RESEARCH ON FAMILY VALUES AND CULTURE
CHANGE IN HONGKONG'S MODERN CHINESE NOVELS

130 novels, parts of novels and short stories (simply called "novels" below) in Chinese language of the years 1960-67 have been analyzed. Only novels were included which have their setting in present-day Hongkong. They are printed as books, in periodicals and daily newspapers. The following data have so far been assembled. From them some preliminary observations can be made.

1. Material

1.1 List of authors according to origin from North or South China, occupation, income.

1.2 List of newspapers and periodicals according to circulation, class of readers.

1.3 Notes on readers according to sex and class.

1.4 Summaries of the contents of each novel.

1.5 List of the values and attitudes of the main characters of each novel according to class (upper — middle — lower) and age (young — old). Both distinctions have proved useful.

1.6 Tabulation (as 1.5) of these values and attitudes, specifically and arranged under the following topics:
— individual versus family and group,
— achievement orientation versus non-achievement orientation,
— attitude for or against Western culture,
— attitude to law and morals.

2. Method

2.1 From some of the most widely-read publications those 130 novels etc. were selected which deal with relevant social topics as listed in 1.6.

2.2 Some balance between books, periodicals and newspapers was attempted.

The sample of novels in books was balanced according to the main two price groups.
NOTES AND QUERIES

Four local periodicals particularly specialising in novels are represented.

The newspaper novels mainly come from
1. one of the most widely read papers which has middle as well as lower class readers and is mainly read by men,
2. a daily with high circulation which is read mostly by middle and lower class women,
3. a small number of novels from newspapers which have other significant groups of readers: middle and upper class, politically right wing or left wing.

3. Some preliminary findings

3.1 The most conspicuous feature of family relations as revealed in the novels is the generation conflict. They describe parents who are trying to influence, control, even sell their children in the parents' interest. The younger generation responds slightly more by revolt against this pressure than by adjustment to it. Persons of lower class are characterised as rejecting parents more often.

3.2 According to the novels the Chinese family in Hongkong has few economic functions today. This can indicate the same as the strong generation conflict: rapid social change.

3.3 Even under change some relations inside the family retain particular qualities from traditional Chinese society.

3.4 Pleasure and enjoyment rank high among the aspirations described in the novels. This is, of course, an inherent characteristic of any entertainment literature. But the Hongkong novels show special features which support the hypothesis that this literature serves as a means of escape from distressing social problems.

3.5 This element of retreat, somewhat paradoxically, does not preclude a generally positive attitude to achievement in the main characters of the novels. Achievement orientation correlates with class stratification and in these novels is more frequent among the lower and middle class.

3.6 The novels do not seem to bear out some well-established theories that the positive need for achievement is combined with sometimes excessive demands from the parents on the
children, with lack of warmth and very strict control inside the family.

3.7 The attitude to Western culture is quite favorable and more markedly so with the younger generation — though. The dangers of adopting Western ways of life are often stressed.

3.8 Some quite extreme cases of traditional Chinese behaviour seem to persist. And if one would consider that such traits as lack of frankness, keen regard for "face", stereotypes in thought truly reflect part of the Chinese cultural heritage, then the novels show that this tradition still occupies a remarkably strong position.

3.9 The high amount of immoral behaviour in the novels is more often related to persons of middle and upper class, especially of the older generation in the upper class.

4.0 The attitude to law is markedly rejective. In contrast to 3.9 lower class persons and youths show much more opposition to law.

4.1 Juvenile delinquency is related by the authors mostly to family problems, but is also traced to two simple "theories":
— he or she is just a bad person, and
— love is at the root of it all.

4.2 Whereas several factors indicating socio-cultural stress are dealt with in the novels (suicide, juvenile delinquency), the authors seem to evade other problems which widely exist in Hongkong (e.g. mental disorder, drug addiction).

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KLAUS MADING

Dr. Mading is Vice-Consul in the German Consulate General in Hong Kong. His doctorate is from the University of Cologne and was on the Chinese traditional law of succession. He hopes to publish his findings on the subject of this note.

HONG KONG'S FIRST GOVERNMENT HOUSE*

People sometimes ask where Hong Kong's first 'Government House' was situated and they usually receive the answer that it stood on the site now occupied by the Victoria District Court. The question is obviously of little historical importance today but it does provide an opportunity for an interesting trip to Hong Kong in the 1840's.

* See map at Plate 20.