

Mei Niang and the “Manzhou” literary world

by ZHANG Xin

This paper is the first part in a series on the work of Mei Niang, a female Chinese writer active mainly during the occupation period. Mei Niang was born in northeast China during the time of the warlord Zhang Zuolin. At middle school she began reading Western and modern Chinese literature. The publishing of her collected high school compositions “Xiao Jie Ji” can be regarded as her debut in the “Manzhou” literary world. That world consisted mainly of “Wen Xuan” and “Wen Cong”, as well as of “Yi Wen Zhi” schools. The “Wen Xuan” and “Wen Cong” schools were similar in their concepts by advocating “local literature”, and the theme of their work was often the hard life of lower classes. Some of Mei Niang’s work has appeared in their publications. Her second collection of short stories “Di Er Dai” conveys the message of the age of masses. Women writers in the “Manzhou” literature have been relatively active. Apart from Mei Niang, other influential personalities included Wu Ying, Dan Di and others.

Sporadic visits by Japanese writers to “Manzhou” revealed different concepts of their works. The official literature policies of the “Manzhou state” introduced since 1941, such as “Yi Wen Zhi Dao Yao Gang”, brought upon crisis in the “Manzhou” literary world and accelerated the exodus of “Manzhou” writers. After graduating from high school, Mei Niang went to Japan. While in Japan, she kept writing, and completed novels such as “Xie”, and others. At the same time she kept her “Manzhou” contacts by contributing to local publications. In 1942 she returned to Beijing.