Lao She was the penname of Shu Qingchun, a writer of humorous novels, short stories, and plays that praise the Communist Chinese regime.

Shu Qingchun, who wrote under the pen name Lao She, was one of modern China’s most celebrated humorists; his satirical novels, short stories, and plays are highly appreciated. He is also known for his sympathy for the underprivileged. After graduating from Beijing Teacher’s College in 1924 he went to England, where he taught Mandarin Chinese, studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and was inspired by reading the novels of British writer Charles Dickens.

When Lao returned to China in 1930, he had already written three novels and had achieved a reputation as a humorous writer, and he continued to write while teaching. During the War of Resistance against Japan (known outside China as the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945) he was head of the All-China Anti-Japanese Writers Federation, and in 1946 accepted a cultural grant from the U.S. Department of State. He stayed in the United States for three years, returning to China in 1949 after the founding of the People’s Republic. He participated in a number state- and party-sponsored cultural and organizations. But at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution...
In (1966–1976) he was publicly denounced as a counterrevolutionary and tortured; in October 1966 he was either murdered or driven to commit suicide.

By the time of his death, Lao had written more than twenty plays in praise of the Communist Chinese regime. Among his most famous works are the 1938 novel Lüotuo Xiangzi (Xiangzi the Camel, also known as Rickshaw Boy) and the 1937 play Chaguan (Teahouse). Rickshaw Boy, the story of a peasant who suffers hardship and degradation after a brief period of success as a rickshaw puller in Beijing, became a best-seller in the United States when a bowdlerized English translation, with new characters and a happy ending, was published in 1945. A film of the original version was made in 1982.

Further Reading
