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Clanging Bells, Clanging Words: Iwate Dialect in Miyazawa Kenji’s "Changa Chaga Umako" Tanka Series

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Clanging Bells, Clanging Words: Iwate Dialect in Miyazawa Kenji’s “Changa Chaga Umako” Tanka Series

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Miyazawa Kenji
(1896-1933)
• Born in the town of Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture.
• Lived most of his life in Hanamaki

Hanamaki City, circa 1910
Miyazawa Kenji
(1896-1933)

- Educated in Morioka City, capital of Iwate-ken (a bit north of Hanamaki city)

Kenji as a young student in Morioka

Morioka Agricultural and Forestry Higher School (MAFHS) in the 1910s
The Idea of a Regional Home

- Hoyt Long’s view of Miyazawa Kenji’s Iihatovu (On Uneven Ground)
The Idea of a Regional Home

- Hoyt Long’s view of Miyazawa Kenji’s lihatovu (On Uneven Ground)
The Idea of a Regional Home

• Hoyt Long’s view of Miyazawa Kenji’s lihatovu (On Uneven Ground, 2011)
Kenji’s Tanka Period

- Roughly ten years from 1911 to 1921
- Gives up the form, begins writing *shi* (→ “mental sketches”)
  - → 1924 collection, *Spring and Asura* (*Haru to shura*)
- Began to seriously compose at MAFHS, writing for coterie magazine *Azelea* (*Azaria*)
Kenji’s Tanka Period

• First issue of Azelea: 1917, the year of the Festival poems (they run in issue #1)

• Strong interest in “rensaku”
  – January of that year, his longest rensaku to date, the “Hinoki (Cypress) Days”. A series of 16 poems written across 7 (+1?) days from January 1st through the 7th
“Changa Chaga Umako” Festival

- Morioka, Iwate-ken Festival. Morioka people call it “Chagu-Chagu Umako”
- Traditionally was held on the 5th day of the 5th month. (Still practiced. Now → mid-June)
- Celebrates “Horse Culture” of which Nanbu-han (Iwate-ken and surrounding regions)
- Small children ride horses and parade through Morioka streets from Hachimangu Shrine to downtown Morioka (seat of Nanbu-han)
“Changa Chaga Umako” Festival
Kenji’s Changa Chaga Umako Tanka

• 4 tanka poems written in Iwate dialect (Iwate-ben)
• Originally 8 poems in Azalea,
• later compiled (reduced) in a Song Manuscript (Kakô) by Kenji in 1920, perhaps with intention to formally publish, but he never did.
Changa Chaga Umako, Poem 1

Though we still got time before dawn at Shimo-no-Hashi Bridge
People already out to see the Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders

From a four-tanka sequence (from 大正6年5月より)
Shin Miyazawa Kenji kashû, edited by Kurihara Atsushi and Sugiura Shizuka (Sôkyû Shorin, 2006) 92
Changa Chaga Umako, Poem [1]

From the crack of dawn
Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders –
Thinking ah’d go see ‘em
but at Shimo-no-Hashi Bridge
there’s a bunch of people standin’

Alternate version of poem 1, found in Azelea (from the original eight-poem rensaku)
Changa Chaga Umako, Poem 2

The color of clouds turned just a bit now with the dawn and Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders come a-crossin’ the bridge
With al lem’s might
Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders come out chargin’
so meybe it’s cause it’s dawn
but ah’m feelin’ like ah’m gonna cry
Changa Chaga Umako, Poem [3]

With al lem’s might
Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders come out chargin’
so meybe it’s cause it’s dawn
but ah’m feelin’ like ah’m gonna cry
Orthographical Strategies in “Eiketsu no asa” (early 1920s)
Orthographical Strategies in "Eiketsu no asa" (early 1920s)
Changa Chaga Umako, Poem 4

At Shimo-no-Hashi Bridge
mixed in them all
who came out to see Changa-Chaga Lil’ Riders
there’s my lil’ brother, too
Other Celebrations of Iwate Culture in Kenji’s 1917 tanka (and later poetry)

• Often mentions Iwate places even in early poetry and prose
  – Nanatsumori Hills (Morioka area)
  – Nakatsugawa River (Morioka)
• Hara-kentai-ren Warrior Dances
  – (former Esashi county)
Haratai-Kenbai-Ren (Sword Dancers of Haratai)
Ide-Kenbai-Ren (Sword Dancers of [Esashi]), 1917

• Hara-kentai-bu Warrior Dances
  – (Ide village, part of Esashi county)

剣舞の
赤ひたたれは
きらめきて
うす月しめる地にひるがえる

Red robes
of the Sword Dancers
glow
and flap on the ground against a swath of pale moonlight

From a three-tanka sequence, 上伊手剣舞連 (from 大正6年7月より)
Shin Miyazawa Kenji kashû, edited by Kurihara Atsushi and Sugiura Shizuka (Sôkyû Shorin, 2006) 102
In faint moonlight
my heart flutters at the glow
given off by the Sword Troupe all dancing together
Sword Dancers of Haratai [Esashi], 1923 shi

• 原体剣舞連 (mental sketch modified)

dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-sko-dah-dah

.....

Well known shi in Spring and Asura collection
Sword Dancers of Haratai [Esashi], 1923 shi

• 原体剣舞連 (mental sketch modified)

dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-sko-dah-dah
こんや異装のげん月のした
鶏の黒尾を頭巾にかざり
片刃の太刀をひらめかす
原体村の舞子たちよ...

dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-sko-dah-dah
under the mysterious and strange costumed moon tonight
decorated with headdresses of black chicken tailfeathers
You Dancers!

You who brandish the one-handed swords of Haratai Village!
Conclusions

What the use of dialect tells us about Kenji’s works

- Dating Kenji’s early “regional” moves
- Reconsidering Kenji’s “Worldview” → “Cosmic View”

I welcome your comments and suggestions

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Thank you!