ABSTRACT

Following the implementation of the land reform movement in China, many literary works on this area have been produced. Ding Ling (丁玲) was one of the pioneer writers in this field. Her novel, *The Sun Shines on the Sanggan River* (《太阳照在桑干河上》), was the first representative novel on land reform to be published.

Materials for this academic exercise are drawn primarily from published literature of scholars from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the West. As Ding Ling was a writer and a staunch communist, she hailed varied reviews from critics. Chinese scholars mostly modified their views regarding her works with respect to the rise and fall of her political status in the Chinese Communist Party. Many overseas scholars who were anti-communist, attacked her works, because they have allowed their political biases to interfere with literary criticism. These in turn hindered the reader from gaining a balanced perspective of her works.

This academic exercise attempts to provide an unbiased evaluation of the novel, focusing on its themes, character analysis and artistry. My study has led to the following conclusions. Firstly, although this novel is not the most memorable of Ding Ling's works, it is undoubtedly the most encyclopedic in scope, as it captures the essence of a major historical event which occurred in China. Secondly, although Ding Ling was compelled to conform to the literary policies of the Chinese Communist Party, she strove to expose the flaws of the party cadres and its policies, boldly if discretely. As a result, Ding Ling managed, in this novel, to maintain a delicate balance between a writer's integrity with party propaganda. On the whole, she succeeded in exploring certain sensitive issues and making some innovations in theme and artistry. This novel hence became a prototype for future land reform works.