



Family Life
in West China

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Introduction

THIS VOLUME is cut from the fabric of rural reconstruction as it has developed in China during the past twenty years. There has been a growing conviction in many groups that change can best be accomplished comprehensively and permanently in community life only through correlative change in family life. This conviction was the more emphatic because of the traditional position of the family in Chinese society. Family-centered rural reconstruction is, therefore, the material from which this account is taken; family life as it was lived from day to day; the sociological factors which influenced family members; the interaction between members of the same family and between families in the community; and the way these relationships have changed, with the reasons for the change, are recorded. The information contained in this book was gathered during three years of research in two rural communities in Szechuan, West China. The material is arranged in three parts to meet the interests of different readers. Book I contains two narratives of daily life in two communities and an analysis of family relationships. Book II presents the service program through which the information recorded in Book I was gathered and indicates some results of the program. Book III describes the research and techniques used to gather the information.

Book I, because of its style and content, will be of interest to those who seek greater understanding of Chinese family life, its relationships, and what happens in the home from day to day. Students of child guidance will discover how guidance principles work and how personality develops in these rural families. Those whose primary interest is research may find it rewarding to read

this factual account of three years of life in these two West China communities. Leaders in rural reconstruction will see it in operation in Part I.

Book II is included in response to a request from a group of church and community leaders who want to know how the service program was initiated, how it was carried on, and what the results were. This section presents the original program as set up to help individuals and families to meet their needs and shows how it was changed from time to time as the partial findings of the research revealed other needs. Some of the results in individual change, in family change, and in community change are set forth in Book II.

Book III is included for the smaller group who are specifically interested in research in family and community life. Students wishing to become familiar with the tools and techniques of research will find here an account of methods selected by various research workers from years of experience with rural people. These methods were further refined during the three years devoted to this study. Busy community and church leaders, who wish to start some research or teaching in this field, may welcome these tried techniques as the starting place for similar work of their own.

The author wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to many who have brought together the child welfare and rural reconstruction movements. A philosophy of rural reconstruction and techniques used in the service-research program have come more directly from the Mass Education Movement, the National Christian Council and the North China Christian Rural Service Union, all of China, and from Cornell University.

Chief credit is due to the Cornell University professors for suggestions, criticisms and encouragement. The author wishes to thank Dr. Ethel B. Waring and Dr. Leonard S. Cottrell for help in the preparation of the check list which was the major tool in the study; Dr. Waring and Dr. Lauriston Sharp for help in preparation of the report; and Dr. Paul J. Kruse, Dr. Asahel D. Woodruff, Dr. Knight Biggerstaff and Dr. Margaret Wylie for reading the manuscript. She is grateful to Dr. Lewis Smythe, Dr. Winifred Shannon, Dr. Margaret Mead, Mr. John H. Reisner, and Mr. Rowland Cross for critical reading of the manuscript and constructive suggestions which have greatly improved it.

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To none, however, is the author more indebted than to her Chinese colleagues of the service-research team: Miss Feng Chia-Wen, Miss Liu Fu-ju, and the six college and university students. She wishes to thank them and Ginling College for the loan of Miss Wei Chen-tzu to make the final check and preparation of the data in a form for transportation to America.

Special thanks are due to the Committee on Christian Literature for Women and Children in Foreign Lands for its generous financial aid to Agricultural Missions, Inc., and to the latter organization for assuming responsibility for the publication and distribution of the book; also to Miss Constance Hallock, who has seen it through the press and arranged the index.

While the author takes final responsibility, she shares with her Chinese colleagues of the service-research team the interpretation of this material and expresses the hope that it may enable many others to work with more insight and understanding at family-centered rural reconstruction.

Book I

FAMILY LIFE IN TWO COMMUNITIES

LIU CHIA HO & LING CHIA HUA YUAN




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Chapter 1

THE SETTING

Szechuan Province, where the two children of this story lived, and which was the seat of the war-time capital of China, has long been one of the richest, most densely populated and most provincial regions of China. Isolated by high mountains and difficult to reach from the outside, the people within the province found travel arduous before the day of buses and planes. The children and their families were familiar with only one of the four great rivers from which the province derives its name. The To river, half a mile away, dominated the lives of those in the community where the little girl in the story lived. It bordered the strip of land where the fields of her clan family lay, provided the water which they used, had to be crossed each time they went to town, and cut them off from the rest of the world in the rare times of flood. It looked so close that the children often reached out their hands thinking they could touch it, yet was so far for adults to carry water from it, that the supply had to be used sparingly. The small tributary river, which was a part of the daily life of the community where the little boy lived, emptied into the To river at Kien Yang, five miles away. It helped to swell the current of this river which finally flowed into the Chia Ling and which in turn, poured its volume into the Yangtze, ten days' boat travel from Kien Yang.

Kien Yang County, in which both children lived, is the second largest and wealthiest in the province. It ranked second in sugar production, and added substantially to the riches of the province before the war. The sugar houses of the families of the children supplied sugar to the three alcohol factories which had sprung up

to meet the war emergency and to keep buses running in the province. The tung oil trees which dotted the hillsides of the little boy's community contributed only slightly to the county output of oil, since they were all young trees and had few berries on them. Other products such as rice, cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, and vegetables were consumed within the county itself. The thirty-five salt wells were an interesting part of the landscape, but salt for families on the market was required by law to come from outside the county to prevent graft in this valuable commodity.

Kien Yang, the county seat, was the city where the maternal grandmother of the little girl of the story lived, and where she often visited. The father of the little boy went there twice a week to sell produce and buy needed supplies and he himself went once during the three years of this story. The little boy's father and the parents of the little girl were familiar with the three pagodas, the curving roof trees and the carved wood friezes of the old ancestral halls which proclaimed the wealth of earlier days in this city. Kien Yang was the seat of the county government. It was the location of the educational bureaus where their schools and adult literacy classes were registered, from which they received free textbooks, and where the father and mother of the little girl, who were teachers, went to attend educational meetings. It was the home of the secretary of the Bureau of Agriculture who came to judge their goats and to help their fathers to decide which land to plant to wheat when the government ordered a twenty-five per cent increase in production of that grain during the war. It was where the little girl's mother went for treatment of an abscess at the public health clinic. It was the town to which families of both communities delivered their rice in payment of the land tax during the war. It was there that the little boy's family took their lawsuit to court, and when the suit was lost in that court, where they took the bus to go fifty miles to Chengtu, the provincial capital, to appeal the case.

Liu Chia Ho, the community where the little boy lived, was five miles from Kien Yang. His father appreciated the stone path from the city to his home. It was easy to carry his heavy load suspended from the ends of his carrying pole when he walked on a paved path, especially on the many rainy days. He was always glad when he climbed the long hill and came to the little hills, for then he was almost home. All of his short life, the little boy had

climbed those little hills, or had been surrounded by them as he walked on the narrow grass-grown paths between the rice fields when he went from his home to the clusters of homes of the neighbors an eighth or a quarter of a mile away.

Ling Chia Hua Yuan, where the little girl lived, was four miles in another direction from Kien Yang. The little girl sometimes got tired walking the one mile from their settlement to the river bank on the hard earthen path, and rode in the basket on her father's back. After they crossed the river in the little boat, they rode in a rickshaw, following the big motor road with the river far below and the cliffs honeycombed with caves, high above them.

At Liu Chia Ho, the little boy lived near the border between two *Pao Chia* and it just happened that the *Pao Chang* of each lived near him. Each *Pao Chang* was elected biennially from the hundred families for whom he was responsible to the county government. Education, taxes, the conduct of individuals and families, conscription of labor and soldiers, in fact, all local government was in the hands of the *Pao Chang*. He administered the law locally through ten *Chia Chang*, each of whom was elected biennially from the ten families for whom he was responsible. All of the *Chia Chang* and the two *Pao Chang* were young men and one of the former was the elder brother of the little boy. The local government was as good or as bad as the *Pao Chang*. When he was dishonest or a man of no ability, local government was oppressive, and public money was said to drip through the fingers of the various hands through which it passed. The *Pao Chang* of the hundred families in which the little boy lived was known as an honest, just, and public-spirited man. He gave unstintingly of his time to handle the most tedious problem of an impecunious old grandmother, to bring harmony from a family or community quarrel, to suppress the use of opium, to plan with his families for some public service which would benefit the whole community, and to train the young men and women in citizenship. All educational matters had to be channeled to the county educational bureau through the *Hsiang Chang*. He had consistently withheld his approval to a request for schools with the result that there was no government school in either of the two *Pao Chia*.

In Ling Chia Hua Yuan, where the little girl lived, there was a dual system of government in operation which produced a

OUTLINE COMPARISON OF THE TWO RURAL COMMUNITIES

LIU CHIA HO

LING CHIA HUA YUAN

Area of operation: a five-mile radius, with Liu Chia Ho as center, had 800 families in it.

Immediate field of operation: 80 families, members of the Credit Cooperative, were scattered throughout the five-mile radius but located largely within one mile of the center.

Families who participated in the service program were largely from four settlements:

| | |
|-----------|------------------|
| Young Wen | with 10 families |
| Older Wen | with 35 families |
| Wei | with 15 families |
| Ch'en | with 6 families |

The people were all farmers.

The people were poor and rising economically and educationally.

There was no *Pao Chia* primary school at the opening of the project.

There were twenty-two Christians at the opening of the project and no opposition to Christianity.

A small river running through the area, at the foot of Ping-tzu's garden, provided water for the community.

Area of operation: a strip of land two by four miles, bounded by the river on one side and mountains on the other side, had 800 families in it.

Immediate field of operation: 80 families, all members of two branches of the same clan, lived within one-eighth mile of each other.

Families who participated in the service program were all in two settlements, and largely from the one settlement with 42 families in it.

The people were all farmers but some of them also had business interests in town.

The people were wealthy with an educational and cultural background of 4300 years of clan recorded history. There was a *Pao Chia* school at the opening of the project.

There were no Christians at the opening of the project and considerable opposition to Christianity.

The great river, one of the four great ones of the province, two-thirds of a mile away, provided all water for the community.

Sugar cane, corn, sweet potatoes, and very few vegetables grew here.

Flowering trees and cultivated flowers grew here.
All except a few houses had tiled roofs and wood or cement floors.

The staff residence and activities were located in the ten-branched clan ancestral hall.

Service activities were all located in one ancestral hall:

1. Ling Clan Ancestral Hall
 - Children's clubs
 - Adult literacy class
 - Nursery school
 - Parent education
 - China New Year Festival

Sugar cane, cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, wheat, and vegetables grew here.

Fruit trees and wild flowers grew here.
Most of houses had thatched roofs and earthen floors.

The staff residence and center of activities were located in a farm home.

Service activities were located in four different family homes or family ancestral halls:

1. Kwan family home
 - Children's school and club
 - Church services
 - Children's and other festivals
2. Young Wen Ancestral Hall
 - Nursery school
 - Parent education
 - Adult literacy class
3. Older Wen Ancestral Hall
 - Adult literacy class
 - Youth group meetings
4. Ch'en Ancestral Hall
 - Adult literacy class
 - Goat judging
 - China New Year meetings

certain amount of conflict among the families. Some clan elders tenaciously adhered to the old system which placed all power, even of life and death, in the hands of the clan elders. Other clan members wished to follow the new and lawful *Pao Chia* government system and feared that the clan might come into conflict with the county government. The clan head, elected from the oldest generation of clan members, took over many functions of local government. At the same time, the *Pao Chang* was regularly elected by the hundred families for whom he was responsible to the county government. A part of the ancestral hall of the clan was allocated to the county government educational bureau for schools. A *Pao Chia* school, and later an adult literacy class, were established and both registered with the government. Certain of the clan elders opposed both of these educational enterprises and established an old fashioned classics school for boys in a nearby branch ancestral hall.

Although different in shape, both of these communities were about the same size and had the same population. If the isolated farmhouse of the little boy were taken as a center and a circle with a five mile radius were drawn, eight hundred families would fall within its boundaries. All of them had a Cantonese background but with many different names. All of them were farmers and all owned the land on which they lived. None of them were very rich and none in dire poverty, though a few families lived in a very restricted manner. The settlement of forty-two families where the little girl lived is off at one end of a U-shaped tract of land two miles wide and four miles long, and is bounded on one side by the river and on the other by some low mountains. Eight hundred families all of one name and all from the same Fukien clan lived here. They had lived in this place for over two hundred years and are known as a wealthy clan. They were farmers too, and lived on land which they owned, but a few of them were also merchants, and a few were school teachers.

The story covers three years of time and tells the actual happenings of the families in these two rural communities, although the incidents are not told in the order in which they happened. The little boy in the story grew from three to six years of age and the little girl from two and a half to five and a half years. Since the three years were war years, many different kinds of people came to live in their province and in their county. The children and