A Study of Luotuo Xiangzi by Lao She

When Luotuo Xiangzi (Camel Xiangzi, 骆驼祥子), was published in 1937, it was acclaimed as one of the best novels to appear in the history of modern Chinese fiction. The tragic fate of the protagonist Xiangzi immediately won the sympathy of the Chinese readers. As a testimony to its tremendous appeal, it is still widely read inside and outside of China today. The aim of this essay is to analyze the literary merits of the work, relying mainly on the materials available in Singapore.

The essay is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with Lao She's life and thoughts. Emphasis is put on his make up as a writer, and his development from a "humorous" to a "realistic" novelist. Chapter two introduces the circumstances leading to the writing of Xiangzi, and outlines the story of the work. Chapter three depicts the theme of Luotuo Xiangzi, analyzing how the life of a decent man was brought to a tragic end by the hostility of his environment. Chapter four deals with the characters of the novel, delineating the major as well as the supporting characters. Chapter five studies the art of the work, covering areas such as character formation, plot, and the use of language. The concluding chapter evaluates the work as a whole, putting it in its historical environment.