

# Mei Niang's literary world

by Zhang Xin

This paper is the third and final part in a series on the life and work of Mei Niang, a female Chinese writer active mainly during the occupation period. This paper looks at Mei Niang's work from three different viewpoints:

1. *Life in "Manzhou" and in foreign country.* Life in "Manzhou" is illustrated by analyzing three Mei Niang's novels, "The Crab", "Evening Comedy" and "The Trip". "The Crab" belongs to one of Mei Niang's most important works. Here, she enriched the concept of big Chinese family, which has a long tradition in Chinese literature, by taking a female view of the "Manzhou" society and the big family's role in it. A similar female view appears also in "The Trip". The life in foreign country, represented by Japan, is a subject of the novel "Foreigner", and of two novels of the "Little Women" series.

2. *Three periods in a woman's life.* "Girl age" is characterized by anxiety about safety and lack of educational opportunities in a male dominated society. "Love age" deals with the restrictions that a traditional male society gradually places on a supposedly free and happy love. "Age of marriage and cohabitation" concerns the paradoxes and contradictions brought upon by complex partner relationships.

3. *Comparison between women writers living in the southern and northern parts of occupied China.* This part looks for common features in the writers' views of education, marriage, occupational opportunities, etc., and the image of man. Two frequently appearing motives of "confinement" and "escape" illustrate the similar stances taken by both groups.