of the struggle of peasants as Lang-shi-sheng did in Taiwan, which remained mainly agricultural.

Out of the three stories studied in this paper – one from Japan, one from Taiwan, and one from Manchukuo – the last one seems to be the cruellest. And because a worker kills his exploiter, it is also the most radical one.

Furthermore, both the Taiwanese and Manchukuo stories include motifs that hint at important events from the life of the author of “Inbaifu,” Hayama Yoshiki: the protagonist of “Yami” is fired from a factory for organising a strike, whereas the protagonist of “Shi tian” is released from prison.

However, the distinct motif of imprisonment in Yuan Xi’s story can also be understood as a reference to Yuan Xi’s own experience with political persecution from 1934 to 1935. In this period, he left Shenyang for Beiping partly for political reasons because he learned from a friend that Manchukuo police was investigating his letter. They suspected that he advocated radical leftist attitudes in it. In Beiping, he first lived on the street and was later admitted to a school for refugees from the Northeast. In 1935 he was branded leftist by the Guomindang police in Beiping and arrested together with several classmates for an unknown reason for one week (Li Shifei et al. 2010: 5–7). In “Shi tian”, especially the protagonist’s wandering around the city, which is described in great detail, dramatically resembles Yuan Xi’s arrival in Beiping, when he had no money. Considering the difficulties the author encountered because of his letter and his brief arrest, the protagonist’s release from prison depicted in “Shi tian” and his subsequent reincarceration can be read as an allegory of the author’s life from 1934 to 1935, when he fled Manchukuo, but was later arrested in Beiping anyway.

Comparing the persecution of leftists in Manchukuo and in China was not exceptional in Manchukuo literature. For example, Qiu Ying’s short story “Ye lu” 夜路 (The Night Road), published the same year as “Shi tian,” 1938, describes the mass murder of a group of people, most probably leftists, in Manchukuo. It compares the killing with the persecution of leftists in China by quoting a couplet by Lu Xun, which refers to the so-called Five Martyrs of the League of Left-wing Writers and eighteen other communists who were assassinated in Shanghai in February 1931 by the Guomindang (Qiu Ying 1938: 104–111).

Such a reading of Yuan Xi’s story challenges, to a certain extent, the overwhelmingly nationalist interpretation of his life and work offered by the biography mentioned above. Considering that he came from a military family (Li Shifei et al. 2010: 3) and the many

accounts of his hostility towards the Japanese contained in his biography and his own memoirs, I do not doubt the nationalist dimension of his fiction work in general. However, I do not find any hints of nationalist resistance in “Shi tian”. Instead, it seems to be a story that dramatises the persecution of the leftists, making no difference between its harshness in the Japanese-occupied Northeast and in Guomindang-ruled China. The choice of the famous Japanese proletarian writer Hayama Yoshiki as a model also speaks for an anti-capitalist and anti-militarist reading rather than an anti-Japanese one.

## **Conclusion**

Japanese proletarian literature became a steady source of inspiration for East Asian writers in the 1920s and 1930s. In this paper I have explored the intertextualizing of Hayama Yoshiki’s work in Taiwan and Manchukuo. By comparing adaptations from these two territories that were controlled by the Japanese Empire, I have demonstrated that Hayama Yoshiki was influential in both regions. In the Taiwanese and Manchukuo adaptations of “Inbaifu” I have identified elements that refer either to Japan and China or to local settings of Taiwan and Manchukuo, hence, these stories can be seen as an interesting example of cultural products that create fluid spaces of transculturation and often defy binaries and borders (see Thornber 2009: 1).

Specifically, my findings suggest that both the Taiwanese and the Manchukuo versions of his short story “Inbaifu” reflect the version of the Japanese “proletarian realism” that was fashionable in the 1930s and that stressed that writers should bring literature closer to the proletariat. Therefore, each version adapts the story to a different environment, or to different “masses”, as the self-proclaimed proletarian authors of these works would have said. Interestingly, despite being written in the Japanese language, the theme of the Taiwanese short story brings to mind Chinese left-wing literature, in which depiction of the countryside is more common than the city proletarian environment. In contrast, the Manchukuo story, which was written in Chinese, is more reminiscent of Japanese proletarian literature that often dramatised the suffering of factory-wage-labourers.

Nevertheless, the Manchukuo story seems to refer to Chinese left-wing literature, too, but in a different way. Namely, it describes the killing of a new-born which evokes Lu Xun’s fears about the future of China. Furthermore, if we take into account the suggested allegorical reading of Yuan Xi’s main protagonist’s reincarceration, it compares the persecution of the leftist writers in the Northeast under the Japanese occupation and in China before the Japanese occupation. Thus, also in this respect, it defies a simple interpretation based on the nationalist understanding of the world.

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