

# A Study on Lu Xun's Translations of Novels Written by Takeo Arishima from the Perspective of the Field of Literary Production——Centered on Chisakimonoe and Osuenoshi

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**Abstract:** The coexistence of the dual identities of “author” and “translator” is an important feature of Lu Xun’s literature. This paper focuses on Lu Xun’s translation of Japanese writer Takeo Arishima’s literature works Chisakimonoe and Osuenoshi to demonstrate the important influence of Lu Xun’s literary translation on his literary creation and the close relationship between the two. This paper studies Lu Xun from the perspective of literature translation with the aim of finding and solving the problems neglected in previous studies of Lu Xun, that is, the pioneers of Chinese new literature which represented by Lu Xun in the May Fourth New Culture Movement made the text continue to expounding across the border through translation, and successfully controlled the field of literary production.

**Keywords:** The field of literary production; Lu Xun; Takeo Arishima

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## Introduction

In recent years, it has already become a common trend in East Asian academic circles to study and examine the process of cultural communication and exchange from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, as well as to consider the modernization process of East Asia from a broader horizon. Many influential writers involved in shaping new literature have studied in Japan and actively involved in translating and introducing Japanese and foreign literature and literary theories in Japanese, Lu Xun was also one of them. Lu Xun’s translation work on Takeo Arishima served as one of the most representative cases. However, his contribution to translation literature remain under-explored. Studying Lu Xun from this perspective allows for addressing the overlooked issues that previous studies may have neglected.

## 1. The Rise of Modern Literature Represented by Lu Xun and Its Close Relationship with the Translation of Foreign Works

The Birch School literature (founded in 1910) was organized by writers and artists centered on the literary journal Bai Hua. Takeo Arishima (1878-1923) is the backbone of this literary genre. Japanese literary critic Honta Akio called him “one of the four pillars of the Birch School”, along with Saneatsu Mushakoji, Naoya Siga, and Yoshiro Nagayo.<sup>[1]</sup> Arishima always wrote in a sharp tone, dared to expose sharp social contradictions and express his own opinions, so he was recognized as a “humanitarian with conscience”.

<sup>[2]</sup> The author believes that Takeo pays special attention to self-expansion and profound humanitarian spirit in the pursuit of individual liberation, and has the same ideological similarities with the May Fourth New literature, and is in tune with Lu Xun’s thought at that

time. Lu Xun, who introduced Japanese literature for reference in the creation and theory of new literature, translated far less literature works than Zhou Zuoren. However, Lu Xun's translation efforts had the same purpose as his literary works, that is, he "had a vague hope that literature and art could transfer people's temperament and the society"<sup>[3]</sup>. Due to his strong sense of social responsibility and concern for the nation and the people, he attached great importance to the social significance and paid attention to the ideological content and social effects of his works when he translated Japanese literature.

In June 1923, Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zuoren co-translated *The Collection of Modern Japanese Novels*, and then it was proofread by Hu Shi and published in Shanghai Commercial Press. This collection contains 30 novels and essays written by 15 Japanese writers, and Lu Xun translated 11 works including *Chisakimonoe* and *Osuenoshi* by Takeo Arishima. This is also the first time that Arishima's works were introduced to China.

In 1929, Lu Xun's *Translation Collection Under the Wall* contained six articles written by Takeo Arishima. In this period, the translation of Arishima's works mainly centered on class and literature debate between Arishima and the Russian literature researcher Katakami Nobushi. In the book *Small Introduction*, Lu Xun clearly stated that "although Professor Katagami Shinobu had a lot of critics after his death, I always like his firm and warm opinions."<sup>[5]</sup> Thus, the coexistence of the dual identities of "author" and "translator" is an important feature of Lu Xun's literature. There is no doubt that translation has a close relationship with the rise of modern Chinese literature. It can even be said that the prosperity of translated novels directly leads to the modernization of Chinese novels. Lu Xun extensively introduced Arishima Takeo's literary theories and creative views, which is a typical case of literature during the May Fourth Period.

## **2. The Relationship Between Lu Xun's Works and the Works of Takeo Arishima from the Perspective of "the Field of Literary Production"**

*Chisakimonoe* is a documentary novel written by Takeo Arishima in the form of a suicide note to his three children. It seems that most Chinese scholars paid less attention to *Chisakimonoe* than other works of Takeo Arishima. However, many well-known Asian writers were moved by *Chisakimonoe*. In a lecture Ba Jin lamented "I also had some Japanese teachers... Especially Takeo Arishima, I often recite Arishima's short story *Chisakimonoe*."<sup>[8]</sup> Zhu Ziqing once lamented in his article *Sons and Daughters*: "After reading the translation of *Chisakimonoe*, 'I actually shed tears at that great and earnest attitude.'<sup>[9]</sup> The novel's narrator, the father, fills the pages of his suicide note with an omnipresent sense of worry. When bad luck comes, the parents always protected their children from the storm. Arishima Takeo wrote in his novel that the father tried his best to let his child to surpass himself and encourage him to create a better future; And the great maternal love of the mother who suffered from tuberculosis, assuming that she would infect her child and that her death would cause psychological trauma to her child, she refrained from seeing her child for a long time; she even insisted that her child should not attend her funeral after her death. This is Lu Xun's ideal family love, which has aroused his resonance and feelings. He highly affirmed Arishima's love which is full of sacrifice and wrote: "Arishima is a member of birch school and he is awakened. In the future, there will be no liberation, no desire of liberation, let alone sentimentality and sorrow; Only love remains—but love for all the children."<sup>[10]</sup> In 1923, after Lu Xun translated the whole book of *Chisakimonoe*, he included *Osuenoshi*, another work of Takeo Arishima in *The Collection of Modern Japanese Novels*. The novel focuses on a fourteen-year-old girl, Osue, and the deaths of her family members. The novel started with the death of her father, who had been sick for a long time and was disliked and abandoned by the family; then her second elder brother died from a heart attack; after that, her third elder brother, Lisan, and her two-year-old nephew contracted dysentery and died. Finally, Osue also died. She did not dare to tell her mother and her sister Lisan and her nephew died because they ate cucumbers together. She fell into fear, self-blame and in her mother's hysterical complaints and her elder sister's constant questioning, Osue committed a suicide. The novel shows the distorted relationship between family, and presents low-statue people's real lives in Japan in the 1920s.

When investigating the relationship between Lu Xun and Takeo Arishima in terms of literature, Lu Xun's translation of Takeo Arishima will be mentioned, yet most people simply regard this as the evidence of the contact between the two, ignoring the variation of literary theory or trend caused by the change of "the field of literary production" in communication. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu put forward the concept of "the field of literary production", which refers to "the network or configuration of objective relations between various positions"<sup>[6]</sup>. Society is composed of many independent and closely related sub-fields, such as political field, power field, literature field, translation field, etc. Each field has its own operation logic and struggle strategy. Because the quality and quantity of capital are unevenly distributed in social space, the status of different fields is not equal, and there is a relationship between domination and obedience. As for field of literary production, it is contained and dominated by the power field, which has a guiding and restricting effect on the genre selection of the literary field. But the field of literary production also has its own operation logic and

autonomy, and only the political field and economic field that meet the conditions of literary field reconstruction can play a role in it. In the same field, agents in different positions will adopt different struggle strategies. Bourdieu believes that dominant actors tend to adopt conservative strategies to maintain the power pattern of the existing field, new entrants hope to gradually approach the dominant position, and often adopt inheritance strategies to expand the quantity and quality of capital, while dominant actors generally adopt subversive strategies to change the power pattern of the field. The form and strategy of the field of literary production is “definition”<sup>[7]</sup>. Literature is the requirement of the will of life, and it is also the demonstration of social life. In the literature of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, the pioneers of Chinese new literature, represented by Lu Xun, made the text continue to expand across the border via translation, and successfully controlled the field of the field of literary production.

### 3. The Significance and Role of Translating Foreign Literature During the New Literature of the May Fourth Period

It is not difficult to find that Lu Xun's translation and his literature works complete and transcend to each other. This is consistent with the view that “text from the perspective of intertextuality is no longer an independent text, but an interesting display of multiple texts' mutual growth and growth”<sup>[11]</sup>. Lu Xun's *The New Year Blessing* and *Reunion in a Restaurant* are under the influence of *Osuenoshi* in terms of theme; and his works *The New Year Blessing* and *Reunion in a Restaurant* are also very similar to the translation *Osuenoshi* in their tones.

Translating is considered to be an inter-textual activity and a bridge between China and foreign countries. *Chisakimonoe* and *Osuenoshi* were translated in 1923 and Lu Xun finished the writing of *The New Year Blessing* and *Reunion in a Restaurant* around 1924. In novel *The New Year Blessing*, Aunt Xianglin's two ex-husbands died and she was remarried to another man, later, she also lost his son. She fought against fate for many times but failed and died of hunger. However, no one cares about her death. It can be said that her death is closely related to the feudal oppression, but the real driving force is the indifference and ruthlessness of the people around her.

As for novel *Reunion in a Restaurant*, we can find that A Shun inherited the illness from her mother; but it was people's indifference and wickedness that prompted her early death. For example, A Shun's father still beat her when she was ill and sad; in order to get some money to support the family, he forced A Shun to get engaged. All these things accelerated A Shun's death. In Lu Xun's novels *The New Year Blessing* and *Reunion in a Restaurant*, there was no ups and downs in terms of the story plots, and the images and destinies of the unique characters are extremely similar. Lu Xun once wrote that: “The projection of foreign literature has become one of the background colors of my novels *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*.”<sup>[12]</sup> For Lu Xun, the most important thing in translating foreign literature is to introduce advanced western thought and culture, to wake up the ignorant people, and to effectively control the field of literary production during the May Fourth Period, which has great enlightening significance and promoting effect on the new literature moving towards maturity.

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