Further Travels in Laos and in Yunnan

The Mekong Exploration Commission Report (1866-1868)—Volume 2

Francis Garnier



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Front cover : Various local dresses of Southern Yunnan, Garnier Mission.

Back cover : Local people from Burmese Laos and Yunnan, Garnier Mission.

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Further Travels in Laos and in Yunnan



The French Commission and its escort at the arrival in Han-kéou (Hanoi): L. de Carné, L. Joubert, F. Garnier, C. Thorel and L. Delaporte (drawing by É. Bayard, based on a photograph).

Further Travels in Laos and in Yunnan

The Mekong Exploration Commission Report (1866-1868)—Volume 2

Francis Garnier

Translated
and with an Introduction by
Walter E. J. Tips

White Lotus Press

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Introduction

This book is a translation of the second part of the report of the Commission for the Exploration of the Mekong. It continues the itinerary of the first book: Francis Garnier, *Travels in Cambodia and Part of Laos*. Both books are complemented by the third volume in this English edition published by White Lotus: Louis Delaporte and Francis Garnier, *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong: Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*, which presents a fuller pictorial record of the Commission's itinerary. All volumes are available separately.

The spelling of place names in this book follow the original. In some cases the Romanization differs from modern usage, but to have introduced any changes in the text could have made it difficult for the reader to follow the Commission's itinerary on the maps. In most cases, the differences are not great, and readers should have no difficulty identifying the modern names of the places mentioned.

The Commission arrived in Luang Prabang, then a fairly independent kingdom under the tutelage of the Siamese government in Bangkok but also paying tribute to other neighboring states at various times during this period, to spend some time there awaiting better weather conditions. Present-day northern Laos was less peaceful then. The various principalities were constantly at war and the Muslim rebellion in Yunnan displaced other tribes who sought refuge and a livelihood in the neighboring small states. All these were nominally under the tutelage of China, Siam, Annam or British India. The Shan States were the latter's most distant outpost in this part of the world but even the British were not keen to interfere in the internecine struggles among the various tribes.

Travels in Cambodia and Part of Laos ended with a decision to follow the course of the Mekong, hoping that the rumors, about wars in the countries the French expedition was now entering, had been exaggerated. The route chosen was along the Mekong river, in keeping with the primary objective of the mission, to explore and study the great river and, if at all possible, find ways to extend French governmental and commercial influence into the countries adjoining Tonkin and Annam.

Francis Garnier ended the first volume with a description of the conditions in which the Commission now found itself. In Luang Prabang, most of the data collected so far, including collections of plants and geological samples, were sent to Bangkok. There too, the members of the Commission reduced their personal belongings to the strict minimum for the remainder of the journey. The reasons were twofold. First, a possible shift to an overland route would not allow much luggage to be carried. Secondly, the members of the expedition already realized that there were insufficient funds to complete the exploration—a mishap brought on them by an excessively long stay in Lower Laos, while they waited for the necessary passports from China to catch up with the expedition. In the end, it was Francis Garnier himself who traveled back to Pnom Penh to collect the passports. He noted the great indifference with which the whole undertaking was treated by the authorities in the French colony of Cochinchina of which the countries being explored would have been the logical commercial extensions.

Thus, in light boats, with lighter baggage and very light wallets indeed, the members of the expedition and their Annamite and Tagal escort left, on a beautiful day in May 1867, with a heavy heart for what they sensed would be a tumultuous adventure rather than a peaceful journey of scientific exploration.

Dr. Walter E. J. Tips

June 1996

Chapter 1

Departure from Luang Prabang—The caves of Pak Hou

At the moment of our departure from Luang Prabang, the effects of the first rains had already made themselves felt on the river, the waters of which had risen more than one meter. We embarked on the morning of 25 May 1867. A nice south-westerly breeze and the natural freshness of our aquatic route promised a less hot, more pleasant day than those we had spent in our camp.

A little distance from the city, the river narrowed and took on a wild and turbulent appearance. The mountains on the banks showed their serrated crests and their rocky surfaces. Their last shelves, which overhung the river, were often surmounted by pyramids, the tombs of pious monks or the shrines of supposed relics, the upward-thrusting forms of which harmonized with the landscape. A little above Luang Prabang, on the left bank of the river, one of these *thats* appeared; it was picturesquely situated at a corner formed by the river and a small affluent. The mountain that served as its pedestal was called Phou Kieo. A little further, on the opposite bank and at the entrance to one of these caves that were so plentiful in the calcareous rocks, there was a gigantic statue of the Buddha.

In the evening, we arrived at the confluence of the Nam Hou, the river which Commander de Lagrée had thought of ascending for a while. Across from its mouth and on the right bank of the river, high cliffs rose up vertically. On their flank was a cave deeper than the preceding ones and which the indigenous people had transformed into a sanctuary. We climbed to it with the help of the steps cut out of the rocks. The breaks in the rock constituted a sort of balcony, the pillars and the balustrade of which were completed and regularized by the hand of man, outside the gigantic and irregular opening to the cave. The view of the river from there was imposing. It was no longer an infinite perspective in which the blue of the water and the sky merged in dazzling light and in which only the far-off rows

of palm trees and the huts half hidden in their shadows interrupted the contours of a landscape that was both imposing and monotonous. Here, the river was not even three hundred meters wide and its winding course was bordered by rocky walls which were overtowered by the bizarre serrations of the mountains behind them. Some ten meters below us, the waters which were already muddy and always fast-flowing, bathed the foot of the staircase leading to the balcony and caused the light boat which was waiting for us to hit the rocks. It was an admirable place to see the pirogue races, so frequently held in Laos, or to enjoy the illuminations with which the locals often enhanced the splendor of their tropical nights. Some distance from there, the calm, black waters of the Nam Hou mixed with the yellowish waters of the Mekong river and the demarcation line that separated them wavered about the mouth of the river, following the variable relation between the speeds of the two currents. Opposite us, on the left, the golden color of a sand bank cut brightly into the dark color of the neighboring rocks, behind which the sun had already disappeared and the tops of which rose up, black, against a red sky.

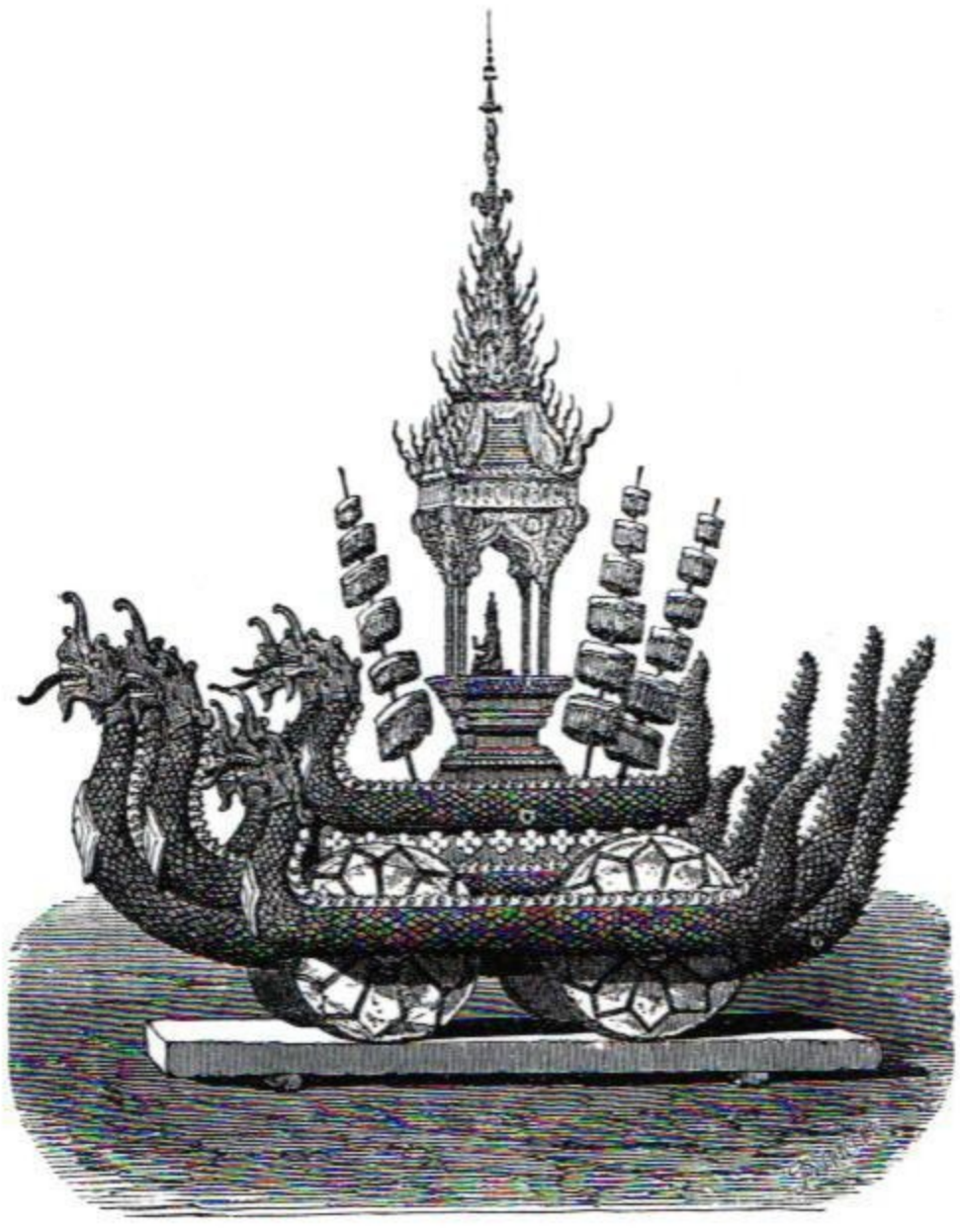


Plate 1 *A carriage of the Lord Buddha in a cave (drawing by E. Thérond).*

After having enjoyed this spectacle for a moment, we entered the cave. Buddhas of all sizes were stacked up in every nook and cranny; flowers, banners, umbrellas, all kinds of votive objects decorated the altars. The flickering of the torches which gave us light caused great shadows to dance in the depths of this natural temple and made the figure of the prophet of Kapilavaston, normally so calm, look grotesque. Despite the originality of this religious decoration, I asked myself if it detracted from the natural grandeur of the cave and whether the sparkling of stalactites would not have been preferable to the faded gilding and the humidity-stained colors of these Buddhist trinkets. It was especially travelers and the oarsmen of the river who were the pious devotees of this cave. The priests who served it lived on the opposite bank in the village of Pak Hou and never lacked flowers or offerings. During the high waters, the river rose to the entrance of the cave itself. In 1856, an exceptional rise had partly flooded it and the inhabitants had indicated the height to which the water had risen, with a red line drawn a bit further up the plain colored, vertical wall of the rock. This line indicated a difference of 17.5 meters between the lowest levels and the level of the inundation of that record year. The usual difference, resulting from taking the average of several normal years, was only 10.7 meters.

The houses of the village of Pak Hou were scattered along the left side, behind the sand bank I have mentioned, which formed a sort of creek or natural harbor where our pirogues were already moored for the night. From all points of view, this station was exceptionally comfortable: instead of our narrow pirogues, huts built on the sand, for the use of travelers, served as our bedrooms.

Night was already falling: I hastened to go up-river in a light boat to make a few soundings; conducted by two oarsmen, I ascended a mile or two on the course of the Nam Hou. The current was almost zero, the waters were as clear and silent as the waters of the Mekong river were murky and turbulent. Gliding along the rocky wall which formed a vertical bank more than 350 meters high on the right side, my boat produced a light chopping sound, the silver-toned noise of which resounded like an echo in the nocturnal atmosphere. At an enormous height above my head some belated birds of prey were circling to enter their nests placed beyond reach in the crevices of the rocks. Their raucous, discordant cries became fewer and fewer. I asked the oarsmen to stop rowing to enjoy the pleasure of this moment of calm and freshness brought by the first stars which is so pleasant in the hot countries. Soon, nothing more was heard but the mute and languorous

murmuring of the great river and the soft song of the nocturnal insects, telling the bushes of the river banks of their mysterious loves.

A source of the Menam—Pakben—A boat in distress—
Pak Ta—Xieng Khong—The volcanoes of Ban Tanoun—
The first serious difficulties—The natives of Lamet—
Departure from Xieng Khong—The ruins of Xieng Hai
and Xieng Sen—Historical souvenirs—Arrival at the
rapids of Tang Ho—A corner of the earthly paradise—
The route of the river to Muong Lim

After a frenetic and tiring day, passed amid feverish intellectual activity that was exhausting because of the incessant work demanding my attention every single minute, it was pleasant to get a moment of rest at the end and to contemplate at ease one of these scenes to which I could not give a moment during the day! What a dull task to be a geographer and what a monotonous occupation the compass and the watch are! How much I envied those of my colleagues whose activities did not deprive them of, at least, the attractions of the journey and the pleasures of seeing new landscapes unfold before their eyes, without any other concern than to admire them! Alas! the more the landscapes varied, the less free time I had. There a mountain, quickly a measurement; a river, what was its name and where did it come from? A village, let us place it on the map! Rapids, where was the channel and which was the greatest depth of the water? I was not allowed a minute's peace. These continuous gymnastics, this everlasting geographical preoccupation which was my lot for two years, have so estranged me from what I call the picturesque enjoyments of the journey that I gladly refer to them now to enjoy them entirely at my ease.[1]

The night had become very black; my Laotians who were squatting motionless and silent at the ends of the boat, roused me from my dreams. The current of the Nam Hou was taking us gradually to the Mekong river; we had to return to the camp, the glimmer of which lit the river a short distance away.

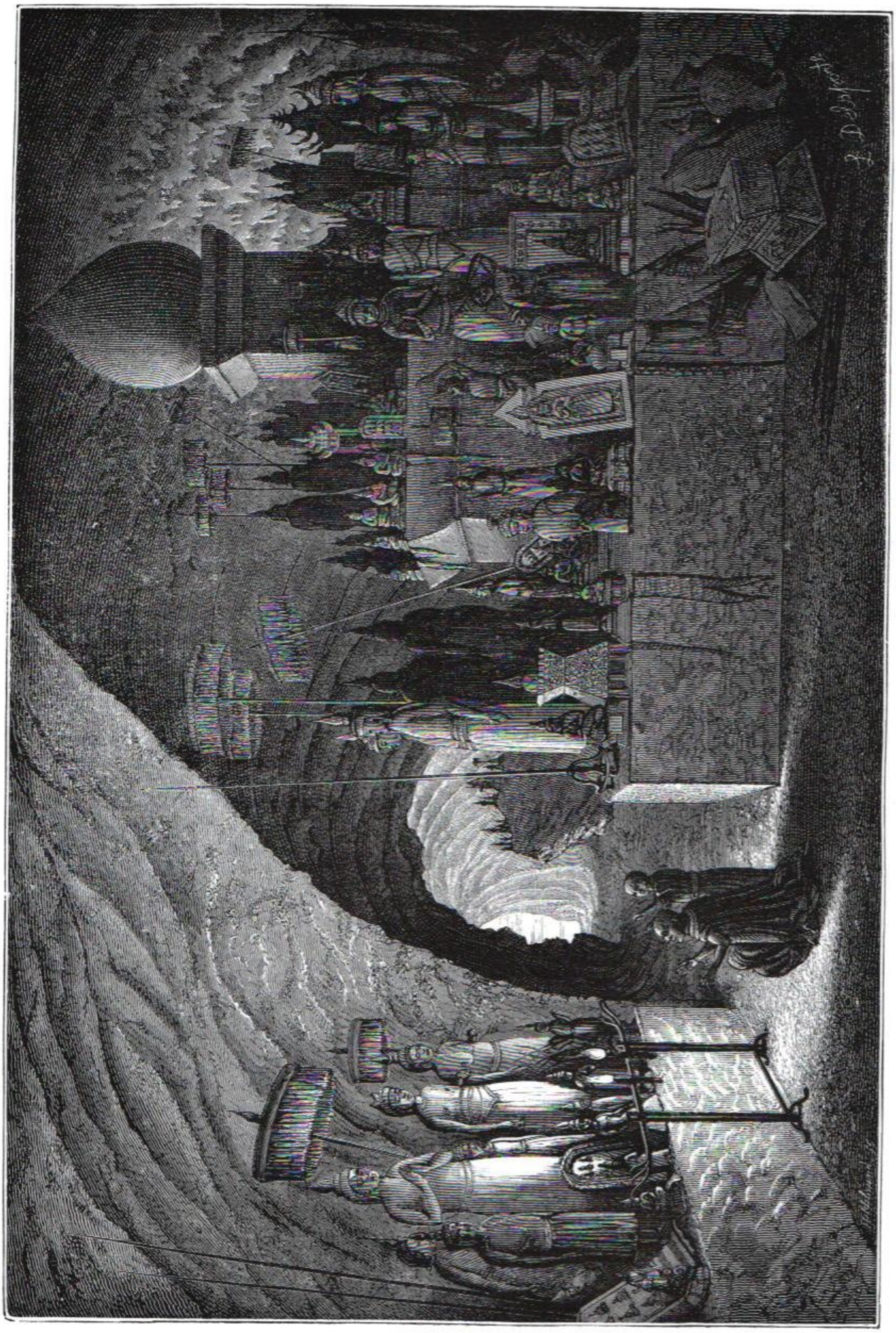


Plate 2 *The sanctuary of the Pak Hou cave (a view taken from the back of the cave) (drawing by L. Delaporte, from life).*

The next day, the navigation of the river was difficult. After flowing north-east since Luang Prabang, the river gradually tended to the absolutely opposite direction, while it surged between rocks and mountains that became steeper and steeper. Once established in this new direction, its bed cleaned out without widening. The mountains stretched parallel to the banks and formed several levels with regular steps. The vegetation, which was more uniform, completely lost its tropical appearance, apart from the numerous wild banana trees which mingled with bombax trees on the banks of the river and the few gigantic palm trees which rose here and there on the tops of the calcareous rocks. Pine trees crowned the highest pinnacles and they reminded us of our distant homeland.

The villages were few and far between on our route. Some were inhabited by Laotians who had fled from the principalities in the north, including, among others, Muong Kun or Xieng Tong. But the natives were more numerous here than the Laotians. They almost all belonged to the Khmou tribe. We could see their villages stretching on the mountains at the second level and the light columns of smoke rising above the tops or drifting along the ravines between them indicated places of forestry exploitation or where fires prepared the ground for seasonal sowing.

On 27 May we changed boats and crews at Ban Cokhe. The next day, we arrived at Ban Tanoun, a village situated on the right bank of the river, not far from which they had indicated to Commander de Lagrée the existence of active volcanoes. Doctor Joubert, our geologist, was dispatched from the expedition to examine the place closely. Mr. de Carné went with him. These gentlemen were to join us again in Xieng Khong.

On 29 May we passed the mouth of a small river, the Se Ngum, of little interest in itself but important to mention, because from the opposite flank of the mountain range which gave rise to it, the eastern-most branch of the Menam descended. The sources of the two watercourses were separated by a very small space and according to the information of the locals, it would be possible, at the time of the high waters, to drag a boat for one or two miles over fairly smooth terrain to leave the basin of the Mekong and begin to navigate in that of the Menam. Is it this proximity that has given rise to the assumption on our old maps that these two rivers were connected?[2]

We stopped twenty-four hours in the village of Pakben, which was our second stopover place between Luang Prabang and Xieng Khong. A pretty little river

coming from the north, which, not far from its mouth, is transformed into a torrent rich in fish, joined the Mekong on the eastern side of the village which was for the most part inhabited by natives. The chief of the place himself belonged to this race and was very concerned and hospitable to us. The rise of the water was about three meters in this area.

On 31 May we left Pakben and the river, the general direction of which continued to be west some degrees south, flowing between high rocky cliffs, crowned with vegetation and extremely picturesque in appearance. We had to stop beside a sand bank in the evening. In the middle of the night, I was woken up by the Annamite guard, who informed me that the boat of the lower-ranking Laotian chief who was accompanying us had detached itself and had been taken away by the current. Its owner was sleeping in it. Our oarsmen, woken up with a start, were in the greatest anxiety; some hastily boarded another pirogue to try to reach the unfortunate before he should be thrown into the water by the current amid the rocks. Would they arrive in time to avoid a catastrophe? Three or four miles down river from us there were rapids which were like most of those that we met in this part of the river, formed by the banks of pebbles that accumulated at the mouths of the torrents that descended from the mountains. The pirogue of the sleeping chief would certainly have keeled over in the currents and the unfortunate man drowned in the water before he had time to realize where he was, if those who were pursuing him had not managed to reach him.

They forcefully pulled on the oars: this contest in the middle of the night between fate which took the unsuspecting sleeper with her and providence which aroused the saviors was indeed gripping. We shivered at the thought that amid the muffled noise which came to us from the rapids, we might perhaps distinguish the first cry, the last of a man suddenly woken up amid the waves.

It was a long time since the noise of the rescue boats' oars had ceased to be heard. The wait continued until daylight and it was only at the stopover for lunch that we saw the two boats coming back, with all those they contained. The chief had woken up at the cries of his pursuers, who were still very far away from him when his pirogue was not more than a hundred meters from the rapids. With great presence of mind, which was not surprising for a people who were familiar with this sort of danger, he immediately realized his position, grabbed a paddle and with a few vigorous strokes had left the line of the current and reached the closest bank. The small pirogue was then taken back by the crew of the boat, very

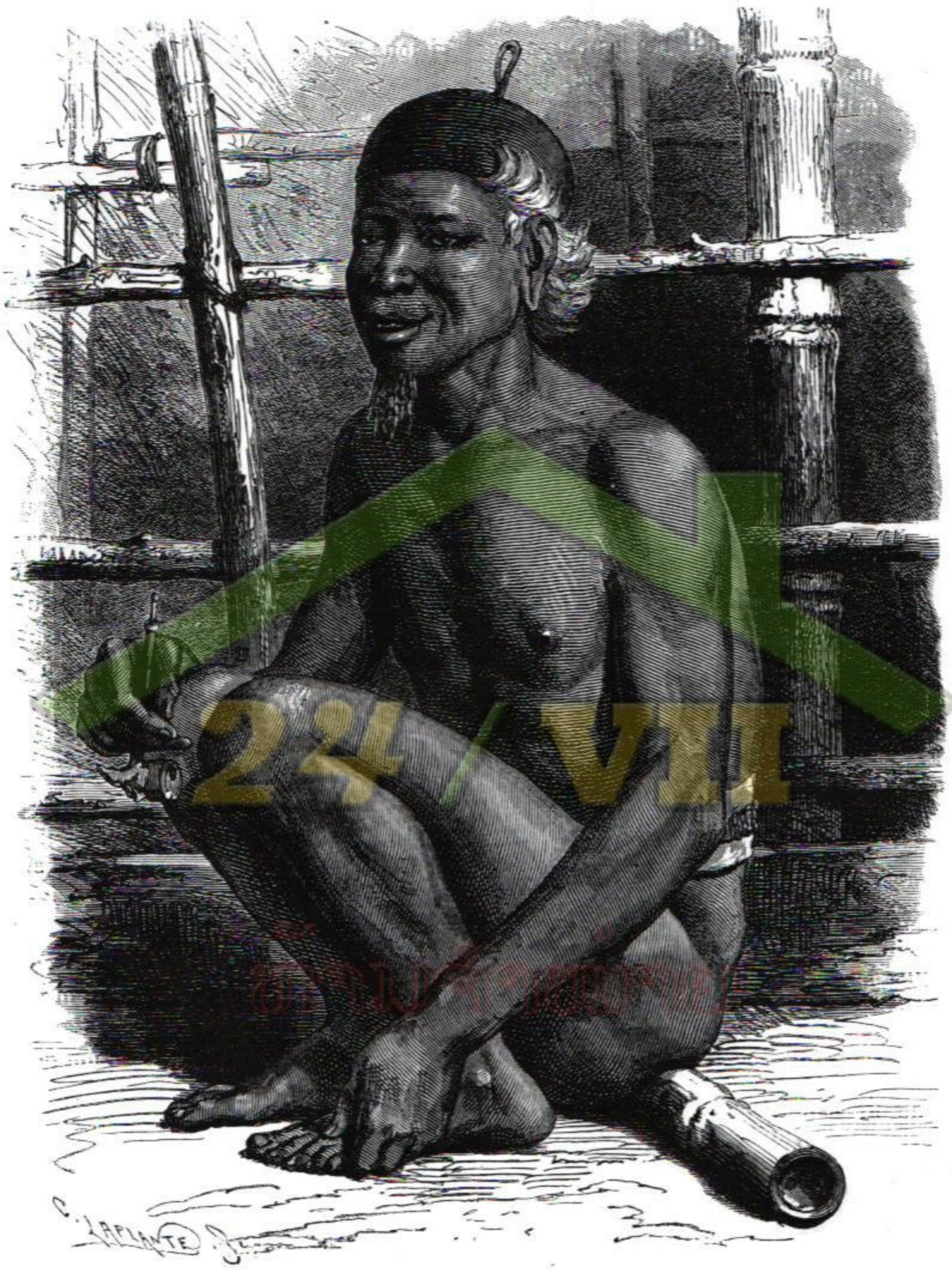


Plate 3 *The chief of the natives of Pakben (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch done by L. Delaporte)*

happy with their successful pursuit. I may be very much mistaken, but I believe our low-ranking chief had a statue of the Buddha made which will increase the number of votive objects deposited in the cave of Pak Hou.

On 1 June 1867 we had to traverse rapids, Keng Le, which made it necessary to unload our boats: it was the first difficulty of this magnitude since our departure from Luang Prabang. With this obstacle passed, the navigation became very easy, the banks were less rocky and more distinct. In the west we observed the tops of a mountain range averaging one thousand to one thousand two hundred meters in height; it seemed to run due north to south. This barrier would terminate the long detour to the west that the Mekong had been describing since Luang Prabang and turned it back northwards. The curves disappeared, the bed widened, the current diminished and the gentle, regular slopes that lead from the right bank to the summits of the range were covered with settlements and crops.

On 2 June, we stopped for some time at Ban Hatsa, a pretty village situated on the left bank. The next day, we arrived at Pak Ta, the last stretch of our trip before Xieng Khong.

As its name indicated, Pak Ta (the mouth of the Ta) was situated at the confluence of the Nam Ta and the big river. It was a considerable village. While they were preparing the new boats for us, which this time would leave us only after we reached Xieng Khong, we visited pagodas. In one of them there was a very well-made clock of such refined workmanship as could only be found in Europe. This was evidently not a local product and the Chinese script which encircled its base made us place its origin in either Tong King or Yunnan. I would gladly be inclined to the first of these two countries, since the name of the emperor engraved in the manufacturing date did not refer to any of the Chinese sovereigns of the last two centuries, whose names I had quite well in my memory at that time.

A little above Pak Ta, the river turned to the south-west, beyond the range, the eastern flank of which it had so far paralleled. This passage was marked by new navigational difficulties. At that point we crossed the borders of the territory of Luang Prabang and entered the great province of Muong Nan of which Xieng Khong is the second city.

After this passage, the river expanded into a great plain such as we had not met with since Vienchan and it took up its course to the north-west again. On 4 June

at night we camped on a sand bank. Our horizon immediately widened, allowing us a view to the west and north of the distant bluish summits of great ranges, the last spurs of which came down in gentle rises to the banks of the river.

The next day, at eight a.m., we went on foot to Xieng Khong, where they had quickly finished the four huts they were building for our reception. The welcome of the authorities was showed good will and eagerness and the governor of the city, who was the second in command of the province of Muong Nan, came the same evening to pay a visit to Commander de Lagrée. Our boats were unloaded and they returned to Pak Ta, after the crew received the customary remuneration. Now, we found ourselves outside the sphere of influence and action of the king of Luang Prabang.



Plate 4 *A bell found in the pagoda of Pak Ta (drawing by Mr. Rapine)*

Mr. Joubert and Mr. de Carné joined us again: the volcanic phenomena that our geologist had been able to observe were, as usual, much less important than the stories of the locals had purported. A sunken and cracked terrain, from which sulfuric and carbonic gases and steam escaped, replaced the erupting crater which had been claimed. The traces of volcanic action existed in two different places, called Phou Fay Niaï and Phou Fay Noi, "mountain of the big fire" and "mountain of the small fire", by the natives. The cracks moved slowly, marking their passage by destroying the vegetation, by the charred trunks of big trees and by deposits of crystallized sulfur. Today Phou Fay Niaï occupied a surface seven to eight hundred meters long and three hundred meters wide. On this area, the soil resounded under our feet as if there existed a deep cavity under it. Applying one's ear to the ground, one can perceive a mute very far-off noise, which, according to the natives, often came close to being perceptible from a distance. This crevice seemed to run southwards and one could follow the route

that it had already covered over several kilometers. The local people collected the sulfur that was deposited on the walls of the crevice. Mr. Joubert was unable to see any centers of eruption. The purported volcano was thus reduced to simple smoking pits.

The negotiations with the governor of the small city started on the day after our arrival in Xieng Khong. I believe that I have already said that he was the second in command of the big province of Muong Nan. Despite his natural good will and his desire to please, he was unable to decide to let us cross the border of Siam: the letters from Bangkok which we carried accorded us free circulation on the whole of Siamese territory but they did not indicate that we could leave it. Taking on himself to authorize us to do so was a responsibility that terrified the timid official. Placed at an advanced post which was always dangerous, he was accustomed to circumspection, which was moreover justified by the numerous wars of which this part of Laos, being disputed time and again between Siam and Bangkok [*sic*], had been the theater. He wanted to conduct us to Muong Nan or, at least, to persuade us to await the answer from the governor of the province to our request to leave Siamese territory. If need be, all that he was able to agree to was to have us conducted to Xieng Hai, another small province subject to Bangkok and situated a little closer to Burmese territory. Nevertheless, Mr. de Lagrée had no problem in showing him that by the terms of our passports themselves we had the right to proceed at least to the border. Consequently, he took it upon himself to furnish us with boats to ascend the river to the point where it entered the Burmese possessions. This course was evidently authorized by our passports which specified free circulation on *the whole* of the Siamese territory. The governor of Xieng Khong objected: "But, the point where I would thus lead you is in mid forest. You will not find supplies, nor means of transportation there to proceed further. Moreover, at that point the river is no longer navigable and you would have to travel overland." Mr. de Lagrée replied: "That is of little importance and not your affair; but mine."

The reader probably remembers that we left without passports of the court of Ava. Admiral de La Grandière had tried to obtain them by the intermediary of Mgr. Bigandet, the French Catholic bishop, who enjoyed a certain influence with the sovereign of Burma. But, in the meantime, a palace revolution had removed the latter from his throne. The three younger brothers of the reigning prince had murdered their two older brothers, without, however, being able to seize power.

They had sought refuge with the English, who had pushed them back, and then with the Karen. The troubles which followed this assassination made it impossible for the Burmese government to answer the communications about us which had been sent.

Nevertheless, Mr. de Lagrée could avail himself of this process to affirm to the Burmese authorities that the court of Ava had been informed of our journey. He wrote a letter to this effect to the king of Xieng Tong, the Laotian prince who ruled the territory that bordered immediately on Xieng Khong and to whom a Burmese agent was attached. He asked him for passage and the authorization to procure the necessary means of transportation in these states and he assured him of our friendly disposition and of the entirely pacific and scientific objective of our mission.

A special mail left on 10 June to convey this message and the gifts which accompanied it. The latter, all destined for the king of Xieng Tong, comprised a small carpet, a fan, a piece of Algerian cloth and a few small objects, pipes, soap, handkerchiefs, etc. If we had known about the frequent trade relations which existed between the Shan States of Burma and the English colonies, we would probably not have dared to offer objects which gave only a very poor idea of our resources. But we were used to seeing the smallest Europeans goods evoke the most lively admiration and the most ardent envy among the Laotians of the south and that had increased the value of our barter objects in our own eyes. Moreover, the aim was to cozen the king of Xieng Tong more than to perform an act of deference to him.

Nevertheless, the authorities of Xieng Khong decided to gather the necessary boats. It was not without trouble and going to great lengths [that this was done]: the commercial traffic on the river here was almost nil and the means of navigation were very restricted. The big pirogues were now extremely rare and skilled oarsmen could not be found. Because of these obstacles, our departure was held back until 14 June. We used the time to visit Xieng Khong and its surroundings.

The village of Xieng Khong was surrounded by a moat and by a strong palisade. A small brook divided it into two parts and the banks were connected by a bamboo bridge, more picturesque than solid. The forest which surrounded the village was traversed by paths that were larger than usual: they were almost roads. Nevertheless the light Laotian carriages of the south were not in evidence here.

Some elephants, pulling heavy logs of teak wood, began here to make their appearance, passing, with a heavy nonchalant trod, convoys of pack bullocks coming and going. One of these paths ran south-east. It was the route to Xieng Mai, a city which was said to be twelve days march away.

In this region, the word *Xieng* replaced *Muong*, used in the south to designate the capital of a province. Here they said "*going to the Xieng*" as [further south] they said "*going to the Muong*".

The trade overland was barely ever more active than the commerce on the river and was reduced to commodities of prime necessity, such as salt, which became rarer and rarer here and which they got from the south of Laos and from Nongkay.

The look of the countryside was rather sad and the population sparse. [The Laotians] had mixed with the natives in considerable proportions so as in the end to lose their Laotian features completely. The crew-cut hair which was worn on top of the head, in the Siamese fashion, disappeared completely. The inhabitants, Laotians or of the native race, wore their hair long. They tied it upwards in a bun at the side of the head and they adopted the Burmese fashion of the turban. The women often placed a silver plate at the knot in their hairdo. They were no longer dressed as in the south. Their skin was lighter and their faces took on a more oriental shape and a more refined expression.

The customs of the natives were imprinted with great harshness. Copper was their greatest ornament: long, double pins of copper fastened their hair on their heads, rings of copper encircled the neck, copper wire twisted into spirals served as belts and copper pins with big heads filled the enormous holes which these natives made in their earlobes. Sometimes also these new types of pendants were replaced by simple rolls of cotton, which were held in the greatest esteem by their owners. Some measured from two to three centimeters in diameter and the earlobe barely encircled this singular ornament with a minuscule strip of flesh. The men continued to display very great simplicity in dress. The women, on the contrary, were elaborately dressed and, unlike the Laotian women, they never displayed their naked breasts to curious onlookers, which often conveyed sadness rather than charm. They wore a skirt of blue cotton with white embroidery and a small blue jacket, worn tightly against the skin. Their behavior was more timid, more modest; most of them would be gracious if not pretty, if the hard

work they shared with their husbands did not harden their features and bend their backs from a very young age. Most of them carried their children on their backs in a sort of cloth belt to keep their hands free and in order not to interrupt their occupations except when they had to breast-feed them. It was not unusual to see Laotians married to native women and in these cases the women hold ranks equal to their Laotian companions.

The natives of Xieng Tong belonged to the great tribe of the Lamet which inhabited, in particular, the valley of the Nam Ta, on the left bank of the Mekong, the greater part of which accepted the authority of Luang Prabang.

The small amount of deforestation that was practiced in the surroundings of Xieng Khong was made worse by the intermittent rains and hot weather which characterized the rainy season: the sun which was then at its zenith fiercely burned the soil. Two of us, Mr. Thorel and I, were affected by fever attacks, accompanied by vomiting and delirium and we were hardly recovered when we had to leave again.

However, it was with great satisfaction that we went back on the road. The journey was beginning to take on an unexpected character and an apparent danger, which it had lacked so far. The smooth passage that we had secured with the Siamese passports was coming to an end. We were going to be left to our own devices, to the resources of our own diplomacy. Moreover, the part of the river that we were traversing was once more entirely lacking in European vestiges. Mr. Duyshart's sketch had indicated to us the general direction and the principal obstacles in the course of the river from Luang Prabang to Xieng Khong. From this latter point, nothing detracted from the pleasure of discovery and the emotion of surprise.

We had some difficulty in procuring sufficient supplies for the period of time that we were going to spend without the means of stocking up supplies other than by hunting. They warned us, in effect, that the banks of the Mekong would become entirely deserted again up to the point where we would stop to await the means of transportation requested from the king of Xieng Tong. Nevertheless, at the last moment, thanks to the intervention of the government, supplies arrived in abundance but at quite a high price. Thus we paid sixteen francs for a hundred kilograms of rice; the same price for a pig which barely weighed sixty kilograms and chickens, about thirty in number, at seven and a half centimes apiece.

On 14 June, at 1 p.m., we left Xieng Khong in six boats: it was the last time that we would use this means of transportation in the exploration of the Mekong river. Luckily for our inexperienced oarsmen, the navigation of the river was easy at first. Here and there some isolated rocks still appeared in its bed. They soon disappeared. The current weakened: one felt that the general tilt of the land had become very gentle. Beautiful forests rose on the banks, which became ever flatter.

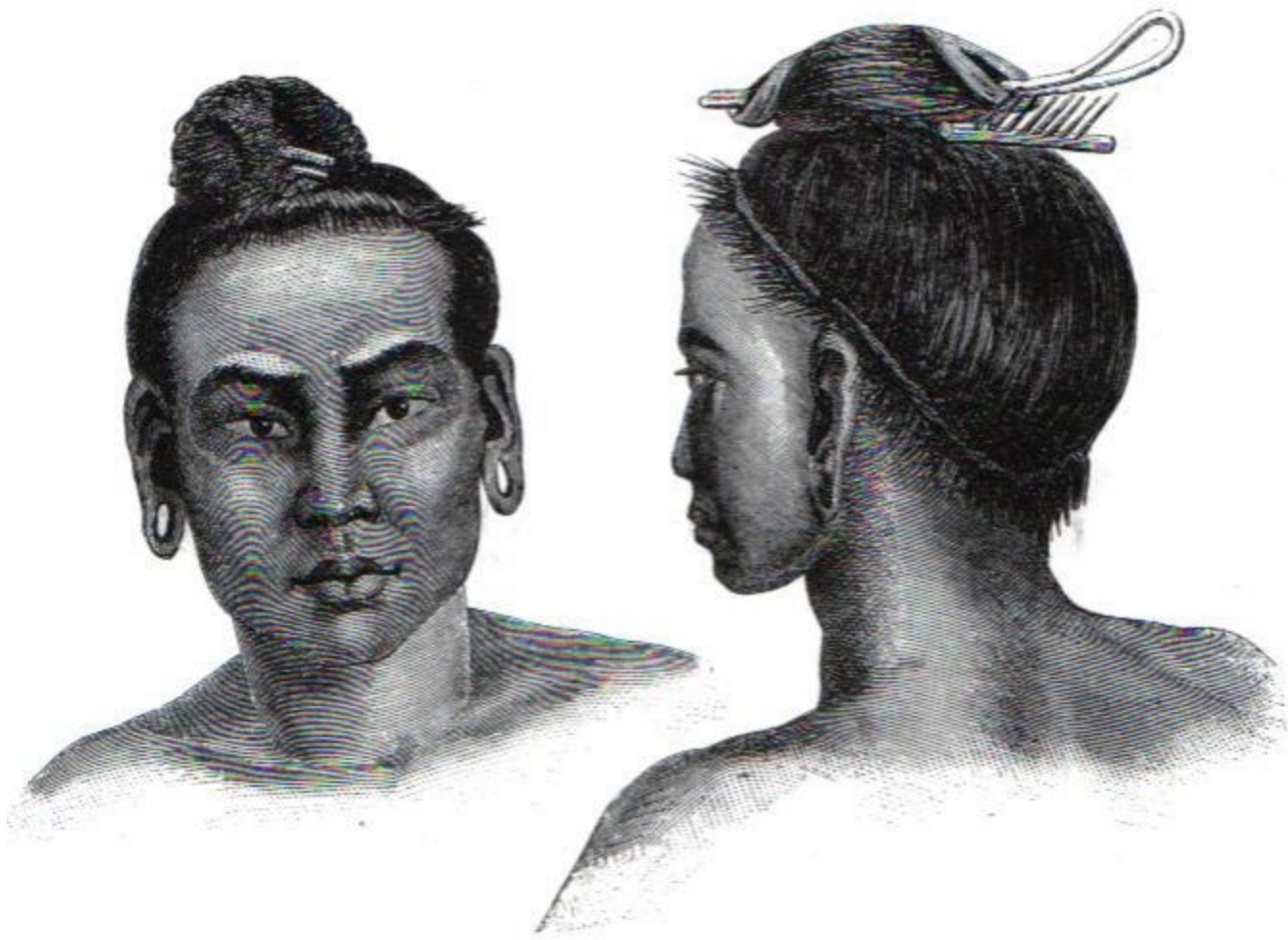


Plate 5 *Natives from the vicinity of Xieng Khong (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch done by L. Delaporte).*

The river, which in Xieng Khong seemed to come from the north-west, suddenly turned to the west here and in this direction there was a limitless plain ahead, the horizon of which barely showed glimpses of light and distant undulations. It was the first time since Vienchan that we had enjoyed such an extensive view and that the river had run peacefully and full to its edges in a wide and shallow bed. Nowhere yet had there been such a beautiful appearance of navigability. Unfortunately this would be a very brief truce with the river's wildness.

From this point on the river describes a long and lazy detour to the south. You could say it is happy to linger in this plain and to rest its waters here from the tiring course through mountains and rocks.[3]

At the end of this detour it received the waters of the Nam Kok. This river, which was very wide, was fed by a chain which separated the valley of the Salween from that of the Mekong river, a chain which the Burmese call Tanen-Toung-Gyi. On the banks of this river stood the city of Xieng Hai, also called Xieng Rai in some accounts, and the ruins of which MacLeod visited in 1837. This provincial capital, formerly very important and the capital of one of those many kingdoms which then divided Indo-China and had prepared their subordination to Siam and Burma by relentless internecine wars, had recently been reconstructed close to the ruins of the old city. It was at this time the residence of the Siamese governor. According to one tradition, Xieng Hai was formerly called Tsen-Katsa-Lakon. From his birth, the king who changed this name to Xieng Hai gave unequivocal signs of his future power: he broke all the cradles in which he was placed and they had to give him one made of iron. They claimed that this metal cradle still existed amid the ruins of the old palace. This prince extended his domination over a great distance and gave his son in appanage the city of Xieng Mai, which was called Muong Lamien before this time, and to his wife he gave the city of Xieng Tong or Kema-Tunka.[4] The valleys watered by the Nam Kok and its numerous affluents, being separated only by light undulations, formed an admirable zone of fertility and richness that was well disposed to become the center of a powerful kingdom. At a very short distance to the north of the mouth of this river, we would come upon other ruins and other historical traditions which testified to the fact that the same place had often tempted the waves of immigrants who arrived from Central Asia through the mountain passes of the north of Indo-China and tried to spread into the lower valleys of the great rivers of the peninsula.

Today, this beautiful region, which separated the principality of Xieng Tong from that of Xieng Mai, was almost entirely uninhabited: coveted by Siamese and Burmese and the battlefield of these two peoples, neither of them had so far been powerful enough to assure its exclusive possession and it had remained a sort of neutral terrain until today, abandoned to the forest and its natural denizens, less turbulent and wiser proprietors than man. For some years, the Siamese, or at least the Laotians who accepted their authority, had timidly reoccupied the right bank of the Nam Kok. Perhaps this did not last very long.

Xieng Sen, the ruins of which extended on the banks of the Mekong itself to three or four miles from its confluence with the Nam Kok, was one of the first

cities whose name appeared in the Laotian and Siamese chronicles. One of the most famous Laotian kings, Thama-Trai-Pidok, reigned in Xieng Sen shortly after the time when Phra Ruang, the so-called founder of the Siamese era, constructed the city of Sang-Khalok on the eastern branch of the Menam and threw off the yoke of Cambodia. The son of Phra Ruang, Phaya Soucharat, had cannons cast and fortified his capital. This was wise because the king of Xieng Sen attacked him and, despite the help which the king of Xieng Mai, Phromavadi, lent to his cousin Phaya Soucharat, the latter was obliged to submit to his enemy and to give away his daughter in marriage. Thama-Trai-Pidok extended his domination over the whole kingdom of Phra Ruang, founded the city of Phitsanoulok, to the south of Sang-Khalok and, advancing even further, established one of his sons as king of Lopburi, a small distance away from where Ayuthia would later arise. One of his other sons became king in Xieng Hai and succeeded him on the throne of Xieng Sen. From this time on a series of wars started between the Siamese and the Laotians; these lasted seven generations.

It was difficult to attach a date, even an approximate one, to all these events which one can only see as episodes in the long and sustained struggle by the Thai Noi or "small Thais", the junior branch of the Laotian race, to arrive at independence. Phra Ruang was born, according to some, in the year 950 of the Buddhist era, but, according to others, in 1500. The latter attribute to him the foundation of the era which was still in use in Laos, in Burma and in Siam, and which began in 638 A.D.; in this struggle sustained by his son against the king of Xieng Sen, others had the famous Buddhist apostle Buddhaghosa, who according to Singhalese chronicles lived in the first half of the fifth century, intervene. All that one could confirm, amid so many contradictions, was that the princes whose names we have cited had existed and that we were not dealing here with purely legendary personalities as was the case in other tales.

We stopped an hour or two close to the ruins of Xieng Sen. The destruction of this city went back more than half a century. A period of wars followed the rebellion of Xieng Mai against Burma. This latter principality rose up in 1774 against the successor of Alomprah and invoked the protection of Bangkok, which had replaced Ayuthia as the capital of Siam. The reader probably remembers that Ayuthia, founded by Phaya Uthong in 1350, had been destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. It was as a result of this rebellion that the Laotian states of the upper valley of the Menam, Xieng Mai, Lakon, Laphon, Muong Nan and Muong Phe passed under the domination of Siam.

Nothing could be seen above the tall grass which had invaded the site of the old metropolis of northern Laos except the spire of a *that,* almost as big as the one that we had visited in Vienchan. Some partly overgrown paths led away from the bank and entered the brush. We came upon some piles of bricks, some overturned Buddha statues; farther away there was a well-leveled space preserved from the encroaching vegetation by brick or concrete tiling. Elsewhere there were some columns of hardwood, on which traces of gilding were still visible. The flowering tops of some fruit trees that had gone wild again rose above the high grasses and indicated the position of the gardens in the former city.

It was terribly hot during this visit to the scattered ruins. The grasses formed a sort of moving hedge which hid the view on both sides of the road and from which came the hot and unhealthy odor that emanates from the jungles in the middle of the day. A short distance away the tops of the teak forests, which covered the plain, limited the horizon in the west. Instinctively, we went that way to search for clearer terrain, more freshness and more shade, when suddenly the leaves of a great mango tree beside us shook violently. At that time, it was almost windless and this intermittent movement surely had another cause than a sudden gust of wind. We soon discovered what it was: a rhinoceros pushing itself strongly against the trunk of the tree and managing to set up an oscillating movement at the top of the tree, which made the ripe fruit rain down all around the enormous animal. Our arrival stopped it from eating the meal that it had so laboriously gained. As soon as it saw us, it fled across the jungle and created a large passage through the grasses. We listened a while to the sound of its quick, heavy footsteps gradually disappearing in the depths of the forest and none of us thought about pursuing the timid and inoffensive pachyderm.

We set off again at two p.m.. The river, which had turned northward again, soon re-entered the mountainous zone from which it had emerged a while ago. The next day, the navigation became as difficult as during the worst days of our navigation between Vienchan and Xieng Cang. The country was absolutely deserted. On 17 June in the evening we camped on the edges of a torrent close to which some people from Xieng Mai, returning from an expedition in the neighboring forests, had set up their camp. They were occupied with shaping the wax that they had collected into cakes. The honeycombs were melted above a fire, subjected to strong pressure and the liquid wax, freed from all impurities, ran into a mold in the shape of a segment of a sphere. We bought two of these

cakes to make candles and we paid for them at the rate of one *tical* or three francs per pound.

On 18 June, we arrived at the foot of rapids called Tang Ho, which offered an insurmountable obstacle to navigation on the river during this season. A *sala* had been constructed on the right bank which belonged to Xieng Tong and which consequently was Burmese territory. The left bank was still Siamese for a very large distance up stream. We had arrived at the extreme edge of the country in which our passports assured us free circulation. From this moment on, the fate of our journey depended on unknown circumstances. The reply to the letter which had been sent to the king of Xieng Tong would not reach us for a week or two. Mr. de Lagrée sent a letter to the governor of Muong Lim, a province of Xieng Tong, and from whose capital we were now a short distance away, to inform him of the request that he had sent to his sovereign and to request from him the means of transportation necessary to go up to Muong Lim, there to wait for the decision that would be taken about us.

In the meantime we installed ourselves in the *sala* beside the Burmese and Laotian travelers who were there already: a certain commercial activity was noticeable at this point and the pack-saddle bullock caravans which made their stopover there had left numerous traces in the vicinity. Two principal currents of exchange met there: one, which took place in boats, brought the necessary salt for local consumption from Luang Prabang; the other, which followed the overland route, brought balls of gambier [from *Uncaria gambir,* Tran. note] and areca nuts which were part of the composition of the chewing betel of the Laotians of the north. The trees which provided these two products became much rarer or even vanished completely in this region. It was known that gambier was an astringent substance extracted from the leaves of a tree of the Rubiaceae family. It had been used for a few years in Europe for dyeing and tanning and the export of this commodity from the single port of Singapore to the West reached more than twenty million kilograms per year. For a long time the Chinese have used this substance to dye silk and cotton cloths black and brown. Gambier was an object of prime necessity for the Malays who chewed it alone or in combination with betel leaves.

From the chief of Muong Lim, we could fear a bland refusal to permit us entry to his territory. Thus, it was safer to keep the boats and the oarsmen which had brought us from Xieng Khong until his answer reached us. In the meantime, I

resolved to ascend the right bank of the river as far as possible on foot. We would leave the banks of the Mekong to walk overland. We ignored the question of where and when it would be possible to return to the noble river. For my part, I attached a special importance to continuing to follow its winding and bizarre course. Since we had entered the region that had been left untouched by European investigations, each of the meanders of the Mekong that I was able to add to my map was an important geographical discovery. A constant preoccupation, from which nothing could distract me, ended by imposing itself like an obsession. Thus, I had an obsession for the Mekong, as Dr. Thorel had one for new species of plants and Dr. Joubert one for graywracke or for anthracitous stones. I was not aware of how little distance I would cover in a single day on uncleared terrain amid the rocks or bushes clustered on the banks of the river, and how little space they would occupy on my definitive map. I did not apply any mapping scale to this grand area of nature, the unknown sites of which unfolded before me. Each step became more of a conquest over my enemy: the unknown.[5] Thus on 19 June, very early in the morning, I left with my compass in my hand and a small packet of supplies on my back. The sky was almost overcast and promised to save me from the burning reflections of the sun on the rocky beaches of the Mekong. I traversed the barrier of rocks, amid which the waters of the Tang Ho rapids roared. A single winding passage, some thirty meters wide, opened in this belt of stones. No raft could descend the current without crashing; no boat was able to ascend it without filling with water, even if pulled by ropes. But at high water, when the river completely filled the moat, which was about six hundred meters wide and extended between the two mountainous chains of hills forming the banks, this obstacle could be traversed and traffic by pirogue became again possible.

Continuing my journey, I noticed that the river tended more and more to the north-east and finally it seemed to direct itself towards the borders of China,[6] that promised land, at the gates of which we had to wander for four long months before we were able to enter it.

The river, which was reduced to a channel fifty to eighty meters wide, left great sand banks uncovered, interspersed with basins containing stagnant hot water and bizarrely shaped rocks which were difficult to climb. Everywhere, the forest clearly marked the [limit of the area prone to flooding] and framed this blue expanse with a green ribbon of shimmering reflections, speckled all over with

black and white spots. At the start of my excursion, I was able to walk on sandy beaches along the verge of the great trees without being obliged either to enter the undergrowth, where walking would have been too difficult, or to walk in the water, which would sometimes have been too deep. The landscape displayed a wildness full of grandeur. There were no traces of human habitation anywhere: the fleeting traces of fishers or nomadic hunters which till now we were accustomed to meeting, even in the most deserted places, were entirely lacking here. This caused a strange impression of wondering and novelty. My shadow, which the rising sun sometimes lengthened on the sand banks or depicted against the rock walls, appeared to me to violate the virginity of this nature which was able to escape the profanations of man. The noise of my steps appeared as dissonant in the great harmony of the forest and the river. Sometimes I tried to speak out loud to affirm my right to enjoy one or the other and to expel the fascination which this calm, grand solitude exerted over me and the silence that answered me made me ashamed for uttering such a vain noise. The disc of the sun had already appeared above the line of trees which crowned the tops of the hills. Slowly nature woke up under the canopy of the forest. Birds celebrated with joyous chants the shafts of light suddenly penetrating their shadowy hideouts. The deer bellowed and elephants made their trumpeting cry heard. Like the start of nature at dawn, a light puff of wind rippled the surface of the water and shook the tops of the big trees. I tried to sort out all the notes of this vague and melodious concert with an attentive ear and I watched the sky, the waters and the forest with a delighted eye. They were still enveloped by a transparent haze which the rays of the sun coloured pink before dissipating it altogether. Suddenly, going round a rock which barred the path, I saw a young deer drinking, ten steps away from me. I stopped and instinctively I searched on my shoulders for my rifle which was luckily absent. What would I have done with this kind of game and how would I have carried it to the camp? Thus I stood still, watching the gracious animal savor the limpid water with long gulps, sometimes stopping to contemplate its rippling reflection which the barely troubled waters sent back. After a while it raised its head, took a few steps on the bank, saw me and—I beg the reader to believe me—it came to me. It pricked up its ears and its fixed eyes testified to an unutterable astonishment, which showed no signs of diffidence or fear. In my turn, I had a strange feeling and I held my breath to prolong as long as possible this intimate meeting with a creature of the forest. It came to me like a creature out of Eden or the enchanted gardens of Armide, in which, however, I have never

taken a stroll. The singular trust of this animal which confirmed to me that man was absolutely unknown in these areas, charmed me and intimidated me at the same time. The deer stopped a pace away from me and the instinct of the hunter suddenly rising up, the idea came to me to grab it by its horns. As fast as my movement was, the agile beast shied away and disappeared in the blink of an eye into the forest, leaving me with the regret of having shortened by my impatience this fairy-tale meeting which lacked only a conversation to make it like a fable out of La Fontaine.[7]

A little further on, I had to engage in the toughest gymnastics to pass a sort of promontory which jutted out into the bed of the river. It formed an absolutely vertical wall which the water bathed with a current too strong for me to think about swimming round it. Dense vegetation covered the top of the rock and after having climbed the slippery slopes, I still had to force a difficult passage through the lianas and the thorny brambles. Fortunately, on the other side, a beautiful sandy beach was located between the forest and the river and promised an easy walk for a while. I stopped a while to rest from the efforts that I had just made. The calm, shallow water which lapped the bank with a gentle wave invited to the pleasures of a bathe and I let myself be seduced by its promises. I had barely swum a few strokes in the open water when two elephants came out of the forest and in their turn headed for the river. When they saw me, one of them stopped and turned round and went back. Despite the good opinion that I have of the character of these animals, I would have liked the other to follow his companion. But he did not do so, and after a moment of hesitation, the latter entered the water, stretching out his trunk to me and sniffing noisily. I did not know what to do: going back to the bank where the forest and the rocks barred my way on two sides out of three was perhaps more dangerous still than staying in the water. Thus I remained, making myself as small as possible and carefully watching the movements of the proboscidean, ready to brace myself against the current, risking being carried down, quite far from my clothes and my notes, if the animal looked like getting too close. He was colored a magnificent brown. His great height and the size of his tusks proved that he had long since reached the end of his growth. He waded into the water up to his belly and began to spray his back with his trunk. We were some twenty meters away from each other and he constantly held his little gray eyes fixed on me, stretching his trunk in my direction from time to time. But soon he appeared to be having so much fun pouring water over his body

that he seemed not to make much of my presence. Little-by-little, I approached the bank where my things were drying in the sun. I threw them over my shoulders and quickly continued my walk, sometimes throwing a furtive glance back to my bathing companion. The latter did not even bother to turn to see which direction I took and for a long time I could see the jets of water that he launched into the air falling like rain sparkling in the rays of the sun.

By noon, the bank of the river had definitely become a high vertical wall, covered as always with tangled vegetation. I had been marching for six hours. I was overcome with fatigue, the sand and the rocks had warmed up in the rays of the sun, despite the numerous clouds that softened its power. My naked feet were swollen and bleeding. My love of geography yielded to hunger. I took a last observation of the river, selected a shady place on the river bank and opened the packet of provisions the cook had given me when I left: rice, instead of bread, and a roast chicken were the contents. The water of the river was not far. I had a meal that gave me—with my appetite sharpened by a long march—more pleasure than the most mouth-watering feast in the civilized world. At one o'clock, I retraced my steps. It was siesta time. The wind had fallen and the heat had become suffocating. The banks of the river, busy since morning with the animals that came to quench their thirst when they woke up, were deserted again. The forest was silent. The wild inhabitants retired into the deepest of these fresh retreats. I was alone to brave the heat of the day and I mechanically followed the traces of my feet imprinted in the sand and mixed with the imprints of deer of all kinds, wild boar and elephant. I would have liked to wipe away this double furrow left by my passage, which appeared to stain this beautiful place. This solitary landscape of the Mekong, one of the last that I was to see, has remained deeply engraved in my memory.

It was night when I returned to the camp. The story that I told about my day to the hunters in the Commission made their mouths water. I agreed to conduct them to this El Dorado where deer could be taken with bare hands, the next day. It was not without remorse that I betrayed the hospitality that I had received and the peaceful, almost friendly, reception that the denizens had given me. But luckily, our number—we were a party of three or four—and our conversations—we spoke loudly—gave them warning. Moreover, we left too late to surprise them at their early morning watering-holes. This new excursion was not a hunting foray but a stroll that was interrupted by a torrential rain shower.

In the evening of the same day, twelve pack-saddle bullocks arrived at the *sala*. They had been put at our disposal by the governor of Muong Lim. The roads, which had been badly affected by the rains, and the very steep hills that we had to climb when leaving camp permitted us to load them only lightly. Despite all the reductions in luggage, our instruments and our barter goods still formed loads for some twenty bullocks. That was the number that we had requested. The eight beasts of burden still to come, would not arrive until the evening of the next day, they said. Mr. de Lagrée resolved to leave early next morning with all the other members of the Commission. We finally released the boats from Xieng Khong, which had been awaiting the outcome of the negotiations with Muong Lim for three days. I had to stay in the *sala* with two Annamites to guard the rest of our luggage until the arrival of the eight pack-saddle bullocks that were promised.

I waited forty-eight hours, during which the rains continued with such force that the waters of the river climbed more than three meters and flooded the columns which supported the *sala* itself. I learned that most of the bullocks were so exhausted during this short section of the expedition's journey that their loads had been redistributed among the porters. They needed five hours to cover the distance of fourteen kilometers between the *sala* and Muong Lim. It was an indication of the difficulties that we were going to face in the rest of our journey overland during the rainy season. They sent me twenty men instead of the eight bullocks that I expected. I divided the remainder of the luggage among them and on 23 June 1867 I joined the expedition again.

When we had traversed the two or three small chains of hills bordering the river, among which ran small brooks whose beds we used as roads during most of this section, we found ourselves in a great plain watered by the Nam Lim, and in which the *Muong* with this name was sited. The Nam Lim was rather a big river which we crossed in boats; it seemed to come from a lake situated close to the dividing line between the waters of the Mekong and the Salween.

The Commission's camp was situated at one end of the village. It was a long house without stilts, inside which stood some field-beds. The construction of huts on stilts, which raise the floor above ground, was less general here. There was a great throng of people already around our house and I had some difficulty getting in.

Chapter 2

A stay in Muong Lim—The low resources of the expedition—The market of Muong Lim

Muong Lim was a big village, encircled by well-established rice-fields, where every five days a big market took place. The high value of the goods indicated important trade relations. There were many English textiles on display. We could not help admiring the ability and practical sense of our rivals in the export field. They had created special products for Indochina with the colors preferred by the locals and the patterns that were most appropriate to their liking. Pictures of pagodas and other Buddhist items were displayed in the background of all these textiles, which had exactly the same length and width as those of local manufacture, i.e., before the introduction of European products. When will we have as much foresight, as much attention to future interests in France to try to export our products also, instead of considering only ways of dumping the rejects of our factories?

Chinese customs in relation to money were in use. Money was only a commodity that was weighed and then exchanged against other commodities. We had to have our *ticals* melted down and cast into the shape of the ingots used in the country. These ingots were retailed by subdividing them into pieces of variable sizes using a hammer and chisel. We had to obtain one of those small pairs of Roman scales with three levers and three different gradations which serve for the making of payments and which the inhabitants of the country, following the example of the Chinese, always carried on them. We have to add that there were not two of these instruments that looked perfectly alike and that a merchant always carried two of them, one for selling, and the other for buying. The double usage of the Burmese and the Chinese weights increased the confusion and favored misunderstandings which crafty people knew how to profit from. An

honest man was always duped in these dubious transactions and we were often in that case.

The population of Muong Lim was less timid than in Siamese Laos of the south, and thronged around us, as much out of curiosity as from self-interest. We were made the most onerous offers of service. The low prices to which we were accustomed made us consider the prices quoted by the locals even more exorbitant. The absence of all government protection had left us at the mercy of all this greediness. To our dismay, we perceived that we were going to be fleeced severely and that the poor cash box of the expedition would not support such harsh attacks for very long. To all the privations that we already had to overcome others would be added, [forcing us] to make savings on our food itself, at a time when the fatigue we had to endure and the sorry state of our health required a more substantial diet.

Two officers were seriously ill: Mr. Thorel was affected by an illness of the digestive tract; Mr. Delaporte had ulcers on his feet which the bites of leeches and a journey undertaken through soaking terrain had aggravated to the point where he was no longer able to walk. We had to think about carrying him on our next march. That was a serious problem on an overland journey, by roads that had become impassable for the bullocks.

To all these worries was added the uncertainty regarding our progress [towards knowing] the intentions of the king of Xieng Tong. The delay in his response foreshadowed difficulties and was to cause hold-ups which would always involve extra expenses. "We are not even rich enough any more," I was told by Commander de Lagrée, "to buy off one of these little chieftains, whose good or bad will can make or break our journey. By being as economical as possible, we may hold out five or six months more. However, then we will be staring ruin in the face. Oh, if they had only allotted us twenty thousand francs more!" [1]

Nevertheless, we hid our poverty under a proud bearing, always hoping for some happy circumstance which would open a credit line with some friendly despot for us, and we cursed the penny-pinching of the governor of Cochinchina who had so poorly matched our resources with the importance of the journey and placed six dedicated people in a position where, for the want of a few thousand francs, they had to use their energy, their devotion and their intelligence to achieve nothing. We did not doubt—as happened later—that the day we had to borrow in

the name of the French government, the latter would hasten to honor our signature. But, luckily, we were not yet reduced to begging or borrowing from the local authorities and it would be compromising our dignity and the success of our negotiations with them to allow them a glimpse of our shortages.

Commander de Lagrée had paid a visit to the governor of Muong Lim, an old man of seventy, who was waiting for instructions from Xieng Tong as to what kind of relations he had to establish with us. As reserved as his reception was, he clearly saw Mr. de Lagrée as the envoy of a powerful sovereign: a guard was placed around us and our lodgings were made as comfortable as possible. Some Muong musicians even came to serenade us and test our generosity. Mr. Delaporte has already given some notes on Laotian music elsewhere. I will not return to this point: I will content myself with saying that the principal singer had a pleasant voice and that the lively and very rhythmic tune which he warbled did seem to be rather rousing. His companions repeated a very short refrain after each of the verses of the soloist [, providing a chorus, sung] with remarkable unison.

The natives of Mou-tseu—A favorable reply from Xieng Tong—Departure from Muong Lim—Reduction of our luggage in Paléo—Siemlâp—A tiger becomes our supplier—The deplorable state of health of the expedition—Religious celebrations—New difficulties—Sop-Yong—Ban Passang—Departure for Muong Yong

The new [racial] types who appeared at this periodical market furnished other objects for study and observation. I have already outlined the new characteristics [we had observed in] the Laotian race . . . since we reached Luang Prabang. I have provided an idea of the native races who, under the names of Khmou and Lemet, populate the river valley from Paklay to Xieng Tong. In Muong Lim we met with other natives who had a very distinctive appearance and a most picturesque dress. These were the Mou-tseu. They have already been described by MacLeod. Colonel Yule suggested that their name might be the same as that of the Miao-

tseu who inhabited certain districts of the Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Se-tchouen and Kouy-tcheou today and who had not been assimilated or even completely subjected by the Chinese. We had not seen enough Miao-tseu to assess whether this likeness could be well-founded. However, it would be all the more interesting to see if the Miao-tseu were the only population of Caucasian origin that had survived without mixing amid the incessantly renewed floods of Mongol invasions. [2]

The Mou-tseu displayed an inventiveness and a complexity in their dress that we had not met before in Indo-China. The numerous tinsel-hung textiles which covered their bodies gave them some resemblance to the Bohemian tribes or the inhabitants of certain districts of Brittany. The hairdos [head-dresses] of the women were most original: they were composed of a series of bamboo rings, covered with twisted straw and erected on top of the head. The brim of this sort of hat was adorned with silver balls which dangled in front. Above this there were two rows of white glass pearls; on the left side hung a tuft of white and red cotton threads out of which came a cord formed by strings of multicolored pearls. Flowers and leaves further adorned these [head-dresses] which were subject to the a great variety of modifications. The women wore a closely fitting outfit, the sleeves and skirts of which were embroidered with white pearls with a bow on the bust and a very short skirt which did not reach to the knees. Their legs were covered in tight-fitting gaiters which started at the ankle and covered the whole calf. The gaiters were also adorned with a string of pearls down the middle of the leg. The dress was completed by ear-pendants of colored pearls or made of blown-silver balls, bracelets, belts, hangers and cross-belts which consisted of shells and of Chinese coins with square holes inserted in the belts, crossing over the bust. The men wore turbans, a pair of short, wide trousers and a jacket with silver buttons. The costume of both sexes was completed by a sort of coat made of leaves in the form of a half-opened book which was attached to the neck and which you pulled over your head as a portable shelter when it rained. When the women carried loads they used a wooden plank which was placed on their shoulders and had an indentation for the neck, and to which was attached the basket containing the objects to be carried. In front, this plank was held in place by ropes attached to the belt or which the women held in the hands.

Some of these natives had long hair plaited into pig-tails like the Chinese. Their language differed profoundly from Laotian. It had harsh, whistling sounds

which distinguished it very easily from the other languages of southern Indo-China. They had special chiefs, were very superstitious and not very communicative. They come, they say themselves, from beyond Muong Lim. Mr. Delaporte had all the trouble in the world in drawing a Mou-tseu woman and only after she had been given some small objects and money was she prepared to remain still for a few moments. The comical unrest, which we were able to read on her face, indicated that she believed herself to be in the presence of some caster of spells who might play a bad trick on her.

On 28 June, the governor of Muong Lim finally came to our camp to communicate the answer of Xieng Tong to Commander de Lagrée. It was favorable. King Khemarata of Toungkaboury authorized us to engage men and boats on his territory and to continue our journey in the valley of the river. He informed us that if we wanted to go to Xieng Tong, it would be necessary to request a new authorization. This letter was written in *Lu* characters and it began with an extremely long enumeration of titles. Nevertheless, it reminded us that the kingdom of Xieng Tong or Khemarata [3] paid tribute to Muong Kham-Angva (the Golden Muong: Ava).

The messenger gave us some interesting details of the debates that our request had sparked in the royal council. He had stayed four days in Xieng Tong during which time he had been sent back and forth between the first and second king and from the latter to the Burmese chief responsible for representing the court of Ava to the local sovereign. This official, whose existence Commander de Lagrée had ignored, had without doubt been vexed that among the gifts, sent by the chief of the French mission, there had been none for him and he had put up strong opposition to the authorization for the passage which we had been granted. The messenger had tried to exonerate Commander de Lagrée for this lack of gifts, alleging his ignorance of the presence of a Burmese officer in Xieng Tong. "Why do these people present themselves as powerful and learned when they ignore such things?" answered the agent of Ava. Nevertheless, the king had countered his resistance by asking him: "Why do you fear them? They number only sixteen and we number thirty or forty thousand. Do you believe they will defeat us?"

The chief of the expedition immediately requested the necessary means of transportation from Muong Lim to continue our itinerary. We followed the valley of the river, heading north-east. That was the shortest way to reach Xieng Hong or Alévy, the homeland of our interpreter and the city where in 1837 MacLeod

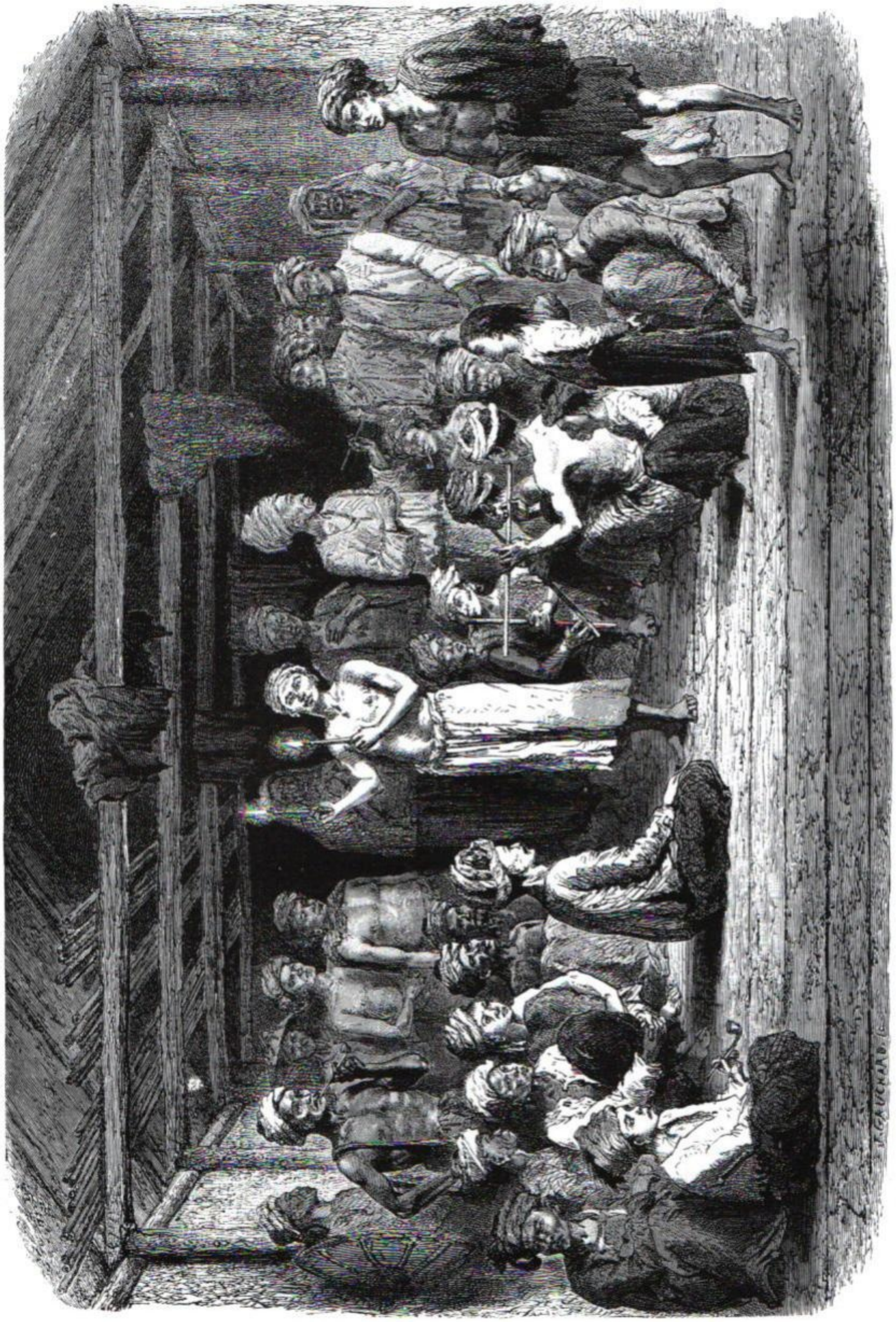


Plate 6 *A scene with singers in Muong Lim (drawing by A. de Neuville, based on a sketch by L. Delaporte).*

had ended his journey. It was situated on the right bank of the river, at 22 degrees of latitude north. On the way, besides the territory of Xieng Tong, we had to pass through the territory of Xieng Kheng or Muong You, another Laotian province that paid tribute to Ava and the governor of which, who was a younger brother of the king of Xieng Tong, received the title of king three or four years ago.

Despite the authorization which had been given by the king of Xieng Tong, the local authorities gave us very little help when we discussed the conditions of engagement of our luggage porters: we had to yield to all the demands of the locals.

At no price were we able to convince them to carry Mr. Delaporte, who was unable to walk or mount a horse, in a hammock. Carrying an ill person was to expose oneself to the same disease, said the inhabitants. "I shall complain to Ava about this lack of support," said Mr. de Lagrée. "Write to whom you want," replied the governor, "I can't do anything at all about this." And surely, those administered led their administrators more than the administrators led them. Our Tagals and Annamites had to carry Mr. Delaporte; some of these, who were naturally rather weak, were struck down with fever at present. Before leaving, we ended by having our escort do a firing exercise to reduce our ammunitions and, at the same time, to have the range and precision of our arms admired.

On 1 July we set off on the road to Paléo. At the beginning of our journey, we had to travel over a vast expanse of newly worked rice-fields encircled by narrow banks, partly destroyed by the rain, in which we often ended halfway up to our knees in mud. We forded the Nam Mouï, an affluent of the Nam Lim, with the water up to our belts. Beyond the ford there was a small village. I had stayed on the bank of the river to assist in the passage of Mr. Delaporte and to order his porters who, being all rather short of stature, had to fight against a strong current and prevent the hammock from being submerged in the water. The crossing completed without problems, we prepared to pass through the village to join the head of the convoy which was far ahead, when some locals rushed to meet us and told us to change our itinerary. I first thought that we had made an error and that they wanted to set us back on the right road, but I soon observed, from their worried faces and menacing gestures, that this demonstration was directed against the ill person, whose presence in the village had to be avoided as it was a bad omen. My indignation and that of the men of the escort, who surrounded me, was expressed in a very energetic way so that they dared not insist further. In particular,

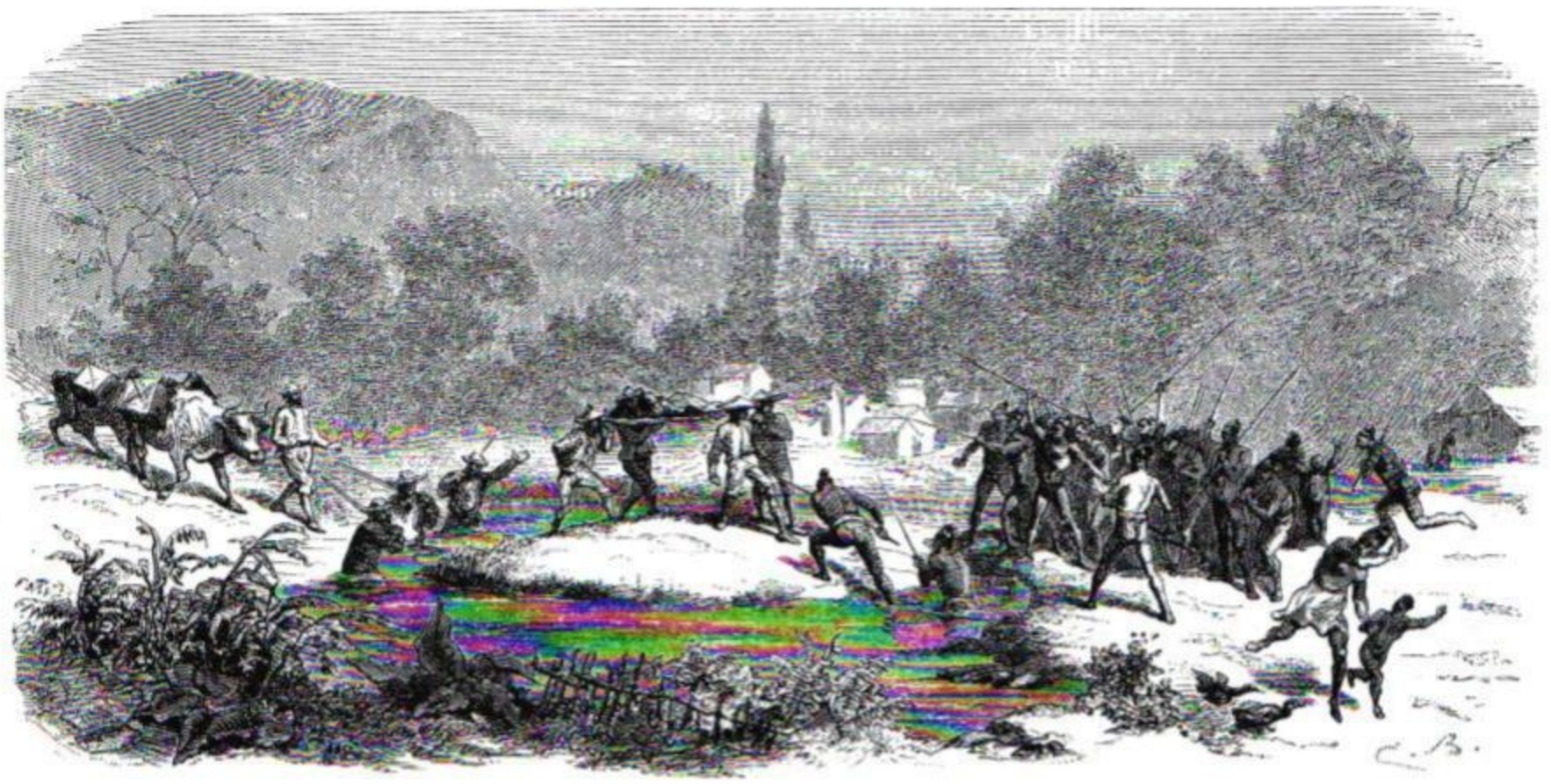


Plate 7 *The "welcome" of a sick person in a Laotian village (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch by L. Delaporte).*

our rifles and revolvers furnished our arguments with an irresistible eloquence. We passed through the village without further incident.

Beyond this, the forest and less difficult roads began. In the evening we stopped at Ban Nam Kun, halfway to Paléo, in the house of a monk which served as the temple. If the inhabitants of this region were intolerant and greedy, the priests, however, practiced hospitality towards foreign visitors in the most exemplary way. As far as we were concerned, they never had to regret this and we always made every effort to adapt ourselves to all the exigencies of the religion and never joined in its ceremonies. The formalities to which we were constrained, because we stayed in sacred places, put very little [inconvenience] in our way. The only precaution to which our hosts seemed to hold firmly consisted in never killing an animal in the grounds of the pagoda. Consequently, Pedro, our cook, went farther away to twist the necks of the chickens and ducks that adorned our table. Gifts, as much adapted to the visible needs of the temple or its priests as possible, rewarded them generously for their hospitality and almost always the gratitude shown to us proved that it was not we who remained indebted.

The next day, 2 July, after five hours of very difficult march amid the small forested hills, interrupted by brooks and swamps among which the path was often lost, we arrived at Paléo, where we installed ourselves in a new pagoda, pleasantly located close to the edge of the Nam Kay, a small affluent of the Cambodia river. The whole afternoon was devoted to weighing out the salaries of our porters. Each of them demanded that we use their weighing scales and put our patience to a tough test. The thirty kilometers that we had traversed from Muong Lim cost us about one hundred and fifty francs. With this tariff, we would not go far and we decided on a new reduction of the luggage. But, instead of giving away our effects, as in Luang Prabang, we sold them: a coat was traded for two chickens, a pair of trousers for a duck, a cotton vest for a cucumber. We resolved to carry our own arms, to abandon the small mattresses which had so far shielded us from contact with the bare ground and to manage henceforth with our covers as bedding and camping gear. Thus we reduced our luggage to thirty quite manageable packages, of which the medicines, the instruments, the ammunition and the money formed the most considerable part. We still had about ten thousand francs in silver, weighing fifty kilograms. Although we had divided it into two packages, the volume of these, too small relative to its weight, attracted so much attention as to require special surveillance by one of the men of the escort on the road.

Paléo was a small place on the right bank of the river. Naturally, I would meet this old acquaintance again: the Mekong river ran there in a plain in which it expanded at its ease, comparable to the most beautiful areas of Lower Laos. However, apart from some fishermen's boats, it continued to be absolutely deserted as a commercial route. The left bank still belonged to Muong Nan and, consequently, to Siam. It was four or five miles higher up that a small river, the Nam Si, formed the border between the Siamese and Burmese territories.

Alligators were abundant on the banks of the river and we were brought a certain number of the eggs of these reptiles. The locals were not above using these in their culinary endeavors. When this new dish appeared on our table, it resulted in an almost general distaste and dislike. I attempted to overcome the prejudice which always attaches to unknown food and I bravely ruptured the fat envelope of these eggs without shells. The contents, uniformly yellowish in color, spread on my plate. I tasted it, hiding my apprehensions under a firm countenance and hoping that I would be imitated. I quickly declared that it was a delicious foodstuff. Indeed, the flour-like and softish taste of this thick liquid contained nothing

disagreeable. Nevertheless, my example having persuaded nobody, I renounced this gastronomic experience.

In Paléo we found another type of native, the Kha Kho, whose appearance resembled the Chinese type infinitely more than the Annamite type. They had short hair, except for a tail which they rolled in a black turban adorned with silver rings. The dress of the women varied little from that of the Mou-tseu whom we met in Muong Lim. Only the married women had the right to wear a hairdo [head-dress]. It was especially made for the person who was its owner and from the day of marriage, the women and the [head-dress] were never separated: they were interred in the same tomb. The Kha Kho possessed a great number of silver objects which had been chiseled with great taste. They even had pipes made of this metal, depicting quite gracious subjects. They refused to serve as our porters, saying that they feared the heavy burdens, and the authorities of Paléo, probably won over to our side with gifts, did not insist with them. Instead, we engaged Lu people to the next stopover, Siemlâp.

Commander de Lagrée sent his interpreter, Alévy, accompanied by two Annamites, one of whom was the sergeant, a solid and determined man, ahead to this place to inform the local authorities of our coming and to request them to send a letter to the king of Xieng Kheng, to whom Siemlâp was subject and with whom we had to take similar steps as those that we had taken with the king of Xieng Tong, his brother. This time Mr. de Lagrée was careful not to forget the Burmese official who was stationed in Xieng Kheng to watch the local prince, in his distribution of gifts.

Alévy left on 5 July. We would have followed him the next day had it not been for the rains which swelled one of the torrents we had to traverse so much that we were unable even to attempt its passage with men laden with baggage. The seventh having passed without rain, the waters receded and we continued our journey on the morning of the eighth. At night we had to sleep in the forest on the banks of a torrent where we constructed a shelter of leaves to protect us against the showers which would not fail to trouble our sleep. One of them was so heavy that it soon broke down the frail layer of leaves that repelled it and we were inundated under our covers. That, however, was not the main reason for not being able to sleep: besides the legions of leeches and mosquitoes, inseparable companions of the traveler in the forest during this season, the place that served as our stopover was infested with innumerable winged fleas which crept into our

scalp and caused the most acute itching. Early the next morning we were only too happy to move out of this untoward refuge and to breathe an air less infested with insects on the road.

The region we traversed, which had been flat the preceding day, now became mountainous: the forest-covered slopes, that we climbed and descended in turn, sometimes wore a magnificent appearance which worry and fatigue prevented us from enjoying as it merited. Here and there, some flanks were covered with cotton plantations. On the highest plateaux, there sprang up wells, the limpid water of which ran under flowering grassland. We ended after five hours of marching in the plain of Siemlâp, where we again had a splash amid the rice-fields, some of which were newly planted. We found Alévy and our two Annamites installed in the pagoda of the village, busy organizing our kitchen. They had already been able to fill our storeroom by a brilliant feat. In the forest, during their journey from Paléo to Siemlâp, a big deer had been slain by a tiger under their very eyes. Without letting this double and sudden appearance confuse them, Alévy and the Annamite sergeant had immediately fired, less with the intention of hitting the ferocious beast which, if wounded, would have become dangerous, but rather to frighten it. The double detonation indeed sent it fleeing and the hunters had been able to finish off the still throbbing deer without intending to. Being unable to consider taking everything, they detached the hindquarters and, arriving in Siemlâp, they had salted it. Thus we found ourselves in charge of a venison supply which would take care of our needs for several days.

On the eighth, the evening of our arrival in Siemlâp, the village authorities had sent Commander de Lagrée's letter to Xieng Kheng. The commander requested permission to depart for this city without waiting for a reply, basing his request on the agreement of the king of Xieng Tong, which evidently implied the consent of his younger brother. After some hesitations, the chief of the village refused and we could do nothing but patiently await the result of this new step. The state of health of the expedition was deplorable: the last marches we had done in the forest and in the rice-fields, the soil of which was soaked by the first big rains and which exuded dangerous miasmas and contained myriads of leeches, had produced fever attacks and foot lacerations which kept half our people on their beds. The bad state of the roads, the seas of mud or the swamps we had to cross to get out of the immediate surroundings of the village, deprived us of the usual distractions of excursions or walks and reduced most of us to idleness. The

harshness of the inhabitants, who honored their intention to exploit our situation more each day and to make us pay an exorbitant price for the least movement, the ill will or indifference of the local authorities, the fear of seeing the Burmese chiefs of the area go back on an agreement which had only been obtained after long discussion, all these reasons to doubt our success, together with a long isolation and acute physical suffering, darkened our mood and depressed our morale. In the corner of the pagoda that had been transformed into a hospital, we had no other recourse but to return the curiosity that those who came and went displayed towards us, to familiarize ourselves with the daily ceremonies of the Buddhist religion and sometimes also to become merchants. The locals had quite quickly chosen the barter objects we still had in preference to our money and almost all the purchases were made in kind, which spared the purse of the expedition considerably. Squatting on the ground and spreading before us the images, the glassware, and the pieces of cloth, we earnestly discussed with the village housewives the number of bananas, oranges, chickens, fish or ducks that we wanted in return for our knickknacks. Our Annamites, who spoke the local language better than we did, had become quite skilled at this sort of bartering and sometimes they amused us with their subtle reasoning and the enumeration of the marvelous characteristics that they attributed to the European objects in their displays. Sometimes, we asked ourselves what our friends would say if they saw us in this role of hawker-charlatan and the memory of the civilized world, the existence of which seemed a dream to us, suddenly saddened the most amusing transactions.

The river flowed not far away from Siemlâp and I made it the objective of one of my first excursions: after having described a detour to the east, it turned again to the north, was enclosed between two chains of hills and offered navigation that was, if not easy, at least possible for some time. Unfortunately, I discovered only one big boat in the vicinity; it belonged to the village chief. There were others, it appeared, and a great celebration having to take place on the sixteenth at the temple, the chief came on the fourteenth to ask Commander de Lagrée to leave it [the temple] and to install ourselves in some inhabited houses on the edge of the water. He added that on the seventeenth, after the celebration, the boats would come to take us and that we would be able to resume our journey. But the price was outrageous and Commander de Lagrée judged it unacceptable. Thus we stayed.

On 16 July it was the first day of the waning moon[4] of the ninth month in the Laotian calendar. This date was the beginning of the *Pha Vasa* (the rainy season), which lasts three months and during which the monks cannot sleep outside or leave their pagoda. Starting the evening before, the priests carefully washed the statue of the Lord Buddha. The village women brought them water and collected the water that had already been used to clean the idol. A great deal of the night passed in unending prayers. Early in the morning of the sixteenth, the crowd thronged to the temple in festive dress. Everyone brought fruits and flowers, burned candles or wicks of cotton soaked in oil and prayed while pouring water into a small trough, made in the floor, from time to time. It appeared that this latter ceremony was addressed to a female angel by the name of Nang Patoram, who was charged with guarding the waters. In the afternoon, the abbot of the pagoda, seated in his chair, would read two chapters of the history of *Suvana Chompu* to the attentive and serene listeners. This sutra must stem from the Buddhist literature of the north. I have never heard it quoted in Singhalese books. There was a vague mention of the kingdoms of Metila, Takasila and Hoy Het Patta. Naturally, the listeners were ignorant of where these were situated. Takasila (Taxila) was for them the country of the *falangs;* Metila was the old Siam or part of Cochinchina. This ancient Hindu kingdom was located south of the Yamouna, an affluent of the right bank of the Ganges. The sutra also spoke about King Milinda, whose conversations with the preacher Nagasena remained famous in the Buddhist records and whose capital had been equated with the Sangala of the Greek historians. The inhabitants of this city offered strong resistance to Alexander and were all massacred or taken away into captivity by the conquering Macedonian. Concerning Hoy Het Patta, I did not know where this might be, but this was surely another distorted name of some Hindu kingdom.

Here, the inhabitants made a kind of movement with their hands, as if they wanted to brush away mosquitoes, when they started their salutations in front of the altar. The *Pha Vasa* season, which we were now beginning, was one of the most celebrated of the year: there was a celebration every eight days, at every quarter of the moon, i.e., twice as frequent as during the nine months of the *Leeng* or dry season.

Some natives of the Kha Kouy tribe who inhabit the vicinity came to the pagoda during the celebration. They said that they came from the vicinity of Muong Lim. Their language was similar to that of the Mou-tseu whom we had met in

Muong Lim. Their appearance was different: they looked like Burmese, their nose was arched; their head long; their profile razor-blade shaped; their chin suppressed; their mustache, their beauty-spot and their turban gave them a quasi Arabic look. Some of them had very handsome faces. They dressed almost like Laotians. The hairdos of the women contained bamboo rings and glassware hangers like those of the Mou-tseu but, in general, they were less elegant. They did not have any written language and they worshiped spirits. They buried their dead and each family had its own vault. It is said that they often committed robberies on the roads and MacLeod reported that the governor of Xieng Hong was formerly obliged to make an expedition against them to punish them for their banditry. They paid no other taxes to the Laotian chiefs than some gifts of mats and cotton cloth. They also provided them with rice and porters when they were traveling. They cultivated a lot of tobacco and cotton which they sold to the Chinese. Left aside whether they had anything else in common than their name with the Kouy who inhabited the mountains of Cambodia and of whom I had never met an exemplar.

The night before the celebration, Commander de Lagrée received a new letter from the king of Xieng Tong, which had been addressed to him in Muong Lim and was dated nine days back. This prince invited the chief of the French expedition to come for a rest in Xieng Tong; Muong Lim, he wrote, was a bad village in which foreigners of rank cannot receive a decent reception. The Burmese mandarin agreed with the Laotian sovereign to authorize this move.

What might be the purpose of this invitation? Without doubt the satisfaction of curiosity and self-esteem and the desire on the part of the Burmese to get some gifts which he had not received the first time round. This detour to the west would lengthen our journey beyond measure and it would cost our purse dearly. Commander de Lagrée resolved to evade it and to consider this offer only a mere courtesy invitation which could be declined without showing any lack of deference due to the writers of the letter. He answered in this sense.

On the eighteenth we received a favorable reply from the king of Muong You or Xieng Kheng: in his turn, he authorized us to traverse his small kingdom. Despite the state of health of the expedition, which continued to be deplorable, Commander de Lagrée immediately started the search for porters. This activity was better than prolonging our idleness, which had a bad effect on our morale. A significant improvement had manifested itself in the state of health of Mr. Joubert

who had given us serious worries for a few days and who had been afflicted by a fever that had both typhoid and bilious characteristics.[5] The wounds on Mr. Delaporte's foot were slowly healing. Nevertheless, we had to refrain from imposing an immediate march on these two officers and on two Annamites, who also had bad feet, and we decided to leave them behind in Siemlâp for a few days. However, the rest of the expedition managed to get back on the way without inconvenience.

The governor of Siemlâp who was given to opium more than to his duties and who was rather badly disposed towards us, had answered the first approaches of the commander by saying that the weather had become too poor and that the rains were too frequent to enable us to continue our journey. The bandit raids were deplorable; all the torrents were over their banks; as to the river, it had become too fast and moreover the Muong's only boat was used to transport merchants and travelers from one bank to the other and we could not take it away from this service. Finally, the replanting of the rice would take place soon and the fields needed all hands available. The governor concluded without blinking that it would be wiser to wait three to four months in Siemlâp for the return of the dry season!

This reply was hardly encouraging. Mr. de Lagrée did not press the governor and looked elsewhere for the help that was not forthcoming from that gentleman. He was very well aware that the inhabitants were in as great haste to regain full possession of their pagoda as we were in a hurry to leave and thus there was an element that almost assured the success of his negotiations. On the twenty-first a low-ranking village chief came to talk to him and asked what he had decided. The commander answered that he had met with a lot of ill will but that he would leave anyway, even if he had to leave all his luggage in Siemlâp. He asked him even to find the governor and to announce this decision. The Laotians were frightened of any responsibility and preferred to carry an object a hundred leagues to put it into other hands, rather than be its guardian for eight days. Thus Mr. de Lagrée's interlocutor of immediately asked how many porters we needed and what price we were willing to pay. Commander de Lagrée indicated the figure of fifty porters and a price of two *chaps* per man (about six francs of our currency) to carry our luggage to Sop-Yong (the mouth of the Yong), a village situated at the confluence of the Nam Yong and the big river, twenty-eight to thirty kilometers north of Siemlâp.

An hour later, the chief came back: he had not seen the governor but he had arranged everything with the other village chiefs. We could leave the next day. Commander de Lagrée had wisely refrained from telling him that Mr. Delaporte and Mr. Joubert would be staying some time: that would have spoilt the whole trick. The next day, there was a new hindrance: they came to tell us the usual story of a torrent [that had overflowed] its banks which we would be unable to pass. In the evening we sensed that this day had been one of bad omens and this was the only reason for the delay in our departure.

On the twenty-third, in the morning, we finally set off again. We thanked the old monk who was the chief of the pagoda and who had really shown himself to be benevolent and hospitable to us and we warmly requested care of the four ill people we left with him.

It was not without trouble that our packages were distributed among the porters. The relative weight of each was not the only consideration that made them hesitate or demand a reshuffle in the composition of each load. Revulsions or superstitions, the motives often difficult to guess, caused frequent quarrels or refusals. I saw that a very light packet which contained camping and kitchen gear was obstinately left aside. I finally got to know the reason: it contained a pair of shoes that our cook, Pedro, reserved for grand occasions. Now, it was impossible to carry, close to one's head, an object which was destined to be put on one's feet. Nevertheless, with concessions, everything was arranged and the long line of our porters soon set out on the flanks of a hill which separated us from the river. After having reached it, we climbed the right bank, which was covered by a dense forest. The rise of the waters had made it impracticable to use the usual path that followed the bank itself: we had to take a route cut out higher on the flanks of the hill enclosing the river. There was a possibility, it appeared, that the king of Muong You might make a journey to Siemlâp and hence, this route which was very little used and had almost disappeared under the grass, had recently been cleared by the Kha Kouy of the surrounding area. The path was thus clearly indicated by large cleared plots but the soil was littered with spiny leaves which ripped our feet apart, and it was strewn with the trunks of small trees which struck our bare toes painfully. At each torrent which crossed the road, the height of the waters obliged us to make a long detour upriver to find a fordable passage.

Despite these difficulties, the fatigue and suffering which resulted from it, this progress in the forest appeared to us preferable to our sad stay in the pagoda

of Siemlâp: the beauty of the landscape remained comparable to the grandest landscapes we had seen and through the curtain of leaves, which the breeze sometimes lifted with a gust, we saw the Mekong, in short stretches, filled to its margins and carrying in its foaming waters enormous trees ripped away from the banks.

After a two-hour march, we arrived at the edge of a partly dried out torrent, the rocky bed of which was not at all entangled with the usual vegetation. The stones between which a minuscule line of water oozed, were strangely shaped: they were whitish and covered with saline incrustations. We touched the water: it was warm. The sources of this singular brook, three or four in number, welled up a little farther on, at the foot of a wall of rocks. Escaping from among the stones, numerous vapors emanated and it was not possible to dip one's hand into them. It was only by taking the greatest precautions to avoid scalding my hand, that I managed to dip in a thermometer at the point which I judged to be the hottest: the instrument indicated a temperature of 86 degrees Celsius.

In the evening we descended again to camp on the banks of the river. Despite the rise of the waters, we still found, at the top of a sandy, softly sloping bank, a place sufficiently large to spread our covers and thus we avoided the damp soil of the forest. A few quickly cut branches made up a shelter for us. Unfortunately, the mosquitoes made short shrift of the sleep we were hoping to catch. Commander de Lagrée and I passed the night chatting and smoking cigarettes to keep these egregious insects away. Another worry helped to keep us awake. Sometimes the river rose suddenly and the waters came within a few meters of us. Commander de Lagrée decided not to sleep and seeking to keep a companion also sleepless had taken to saying, every time I was about to drop off: "Look there Garnier, it appears the water is rising." And suddenly woken up by the fear of an inundation, I perched over the border of the water to examine the stones that I had placed there as reference points.

Nevertheless, the night passed without incident. The day that followed was horribly difficult for me. I was gripped by a rheumatic pain in the left knee which caused me to cry out at each step. We had to do five hours of marching like this. At noon, we arrived at the mouth of the Nam Yong, a big and lovely river which we crossed in boats. At 1 p.m., we were installed in the decrepit pagoda of the village of Sop-Yong. It was maintained only by the worshippers themselves. The position of the monk had been vacant for a few years. We settled into his room.

The village, consisting of four houses, was picturesquely located on the right bank of the Mekong: the great river was here only one hundred to one hundred and fifty meters wide and the left bank was formed by calcareous rocks rising straight and stacking up in front of us like grim faces. Their base was hollowed out and whitened by the rapid waters. We were only four meters above the level of the river and the inhabitants told us that it would rise further, to this height, before the end of the annual rains. We paid just over three francs to our Siemlâp porters who returned delighted with their excellent pay.

In the pagoda there were two or three travelers belonging to the Laotian Muongs, situated west of the Salween. They came from Xieng Vi and Xieng Pho, the Burmese names of which towns were Thibo and Theinny. These two Muongs, they said, had no king at present and they were administered by the Burmese. The inhabitants of Laotian race, who were given the special name of Phong, were in revolt against them. The inhabitants of native races, Kha-wa or Lawa and Kha Kouy, were very numerous in the same region, in which they form several separate Muongs. A large number of Phong, it seemed, had fought on the side of the Phasi or Muslims when they revolted against China. I believe that the Phong were Laotian tribes which, on some maps, were called Palong and whose country of origin, which was situated south of Teng-yue tcheou, was called Kochanpri.

These Phong travelers sold gold leaf paper, opium, and some precious stones. They had suffered so much from the bites of leeches during their journey that their legs were very swollen and they were past trading any further. Doctor Thorel gave some medicine to these poor people who were very doubtful about our intention to continue our journey despite the rainy season. "You will not find roads or porters," they said. The general ramshackle look of Sop-Yong told us only too well that the village would not supply us with the porters we needed. We had to recruit them in the neighboring villages. On the twenty-seventh I left in a small boat to carry out this task; I was happy to be navigating on the Mekong again and to undertake a survey to a few miles up river from Sop-Yong. There were none of the big pirogues hollowed out from the trunk of a tree to be seen here. The inhabitants constructed their boats, which, moreover, were very small, from three components. One part, very wide, formed the base of the skiff. The other two parts formed the sides. Holes were made . . . to correspond to the two connecting lines and a piece of rattan was passed through them so that the base

of the boat appeared to be sewn to the two lateral pieces. Stuffing and resin were used to caulk the seams.

After a few hours of difficult navigation I arrived, with the chief of Sop-Yong who accompanied me, at a small group of houses situated on the left bank of the river. I was received in a really pleasant way, without curiosity or servility, by a Lu who had traveled far and wide in the adjacent countries. There were also a lot of fugitive Lu people here, as in Siemlâp, who belonged mostly to Muong Ham, the capital of the province situated on the left bank of the river, a little below Xieng Hong. This city was captured and destroyed in 1856 by Maha Say, the governor of Muong Phong who made war on Xieng Hong and who ended up being killed near the latter place which he had sacked and burned, just like Muong Ham. Phongs and people from Muong Lim fought with him against the Lu.

In the afternoon, my host and I spent the time making crude maps, from which I learned at least the Laotian names of the principal rivers of Burma and of Tong King. The Thai name of the Salween was the Nam Koung. The westernmost arm of the Tong King River was called the Nam Te; the other stream was the Nam Ta. My host had gone down the Nam Ta to the sea.[6] The reader may understand how interested I was in these tales. I saw all these unknown regions which had seemed so far away at the start of our journey, now approaching on all sides and unfolding before my eyes. My host's wife served us Chinese-style tea with fruit and cakes which I ate with pleasure during the conversation. I would have happily converted to local customs to escape from the slowness of the unending odyssey imposed on us by our numbers and our luggage. I would voluntarily have renounced both my companions and my instruments to traverse on foot, according to the inspiration of each day, the various parts of this northern part of Indo-China, which was so varied in appearance and which still hid the solution to so many ethnographic and historical problems. Only this life of adventure and constant interaction with the indigenous people is capable of familiarizing a European with the languages and the varied customs of this part of the Peninsula, by giving him the best private tutors: isolation and necessity. To be successful, one must be blessed with energy and unusual health and especially, one should not have any official assignment to accomplish.[7] Unfortunately, that was not our situation and we had to be content with progressing very slowly: the season, the state of the roads, and the scarceness of people in the area that we traversed forced us to make a stopover of some ten days after each stretch of twenty kilometers. That

was the time needed to gather the means of transport we needed to continue our difficult journey!

The evening came. We went back after having received the promise of a certain number of porters. We were still far below the number needed. I also bought some supplies, because the few hen houses of Sop-Yong were insufficient to supply enough for our consumption. We went back on the river. In less than half an hour, the current had brought us back to Sop-Yong and this sensation of rapid movement, an event to which we were not used, seemed infinitely pleasant. The light skiff jumped like an arrow amid the rocks which were strewn over the bed of the river, and I admired the safe-handling and precision of its owner. [8]

The rains continued and made any work or observation impossible. The level of the river rose each day and it was not without worry that we thought about our sick colleagues whom we had left behind in Siemlâp, and who would find the roads getting more terrible and the journey longer due to the detours which the passage of each torrent would require. They joined us on 30 July, after having taken almost double the time that we had needed ourselves. They dispersed the few illusions we had about the natural goodness of the abbot of Siemlâp pagoda. This greedy elder, whose covetousness had probably been awoken by the generosity of Commander de Lagrée, had shown himself to be very grasping in the end and seeing the last chances of unusual generosity leave together with the last guests, he had insistently demanded objects which were of least use to him. In disgust they had been left him. Did he later confess this lack of generosity towards unlucky travelers in his pagoda?

We totally refused to stay in Sop-Yong but, on the other hand, it was impossible to find enough porters in the vicinity to transport all our luggage in one trip to Ban Passang, which was our next stopover in the direction of Muong You. Commander de Lagrée, who was himself affected by a groin swelling, the result of leech bites, again split the expeditionary column in two. I took the command of one part and on 31 July I left together with Mr. de Carné and Mr. Thorel and half of our luggage. To make up the necessary number of porters, some village women had to join their husbands. Mr. de Lagrée stayed in Sop-Yong with Mr. Joubert and Mr. Delaporte.

At our departure from Sop-Yong, the road, which was easy and well-built, followed the flanks above the Nam Yong. At the time of our passage it was literally

paved with avid and agile leeches, which from every leaf, from every blade of grass leapt upon us. The Annamites of our escort had contrived to make small pads containing tobacco soaked in water [which they] attached to long sticks. It was sufficient to touch these atrocious parasites with this talisman to see them immediately detach themselves and fall to the ground. Since I had my notebook, my compass and my pencil in my hands, and so was unable to use my hands to prevent myself from being bitten, an Annamite took upon himself the task of following me and, without saying a word, he constantly tapped my legs during the whole journey. Never had any watch been more vigilantly undertaken and none of these cursed gastropods managed to pass my ankle without being knocked off and sent back snarling into the mud out of which it had come.

As soon as we had left behind the banks of the river, the valleys of the affluents that run into it widened, the hills became less steep and changed into a series of undulating grassy plains, dissected by swamps and brooks and very suited to various rich crops. Unfortunately, the country was little or not at all inhabited and even less cultivated and on the second day of our journey, after having left the banks of the Nam Yong to climb towards the north, we had to traverse flooded areas covered by tall grass, in which we waded entire kilometers with the water up to our belts and sometimes higher.

On 1 August 1867, we arrived in Ban Passang, an agglomeration of villages situated on a plateau of cultivated rice-fields and soaked by the rains and by plows. We had left the territory of Muong You and we were now in the territory of Muong Yong, a small province under the authority of Xieng Tong and the capital of which was a short distance to the west. A more direct road would had taken us from Sop-Yong to Muong You, without making us pass through the territory of Xieng Tong again, and I had pleaded this course with Commander de Lagrée.[9] But we would have had to make a four-day march, with some stages in the forest and the chief of the expedition had judged that this effort was beyond our ability. The detour from which he had stopped short would have been fatal to the speed of our march and it would have excessively increased our fatigue and problems.

On 5 August, the other part of the expedition, which had stayed in Sop-Yong, joined us. Mr. de Lagrée and Mr. Delaporte almost immediately left again to visit a very old and very famous *that*, situated to the south of Muong Yong, on the side of one of the mountains that border the plain of Ban Passang on this side.

Porters were requested from the village chief for the day after next, the day set for the departure of the rest of the expedition to Muong Yong.

A few hours after the expedition chief's departure, two Burmese soldiers arrived at the pagoda in which we were camping. They were charged with presenting an official communication to us. In the absence of the commander and of Alévy, our interpreter, I tried to receive them. They came on behalf of the Burmese mandarin who resided in Muong Yong, and who was the subordinate of the mandarin of Kieng Yong, to ask what our intentions were and to invite us to pass through this place. As I have said, it was included in our itinerary and I was able to confirm to these soldiers that we would grant the request of the Burmese mandarin. Nevertheless, I wanted to assure myself of the nature of his invitation and I feigned [a wish] to reserve the answer in case Mr. de Lagrée should change his mind and should [decide to] go directly from Ban Passang to Muong You. Energetic gestures of refusal answered this overture. The invitation was an order: we had to go to Muong Yong. Probably, the Burmese mandarin of Xieng Tong, disappointed at having let us escape a first time from his claws, had resolved to catch us at any price and he had sent instructions to this effect to his subordinate in Muong Yong. The invitation to pass through Xieng Tong, which Commander de Lagrée had received and declined in Siemlâp, appeared to me from this moment onwards to be an order which we could no longer ignore.

We set off again on 7 August, for Muong Yong. The plain which we traversed was admirably watered by several watercourses, all of which ended in the Nam Yong. A wooden bridge was built over the most important of these rivers, the Nam Ouang and this considerate act, to which travelers in Laos were so little used, provided us with a pleasant surprise: we considered it an indication of a more advanced civilization which would before long manifest itself in a more profound way. Part of this plain was cultivated with rice-fields, the other half was still swamps. We came upon several villages which presented an unusual appearance of well-being and ease. Pagodas with turned-up roofs charmed our eyes and witnessed to the influence of Chinese architecture and the proximity of the Celestial Empire. By noon, we had arrived in Muong Yong, after having traversed the valley of the Nam Ouang over its greatest width, which was about three leagues.

Chapter 3

Muong Yong—The first negotiations with the Burmese authorities—Departure of Mr. de Lagrée for Xieng Tong—Detention of the rest of the expedition in Muong Yong—The Chom Yong that—Local history—First information about Mr. de Lagrée—A distressing uncert-ainty—The success of the chief of the expedition in negotiation—We are authorized to depart from Muong Yong

Muong Yong was situated on the last slopes of the mountains which enclosed the valley of the Nam Ouang to the west. A wall of raised earth, defended by a moat in which flowed the waters of the Nam Khap, an affluent of the Nam Ouang, encircled this old capital of a kingdom that was formerly powerful, at least if you believe the tradition. We crossed the moat by a wooden bridge. A gate, surmounted by one of those small Chinese roofs the corners of which were formerly adorned with bells, opened into the fortification. A sort of esplanade covered with pretty trees, ran up a slight slope to a pagoda around which the first houses of the village were grouped. On the right side of the esplanade was a great *sala* perched on high posts.

We were barely installed in it than a lower-ranking mandarin presented himself to me and invited me to follow him to the communal house where public affairs were conducted. I tried to make him understand that I was only second in command and not the chief of the expedition [1] and that the latter had gone to pay a visit to the *that* situated a short distance away and that I expected him back any time now. Moreover, the interpreter was with him and it was not possible to understand him and to start serious negotiations without his support. These reasons did not satisfy the local officer: after a short while he came back accompanied by two

Burmese soldiers, armed with sabers and he again brusquely intimated his order to follow him. I replied with a refusal that was no less formal. His assistants then took a menacing stance and put their hands on their sabers. I turned my back on them and ordered the Annamite sergeant to show them the door of the *sala,* with all possible propriety. Unfortunately, the latter performed the task with less gentleness than I had requested from him. Also, once arrived at the steps, which they had to descend quite abruptly, the mandarin and his escort poured out threats against us and only retired after swearing several times to bring us to reason.

After his return, I informed Mr. de Lagrée who arrived a few hours later, about this deplorable start and of the visit I had received in Ban Passang. He approved my conduct. The next day, rather earlier, they came to inform us that the Burmese official would again go to a meeting of the mandarins and that he invited the commander to come too. Mr. de Lagrée, who did not want to lose face by too hasty a move, sent his interpreter Alévy to ascertain the nature of the meeting to which he was invited. The latter came back in shock after a short while, saying that we were dealing with a rather bad man: the Burman had refused to offer him any explanations and had threatened to refuse us passage and immediately to send us back where we had come from. Thus we went to the *sala* with some armed men: the welcome of the Burmese was more polite than his preliminaries had allowed us to foresee. He asked Commander de Lagrée for news of himself and of the emperor of the French. Then he inquired about the objective of his journey and about the passports which he had in hand. Mr. de Lagrée showed the second letter he had received from Xieng Tong.

"But," said the Burman, "Muong Yong does not entirely depend on Xieng Tong and it was necessary also to address a request for passage to me. Moreover, the letter from Xieng Tong invites you to pass through that town. Why are you not going there?"

"The road is too long and we have too many sick colleagues."

"Wait then for ten days or so, for me to obtain instructions from Xieng Tong."

"It is impossible for me to agree to such a delay," the commander replied. "We are all very tired and we need to get to the river."

After a long discussion and the insinuation that Mr. de Lagrée should send some presents to the Burman of Xieng Tong and to his subordinate in Muong

Yong, the waiting was reduced to no more than three to four days. We left, believing that everything was arranged.

The next day, when Mr. de Lagrée was getting ready to pay a visit to the local governor, who possessed the title of king, the only witness to the past grandeur of Muong Yong, the Burman let him know that he first had to see him. On the other hand, the local people energetically confirmed that it was the right of the king to receive our visit first. Commander de Lagrée requested them to agree with each other and the king, who was soon informed about the exaggerated demands of the Burman, required that his demand be sacrificed. Thus we went to this little indigenous principal, a good man who basically had no influence and no power. Commander de Lagrée asked for thirty-eight porters for the day after next. Leaving this first audience, Mr. de Lagrée and I went to the Burman who lodged with all his people (eight Burmese soldiers) in small, rather badly constructed huts, close to the market of the village. His welcome was cordial. His wife, a young, fresh-looking, pretty Burmese lady attended the meeting and seemed to enjoy quite a considerable influence over the mind of her husband. The conversation was very lively and the Burman showed signs of sincerity and friendship which deceived us for a while. He told us in a confidential tone: "You come from Laos and Siam who are in disagreement with us, you do not have a letter from Ava. These are the reasons for our suspicion. Nevertheless, now that I am assured of your French nationality, I will not place any more obstacles in your way. But if you were English, you would certainly not have continued your journey. You must also fear many other difficulties: be careful with the Chinese. They do not like you and I would be very surprised if they let you pass." The same day, 9 August, he came to pay a return visit to Commander de Lagrée and received a beautiful rifle. His wife and his mother also came to the *sala* and were overloaded with attention and small gifts. The king sent us a very big umbrella, which is used for stopovers in the open air—an entire family would have found shelter under it—in exchange for a gong and some other small objects which we had given him. Alas! this umbrella was for us only an inconvenience which needed one more porter [to carry it]. But it was hardly possible to refuse it.

On the tenth in the morning, the Burman called Alévy and told him that, after further reflection, he could not let us leave just like this. It was indispensable that he wrote to Muong You and that he should obtain a reply. There obviously was a trap in this: Muong You, asked in a certain fashion, without any doubt had

to retract the permission already given to pass through its territory so that we would be reduced to accepting the invitation of Xieng Tong. Commander de Lagrée, despite the longing he felt to tell the Burman in no uncertain terms what he thought of his good faith, armed himself with patience, went to see him once more, received the most beautiful protestations and ended by twisting out of him authorization to leave on the twelfth. He immediately informed the governor, whom he went to see again on the eleventh, and he complained a lot about the scheming of the Man (this is the name which the Laotians give to the Burman). "We are always in debt to them," he said, "and we always have to pay them. Oh! if the *falangs* (Europeans) were close to us, I would go and live in peace with them." On the twelfth in the morning, our porters were already gathered near the residence of the king, when the Burman called the members of the *Sena* together, displayed the greatest indignation and anger in front of them, denied that he had ever authorized our departure and accused them of trying to obtain gifts from us. The mandarins, who were rather embarrassed, gave us to understand that the porters had come in insufficient numbers and that our journey was again deferred. Obviously the Burman was only trying to win time. The next day, effectively, he called Mr. de Lagrée to show him a letter which he had just received from Muong You. It was signed by the Burmese official and the members of the *Sena* of that place and it read in essence: "Since there is a letter from Xieng Tong which requests the French to proceed there, we cannot receive them before they have been to this town." Evidently, the king of Muong You thought he would offend a stronger colleague and he wisely declined to give an authorization without knowing what had gone on between us and Xieng Tong.

We had to think hard: everyone was overcome with discouragement; fever reigned permanently in the camp and it was almost impossible, given the state of the roads and our monetary resources, to have the whole expedition undertake the journey to Xieng Tong. Mr. de Lagrée resolved to go there together with Doctor Thorel, Alévy and only two men of the escort. The success of our journey depended entirely on the outcome of this move. We began to fear that, in his turn, the king of Xieng Tong would feel obliged to refer the matter to Ava and that he would force us to wait for an answer from the king of Burma. That would have been as much as putting us off forever. Commander de Lagrée promised to keep me abreast of his journey and of his negotiations. It was agreed that if I had

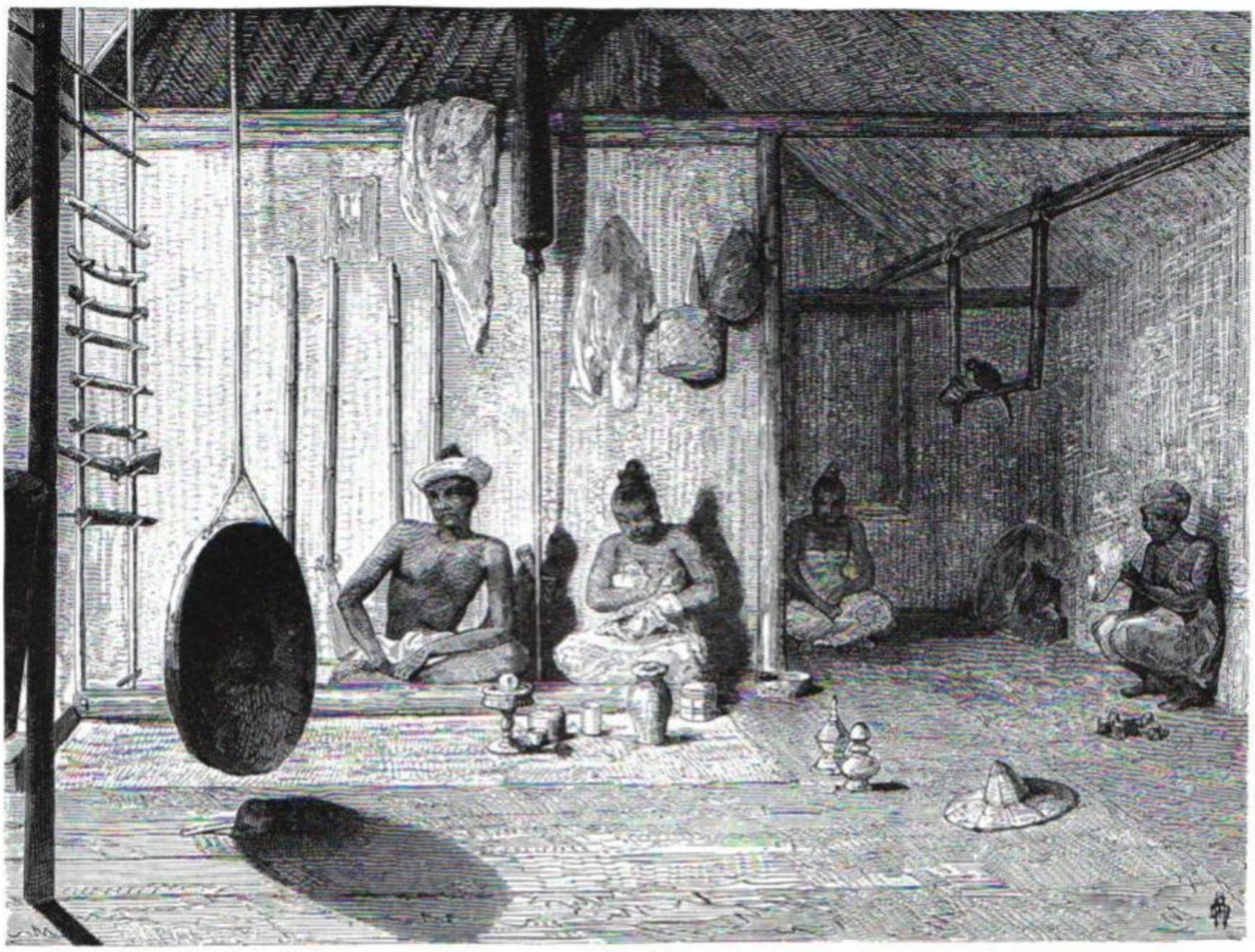


Plate 8 *The Burmese resident of Muong Yong and his wife (drawing by H. de Montaut, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

to join him in Xieng Tong, with the rest of the expedition, I would leave yet another part of our luggage behind.

Mr. de Lagrée left on 14 August, at 1 p.m. A few hours before his departure, the Burman had offered him, at an exorbitant price, a bad, one-eyed horse and he appeared to be shocked by the blunt refusal that met this interesting offer.

This cynical and obnoxious person gave us more offense every day. Nevertheless, we had to live in peace with him for the fifteen days or three weeks we were to stay in Muong Yong while waiting for Mr. de Lagrée's orders. With the weather still rainy and the fever which affected most of us, we were forced

to stay put. The illness hit us less when we ourselves were its victims, than when we had to watch its effects on our companions. Silently and broken-hearted we listened to the delirious words of those among us who paid their tribute to the pernicious miasmas of the jungles, and not daring to stop the delirium in action, we had to content ourselves with having the person followed by a man of the escort when he went wandering outside. I myself was affected very strongly by a fever and taken by delirium and I recall abusing our courageous and devoted cook, Pedro, who followed me by order of the doctor, and who was in my eyes guilty of having violated my order not to leave the camp without my permission. The poor devil was about to leave, not daring to call me back to the reality of my situation, and he hid behind the nearest tree to continue his observation out of my sight.

Nevertheless, we received frequent visits. The wives of the king often came to be shown our European objects, to see photographs of monuments in Paris in the stereoscope and to question us about Europe and especially France. The marionette theater of our Annamites had a reputation that preceded us all over Laos. They came to ask them for performances. But their cheerfulness was gone and their miniature actors had lost their voices. I had to use my authority to obtain something resembling a theater performance. Alas! the happy pantomime and the dialogues full of high spirits had run their time. There were more tears than laughter in the jokes of the dolls, and their owners soon burnt them to avoid having to feign a cheerfulness they did not feel.

The Burman's wife was the most regular of our visitors. This young woman showed an extraordinary intelligence, curiosity and gratitude for the trouble we took to instruct her, and her charming grace made us enjoy these meetings. She noticed this and put a certain coquettishness into prolonging the meetings by contriving to find new topics of conversation. In this way I collected some vague information on the upper parts of the country, on the silver mines situated further north, in Kenma, and especially on China which is called Muong Ho here and is only spoken of admiringly. There, they said, were wide roads paved with flagstones, iron bridges and inns at all stopover places. The idea of comfortable roads made us swoon with joy and our bare feet itched in advance. But when would we reach this country of civilization and comfort? This consideration filled all our projects and dreams. It was with despair that we envisaged the prospect, which at this moment was not even the least probable, of having to retrace our steps. To go

back to Saigon after failing in our attempt, having undergone so many weary marches and withstood so many cares, all this without obtaining the compensation of the glory which wipes them away, that was indeed a sad prospect.

To while away these long days of doubt and waiting, our only recourse was talking about the homeland, to savor in prospect those joys of our return, to go over the same projects twenty times, to rehearse the same scenes incessantly in our imagination and to vary them according to the mood of the day, as to who, what, where and why. Sometimes the discussion would turn to politics: had a war come out of the Prussian-Austrian question? We talked over the alliances and computed the chances of victory. We speculated on the news that we would find out at the first civilized place we would reach in a year or eighteen months. Sometimes also—and these were the liveliest discussions and also those that answered best to the state of abstraction in which minds that had been deprived for more than a year of all communication with the outside world, found themselves—we tackled the most worthy philosophical and religious problems. What struck us especially, since we were in contact with the Buddhist populations of Indo-China, was the similarity of the religious instincts of man, whatever race he belonged to and wherever he lived, and the strange resemblance of the traditions, legends, miracles which are at the origins of each belief. It was childish to assume that each borrowed this from his neighbor and to build historical theories, which were, above all, based on the religions convictions of their authors, on these analogies. The spirit of man, which had the same aspirations and the same needs everywhere, followed the same tendencies and aspired to the same ideals. The reasons for believing, as well as the forms which worship or prayer took, were the same among all peoples, whatever point of the globe one visited. Among the less enlightened classes religion reduced itself always to some superstitions, to certain poorly understood formulas. Everywhere, it presented an apparent uniformity which struck even the most superficial observer.

On this, we all agreed: but the disagreement started when we tried to interpret the Buddhist dogmas and to compare their influence with that which the Christian dogmas have exerted on the Western world. I spare the reader our digressions on this subject. I believe that we can only consider all these questions dispassionately when, having retired to another planet, we could contemplate what happens on this small globe that we call the earth, with an eye devoid of partisanship.

The subjugation of the region in which we found ourselves by the Burmese did not seem final and the conquerors appeared to treat their tributaries cautiously. The role of the Burmese officials was, above anything else, fiscal: they were charged with collecting the customs dues imposed in different parts of the country. All the Chinese traders who traded with the south of Burmese Laos up to Xieng Khong had to pass through Muong Yong and this obligation, no less than the harshness of the Burmese agents and the rebellion of the Muslims in Yunnan, had reduced this trade to an insignificant amount. When we were in Muong Yong, three years had passed since the usual Chinese convoy had made its appearance there.

The administration and justice system remained in the hands of the indigenous authorities who are composed, as in Siamese Laos, of a *Sena*. Only the titles are different: thus the *opalat* or second king becomes the *Paitabong;* the *atchbout* is called the *Poumabong*; the *atchsvong* is the *Petchabong;* the *Muong Sen*, *Pyabong* etc. A large number of Laotians, especially in Muong Yong, seemed to regret the passing of Siamese sovereignty and that was what made the Burmese say that the people of this Muong did not have an honest heart and must be controlled strictly. By 1803, Burmese oppression of the Laotian principalities of the north was so great that the chiefs of Xieng Tong, Muong Yong etc. undertook secret negotiations with the chiefs of Xieng Mai, Laphon and Lakon which were subject to the Siamese. The latter promised to give land to all those emigrants who agreed to live under the suzerainty of Bangkok, and at a given moment, to attack the Burmese troops who occupied the territory of Xieng Tong, to evict them. They formally engaged themselves to respect the liberty and autonomy of the immigrants. Consequently, the *tsoboua* or king of Xieng Tong, his four brothers, the *tsoboua* of Muong Yong and a great number of Laotians of their following rebelled against the Burmese and placed themselves under Siamese protection in Xieng Sen. But the malice of the Siamese was not long in erupting: far from respecting their agreement with the immigrants, they dispersed them among the five towns of Xieng Mai, Laphon, Lakon, Muong Phè and Muong Nan, subjecting them to the heaviest taxes and treating them only with harshness and mistrust. The youngest of the brothers of the *tsoboua* of Xieng Tong managed to return to this town with some loyal followers and he was proclaimed king. The present sovereign of Xieng Tong was his eldest son.

In 1837, during his stay in Xieng Mai, MacLeod met the exiled princes, who complained bitterly about Siamese behavior and solicited the support of the

English to help them return to their country. On his part, the *tsoboua* of Xieng Tong had proposed to Bangkok, in a friendly manner, the reopening of the long-discontinued commercial relations between the Laotians of the north and Siamese territory. Bangkok refused this absolutely, lest the exiled Laotians use the reopening of communications to return to their old homeland. The authorities of Xieng Mai especially opposed the adoption of this proposition, which would result in their losing a great number of their subjects. The ancient enmity between the Burmese and the Siamese manifested itself from this moment in several armed attempts on the borders of Karen territory. In 1852, it degenerated into open war. Rivalries, which were growing more pronounced each day, had risen up between Maha Say, the governor of Muong Phong, a province situated on the left bank of the Mekong and the king of Xieng Tong. Maha Say appealed to the Siamese for help and the latter made three expeditions against Xieng Tong; the first with three thousand men, the second with ten thousand men and the last with thirty thousand men. The last took place in 1854 and ended in a veritable rout of the Siamese. It was under the command of the Kromaluong, [2] i.e., the minister of war, commander in chief of all the military forces of Siam. The Siamese army was concentrated in Muong Nan and set out for Xieng Hai, in January. At that point it split in two groups: one, under the command of Chao Phaya Yomerat, advanced directly on Xieng Tong; the other, under the command of the Kromaluong, took the road that we ourselves had followed and by way of Paléo, Muong Yong and Muong You, it tried to encircle Xieng Tong. But the population had fled the invaders, the rice they were unable to carry had been burned and in each place the Siamese army found only defenders who retreated before its approach, fighting the passes through the mountain every inch of the way. The elephants and buffaloes used for the transportation of luggage and supplies were not sufficient in number and the Kromaluong had to have recourse to Lu from Xieng Hong to obtain provisions and porters. Despite all these difficulties, the Siamese army finally arrived under the walls of Xieng Tong on 26 April. The town was defended by approximately three thousand Burmese troops, seven thousand Laotians and six thousand men belonging to native tribes of the vicinity. The Siamese opened mortar fire which did the town no harm at all: they saw the projectiles coming from afar and avoided them. After twenty-one days, the besiegers had made no progress at all. The rains arrived and threatened to make a retreat impossible. An epidemic decimated the elephants and the buffaloes. On 17 May, the Kromaluong gave up the siege and began a fighting retreat. The

Siamese were pursued by natives, who killed a great number of them in the mountain gorges. Many died of hunger and misery between Paléo and Siemlâp. Numerous trophies were left behind in the hands of the victors, among others a two-wheeled cabriolet of European origin, which belonged to the Kromaluong himself and which Mr. de Lagrée has discovered carefully maintained in Xieng Tong, a mortar of English make and a lot of weapons.

In summary, there was nothing less final than the situation of the Laotian principalities of the north. Having successively had the experience of rule by both Siam and Ava, the locals deeply desired a less violent state of affairs, more regular and stable, and this aspiration, which was general, would be singularly favorable to the attempts of a European power, should it interest itself in the affairs of the region.

I have said that formerly Muong Yong was the seat of a powerful kingdom. Within its walls, we still found sizable ruins of pagodas and dagobas extant; they indicated a state of prosperity and of great power. One of the most remarkable of these ruins rose on the flanks of the mountain under which the village stood. These were layered terraces, in the center of which rose brick monuments. Although very inferior in terms of materials, the principal arrangements and the layout of the various parts of the construction brought to mind the monuments of Angkor. In addition, the Cambodian empire had left a deep imprint in the minds of the people and monks often solicited, with respectful curiosity, some information on the Tevata Nakhon, or "the Kingdom of the Angels," which was the name by which they designated the old Khmer empire. But if we asked what touched them most deeply about these nearby ruins, which they had never visited and which were covered by vegetation, to this and to all the other questions we got the eternal answer *bo hou*, "I don't know!"

That Chom Yong which Mr. de Lagrée and Mr. Delaporte visited and which one could see from almost any point of the plain, appeared to be older than the ruins of Muong Yong. By its isolated location and by the respect that it inspired, it had escaped the destruction which had almost everywhere overtaken those religious monuments within the walls of the town, when they were conquered. Even then, That Chom Yong was a much frequented place of pilgrimage. At the foot of the mountain, on which it rose, ran the Nam Yong, which in this spot was twenty to twenty-five meters wide. A village, the pagoda of which served as a first stopping point for pilgrims, was on the left bank. When one crossed the

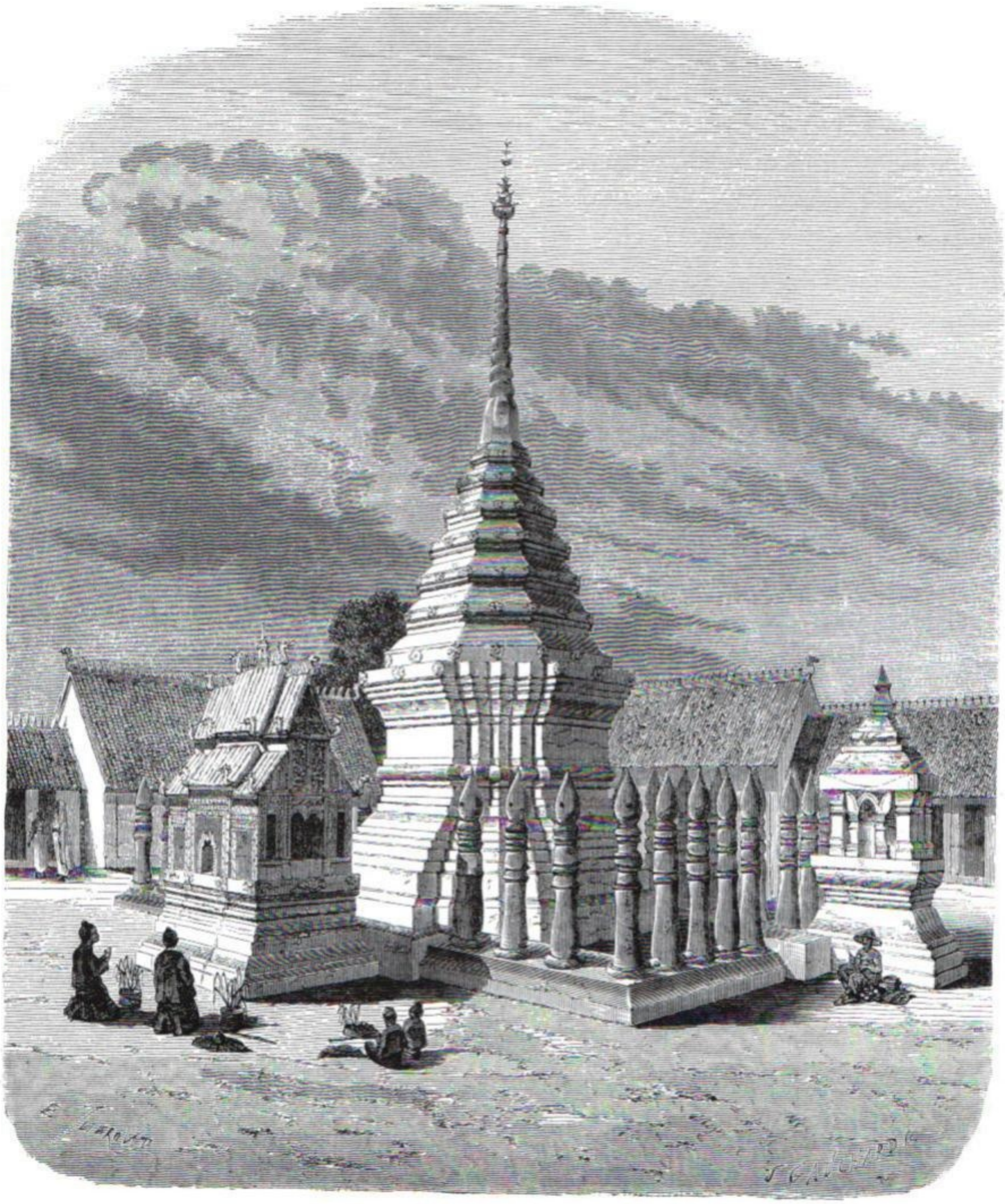


Plate 9 That *Chom Yong (drawing by E. Thérond, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

river, one climbed the steep flank of the mountain by quite a good road. Formerly, part of this climb had been done by the staircases, now in ruins. After half an hour of walking, we arrived at a *pouchrey* of huge size,[3] which, according to Buddhist legend, had probably been planted at the time of the monument's construction. The tree was five to six meters in diameter. Very close up, we noticed the ruins of an altar and of a small walled space. A little before we arrived at the plateau that supported the *that,* we came to another sacred well which was very much revered.

The monument itself consisted of large galleries which formed a square in the center of which was a gilded pyramid, overtowered by an iron crown. The foot of the pyramid was encircled by small columns, above which there was a hollow oval in which gifts were deposited. The small columns were called *doc bo* which meant "lotus leaves." There were also small monuments called *Ho,* intended for the same usage. In the center of the eastern gallery there was a small sanctuary. The columns of the gallery were square-shaped and adorned with intricate sculptures. Although they showed traces of several restorations, they were almost completely preserved in their original form and the inhabitants of the country said they were from the same period as when the *that* was first constructed. All the ornaments were made of cement. As in the ruined monuments of Muong Yong, you could see a few similarities between the general lines, the form of the columns and some other decorative features of That Chom Yong and the architecture of Angkor. Inside the eastern sanctuary there were several rather peculiar bronze statues. They were made distinctive by their protruding eyes and chins which appeared to be superimposed. One of them had the date 100 in good characters; evidently, this must have been 1100. There were also smaller marble statues, among which there was a representation of the reclining Buddha, or, as the Laotians called him, the Prea Nippan.

To the west, a little below the monument, on a less elevated plateau, there was a smaller pyramid, also gilded. From this point, the view was very pretty: we discovered the valleys of the Nam Yong and the Nam Ouang and the view extended to the line of mountains which formed the horizon in the west.

The most valuable and distinctive historical souvenirs that we obtained in the region were those which were connected with the construction of the *that.* By clearing them of their legendary accretions, we can deduct interesting indications of the kings and the rulers who had succeeded each other in the region. Here is what the *Samaing* or "the chronicle" of That Chom Yong said:[4]



Plate 10 *A wooden statue of the Buddha at* That *Chom Yong (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

"When Pha Kasapa, the Buddha before Sammonocodom, came to the country of Muong Yong, there were no inhabitants and the plain was a big lake. He planted a *pou chrey* on the flank of the mountain; he had brought this tree from Lanca (Ceylon) and he ate rice at the place where now the *that* rises up.

"At this moment, the natives who came from the east founded seven kingdoms around the lake. Phya Ngam was their principal chief and the number of subjects was about four to five thousand men.

"There were Thais in Xieng Tong, in Muong Lem, in Xieng Sen, in Xieng Hong and to the east of the Nam Khong (the Mekong river), but they were subject to the natives who were much more numerous.

"The prince of Alévy (Xieng Hong) had four sons. He brought them together and told them: 'The Kha are our masters; it is a shame to be subjected to their yoke. What must we do to gain our independence?' Sonanta Satrou Kouman, his second son, answered him: 'Give me five hundred men and I promise deliverance.' These five hundred men were given to him and he went to Phya Ngam and offered his services. The Kha prince received him with goodwill and authorized his establishment in the country. Sonanta Satrou Kouman then hired natives and had a fortified place constructed which carried the name Xieng Chang. Phya Ngam maintained friendly relations with him and came to visit sometimes.

"One day the Thai prince invited the whole following of Phya Ngam for a great feast. They served three types of wine, one of good quality, the other very heady and the third one poisoned. At the same time the gates of the town were closed and at the end of the meal, they murdered Phya Ngam and the Kha who accompanied him. The whole country was conquered. The king of Alévy sent his three other sons to govern Muong Khie, Muong Sing and Muong Ham. The country, which had already been called Tong, was designated from this moment onwards Na Yong, because there great quantities of rice were cultivated (*Na* means rice-field in Laotian).

"A long time after this, Sammonocodom was born. Fifty years had passed since his entry into the Nippan (Nirvana) when an *olohanta* (saint) by the name of Kiri Malenta brought four sacred hairs. They cited also the names of four other *olohantas* who came: Anouta, Oupaha, Soupitha and Tauna. They brought a bone of the head, a bone of the leg and other relics.

"Sourang Cavati was the king of a country and he donated a golden vase and a vase of precious stones. The relics were put in it and the vase was placed in a deep hole, twenty times six feet deep. The king then came to celebrate a feast: he had his wife Sida and his four sons, Keomarou, Chomsivirat, Onghat and Somsnouc, with him.

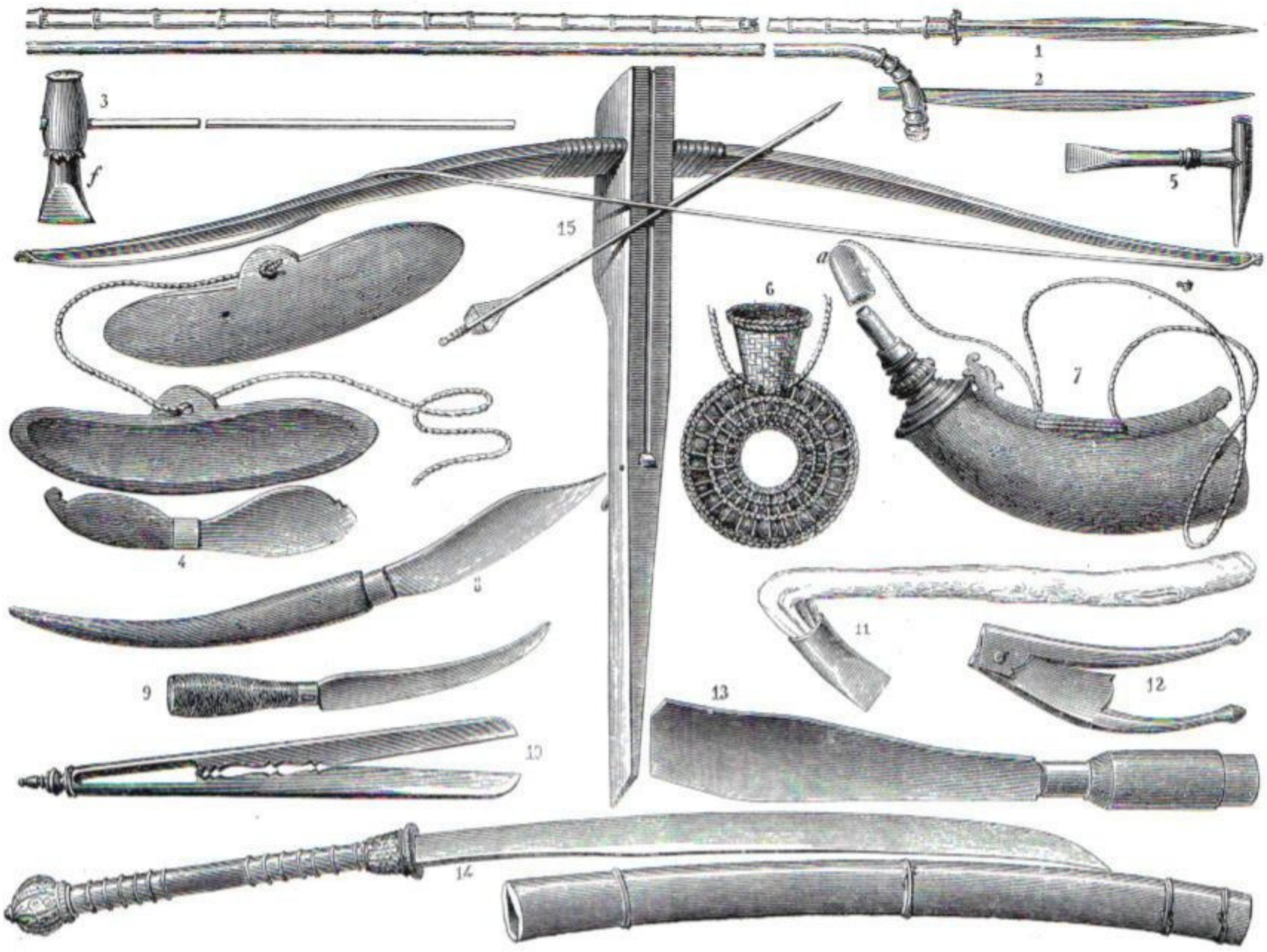


Plate 11 *Laotian weapons and tools (drawing by B. Bonnafoux, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte):* 1. A spear used for elephant hunts; length: 4 meters and 20 centimeters.—2. A foot-soldier's spear.—3. An ax for cutting trees; length: 1 meter and 20 centimeters, the f-part is moveable and can be turned at right angles. It was then used as an ax.—4. A razor and its sheath; length: 20 centimeters.—5. A screw-driver and a hammer used for gun mending.—6. A box of twisted bamboo for bullets.—7. A wooden powder-horn. The top (a) was used to measure the charges.—8. An ordinary knife; length: 40 centimeters.—9. A stabbing knife; length: 25 centimeters.—10. Scissors; length: 30 centimeters.—11. A small hatchet; length: 30 centimeters.—12. Scissors used to cut areca nuts; length: 17 centimeters.—13. A chopping-knife used to cut herbs or to cut a path through bushes; length: 40 centimeters.—14. A saber and its sheath.—15. A bamboo bow and arrow.

"Seven years later, the great *olohanta* died. He was buried in the westerly direction, at a distance of one hundred and twenty times six feet, in a place where there is a small pyramid today.

"King Alévy decided that the inhabitants would be devoted to *Chaydey* (Chaitya) and three times a year he came to attend a celebration.

"Five hundred years after achieving the Nippan, the king of Pathalibot (Patalipoutra or Patna), Açoka Thamarat, came to fight the kingdom of Vitheara. He gained victory and decided to make war with the kingdom of Keo. The king of this country threw himself in the river and the ranking nobles surrendered without a fight. Açoka demanded to see the corpse of the king and he resuscitated him. Then he gave him his kingdom back and he called it Chulani. Having returned to Pathalibot after his victories, he sent mandarins in all directions to built eighty-eight thousand religious monuments all over the countries he had conquered. He erected the *Chaydey* of Muong Yong and he himself celebrated a feast there."

The reader may note that according to the tradition, the *that* of Muong Yong was linked with the oldest and the most celebrated incidents in the establishment of Buddhism. The local chronology erred a little because it placed the reign of the pious Açoka, who lived in the middle of the third century B.C., near our era. However, the reader must not look so closely: it is to the order of the facts reported in these pious legend only that we must attribute some chronological value.

More recent traditions preserved the memory of the conquest of the country by the Chinese. This conquest appeared to me to be placed in the thirteenth century, during the reign of Khoubilai Khan. The Chinese established themselves in Muong Yong, which they made an important defense center for their southern border: they built a fortification, which took the name Vien Chieng Ho, on the banks of the Nam Ouang. Their domination, however, did not last long and the princes of Xieng Mai succeeded them in the government of the country up to the sixteenth century, the period when the Burmese kings seized the whole region up to Xieng Sen.

On 20 August, I received a letter from Commander de Lagrée, written about halfway to Xieng Tong. He had had to abandon the direct road and had made a detour to the south around the mountain range which separated Muong Yong from Xieng Tong. [He wrote that] the country which [he] traversed was inhabited

by natives called Doe, whose skills in agriculture and industry were not inferior to those of the Laotians, nor did they deserve in any way the label natives or Kha, which was given to them by the conquering race. These Doe were dressed more or less as the Thai-Lu: a deep blue pair of trousers and a jacket with a red turban. Their villages were big and well built; the houses were very large; their roofs reached very low and formed a sort of covered gallery all around. The dwellings touched each other instead of being spread out haphazardly like those of the Laotians, and they usually formed a wide, pleasing road. The gardens, in which he noticed carefully cultivated tea plants, were outside the village. The [scarcity of] water . . . in the heights at which they lived probably obliged the natives to group themselves in this way. The water was brought close to the houses by bamboo pipes. The roads in the vicinity of the villages were well maintained and carefully fenced by wooden barriers to prevent animals from entering the neighboring cultivated areas, the main crop in which was cotton. These fences were covered with climbing plants and they formed hedges of greenery which held back the soil brought down by the rains and thus protected the roads from landslides.

The Doe were capable hunters. Here, [Mr. de Lagrée wrote] [he] no longer encountered the great forests and the grassy plains which were home to the great quadrupeds of central Indo-China, such as the tiger, the elephant or the rhinoceros, but porcupine and wild boar were abundant and sometimes supplied the kitchens of the inhabitants.

[From the account of] the places where MacLeod had met the Lawa during his journey in Xieng Tong and the details which he provided on their customs and their economic activities, [Mr de Lagrée] believed that they belonged to the same race as the Doe, although the latter did not at all deserve the words of the English explorers about the dirty and awkward appearance of the Lawa. To this group of people, i.e., the Doe, we should add the Lemet, who spoke the same language and whose dress displayed very great similarities. In the opinion of one of the most competent men in Indo-Chinese ethnographic matters, Colonel Yule, these natives represent the degenerate type of the mother race of the Laotians and the Thais, in the period when they had not yet been modified by Buddhist civilization. [Mr. de Lagrée] more happily adopted this opinion as the Doe today still greatly resemble the Thais. The Doe called themselves Hoi-Mang. They said that they were natives with the same origins and that they spoke a dialect

close to that of those who lived on the banks of the Salween. They called the latter natives Hoi-Kun.

A few Kha Kho villages were intermingled with the Doe villages on the plateau of Xieng Tong. Muong Khay, from where Commander de Lagrée wrote to me, was a large Laotian village inhabited for the greater part by Lu from Muong Ham, who had fled the country when Maha Say, after having stirred up the war between Siam and Xieng Tong, had attacked the Lu principalities of the Sip Song Panna, or "the twelve Muongs," the name which was sometimes used to designate the kingdom of Xieng Hong. Muong Ham, one of these twelve provinces, had more than four thousand registered inhabitants at that time. It has no more than three hundred now.

Commander de Lagrée ended his letter by giving notice of [the arrival of] further mail on the evening of the thirtieth, written from Xieng Tong.

This promise inspired patience in us. Despite the rains, we made a few excursions in the vicinity of Muong Yong. Three to four kilometers to the north, there were warm water springs which we visited. They were situated close to a pleasing big village where we were surprised to find a daily market and a great number of Peguan and Burmese hawkers selling cloth and objects from Xieng Mai. There was an abundance of all kinds of things, while in the capital of the district, in Muong Yong, we often had problems in buying necessities at exorbitant prices. This was the result of the presence in the latter place of the Burmese agent and of the taxes that he collected from the vendors.

On 26 August, the Burman called me: he had received a letter from Xieng Tong, which informed him that permission to proceed had been granted. I leave it to the reader to guess how satisfied we were to be able to put an end to our enforced halt and to continue our journey. Nevertheless, I was surprised that I did not receive a letter from the commander confirming this good news. The thirtieth of August, the date fixed for the arrival of this letter, passed without bringing anything. Our waiting was thus prolonged until 6 September, taking a more precarious turn with the passing of each day. Had Mr. de Lagrée fallen ill? In which case, why did Dr. Thorel not give us any news? Our confusion, which was more than justified by a week's delay, conjured up one reason after another. Our absolute ignorance on what had passed in Xieng Tong and on the welcome the chief of the expedition had met with there, made us conjecture all kinds of

plausible assumptions. There was a rumor running around the country that twenty-eight men sent by the king of Xieng Tong to sell opium in Muong Phong and vicinity had been murdered. Only one man had escaped and had brought the news. We trembled every time we heard such bad rumors on the fate of part of the Commission which was so far away from us.

On 6 September we heard from public rumors that Mr. de Lagrée, instead of coming back to Muong Yong, would leave or had already left Xieng Tong to proceed to Muong You. There was, however, no plausible explanation for his silence from that moment onwards: had the messenger with his letter lost it and did he not dare to reappear, or had he met with an accident on the road? I decided to ask to leave for Muong You with the whole expedition, in order to discover whether we really had recovered freedom of movement again. The Burman made no objection. Orders were given to gather the porters we needed and our departure was set for the eighth. The evening before that day, in the middle of our preparations, the long-awaited letter of Commander de Lagrée finally arrived. It was not dated, but the messenger, who was none other than the low-ranking officer of Muong Yong who had escorted the chief of the expedition to Xieng Tong, told us that he had received it on the first of September. Mr. de Lagrée confirmed the good news that had been given to me by the Burmese resident; however there were strings attached which made us fear new difficulties. At the same time, he gave me some details on his journey and on his negotiations. He arrived with Dr. Thorel in Xieng Tong on 23 August and the two French officers were received in audience by the king on the twenty-fifth. His reception led the chief of the French mission to guess immediately that no obstacle whatsoever would come from that side. The visit made to the father of this prince by MacLeod in 1837—a visit of which the prince retained the best of memories—was perhaps one of the most important reasons for the goodwill he showed to French travelers. He often spoke with Mr. de Lagrée of the English officer, about his costume and his instruments, [as if] . . . all these details had been to him the revelation of a superior civilization. Leaving the king, Mr. de Lagrée went to the assembly of the mandarins. It consisted of thirty-two officials, representing the thirty-two *muongs* or provinces of the kingdom and all nominated by the king and presided over by two mandarins of a higher rank, nominated by the court of Ava. The reception was almost as friendly as that of the king. The next day, it was the turn of the Burmese mandarin, who is designated by the title "*Pou Souc.*" He said that it was by very

exceptional favor and goodwill that Commander de Lagrée was permitted to make all the obligatory official visits with such short intervals in between them. Usually, the rule was to let a week pass between visits. The reception which the representative of the court of Ava gave to Mr. de Lagrée was less kind. Commander de Lagrée was asked to take off his shoes before entering the king's palace and, upon his refusal based on the different customs of Europe, they had not at all insisted. The Burmese soldiers who guarded the entrance of the reception hall of *Pou Souc* were not so accommodating and they wanted to force Mr. de Lagrée and Dr. Thorel to take off their shoes by threatening them. These half-drunken soldiers went as far as pulling out their sabers and emitted many insults, among which the word *Angkrit* (English) often turned up. Mr. de Lagrée and his companion immediately turned their backs and let it be announced to the Burmese mandarin that they declined to see him, since he insisted on these humiliating formalities. The latter called the French officers back, made them wait for some time in the audience hall, adopting the most haughty manner that he was able to master, but nevertheless softened on seeing the gifts that were offered to him. He entertained his visitors with a ballet performance given by four or five young Burmese girls twelve to fourteen years old and some strapping men. After the dances came the wrestling. The *Pou Souc* threw the fighters a few pieces of money and encouraged them with his shouting. The impression that Commander de Lagrée got from this first meeting was that they were trying to stall him until a reply from Ava arrived. He used the three or four days they asked for, before they made a decision, to visit the town and its vicinity.

The town of Xieng Tong was located on four or five small hills. It had a wall made of irregularly-shaped bricks, poorly maintained and defended by a deep moat. The total length of this wall was about twelve kilometers. Only a quarter of the space that it comprises was occupied by dwellings. The houses of Xieng Tong represented all sorts of structures, in wood, in bamboo, in pisé. Some were on posts, others rested directly on the ground. The residences of the king and his ranking officials were in wood, covered with tiles, supported by strong columns and with skillfully carved ornaments. The town contained some twenty pagodas, with superimposed roofs and curvilinear arris, the architecture of which showed very pronounced Chinese influences. They were overloaded with gilding and were continually being repaired. The great use of gold leaf which was needed for this kind of decoration and the difficulty of communicating with China, whence this

precious metal was procured, since the rebellion of the Muslims, had increased its value considerably. At the moment of Commander de Lagrée's visit, gold was exchanged against twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three and even twenty-four times its weight in silver, according to the purity of the latter. The exchange rate in rupees was twenty times the weight. About a kilometer to the west of the town there was a *that* by the name of That Chom Sri which was greatly revered: it was under repair. According to the tradition, its foundation was attributed to Açoka who was known by the name of Pha Souko.

Relations between the king of Xieng Tong and the two French officers became more pleasant and more cordial each day: His Majesty invited his guests almost every day to spend the evening with him and, putting aside etiquette, bombarded them with questions about French customs, about Saigon, Cochinchina, Europe, about French language and science. The botanical excursions of our naturalist, who was seen returning each evening with huge bushels of plants under his arms, had very much intrigued the king: one day he had more than fifty species of plant brought and he was very surprised to note that our botanist knew them all. He requested him to perform his work for him and the bistoury, the magnifying glass, the pen, and the ink-stand became in turn the object of his curiosity and his questions. He amused himself by writing down the French names of all these objects and one day he wanted his guests to demonstrate to him the procedure of a European meal. They asked Mouello, Mr. de Lagrée's orderly, to come with all his utensils. They furnished him with chickens, eggs, carrots, pork meat, and small bamboo shoots. The whole was prepared on the spot and served in English crockery and silver cups which composed the royal crockery. The king's wife attended these informal meetings and tried to obtain some remedies against the rheumatics of old age from our doctor. both she and her husband wore luxurious jewelry. At each visit they had new rings, new golden ear-rings in which diamonds and emeralds of a considerable value sparkled. The king had been decorated with the order of Ava, with fifteen small chains and four golden plates adorned with rubies, which he wore as a sash from left to right.

After having seen all the letters which Commander de Lagrée was holding and having convinced himself of his sincerity, the Laotian prince forthwith allowed him to leave Xieng Tong as soon as he wanted and it was agreed that the two French officers would leave directly for Muong You, while a letter would be taken to Muong Yong, to the rest of the expedition, authorizing them to proceed to the same point.

But the Burman did not mean to release so quickly the foreigners he had managed to get in his grasp, and he raised objection after objection. The good faith of the king was thoroughly irritated by this move. He sent three mandarins to the *Pou Souc* to declare that he had wished to see the foreigners in Xieng Tong, that they came, that everybody was able to judge that they were honest and that now they asked to continue their journey and that this should be granted to them. The Burman acted as if he was acceding and gave the king's envoys a written permit for Mr. de Lagrée to proceed on the journey. The mandarins, believing everything was arranged, hastened to convey this to the chief of the French mission. The verification completed, he found that the above mentioned document was a passport to circulate in the interior of the province of Muong Yong and that the name of Muong You was not even mentioned in it! [Mr de Lagrée wrote that he] had to go back on the attack. On 3 September, finally armed with a proper permit, our travel companions left for Muong You after having received, among other gifts, from the king a beautiful horse which was the start of the expedition's cavalry division. It was christened *Royal,* by reason of its kingly origins.

The complex moves by the Burmese resident evidently had the objective of winning time so that he might receive an answer from Ava before the French Commission had left Burmese territory. This answer had to arrive almost at the same time as, or two or three days after, the departure of Mr. de Lagrée from Xieng Hong, according to the information obtained by Colonel (now General) Fytche, the English resident in Burma. Here is the letter that the latter wrote from Rangoon on 9 August 1867, to the viceroy of India: "The French exploration commission has arrived in the Shan State, tributary to Yunnan, East of Bamo. They have written from Mainglon or Maingla to the court of Ava to request the authorization to visit Mandalay.[5] A favorable reply has been sent. This reply left Mandalay on 31 July." This letter ended with details on the towns of Mainglon and of Maingla, situated on the road from Ta-Ly to Bamo via Young-tchang, details which cannot be reproduced here. The honorable English officer was misled, as one can see, about our real situation by the information of the locals. The letter to which he made an allusion was surely the one which was sent by Commander de Lagrée from Muong Lim to Xieng Tong and which requested authorization, not to go to Mandalay, but simply to traverse the Laotian tributary states of Burma.

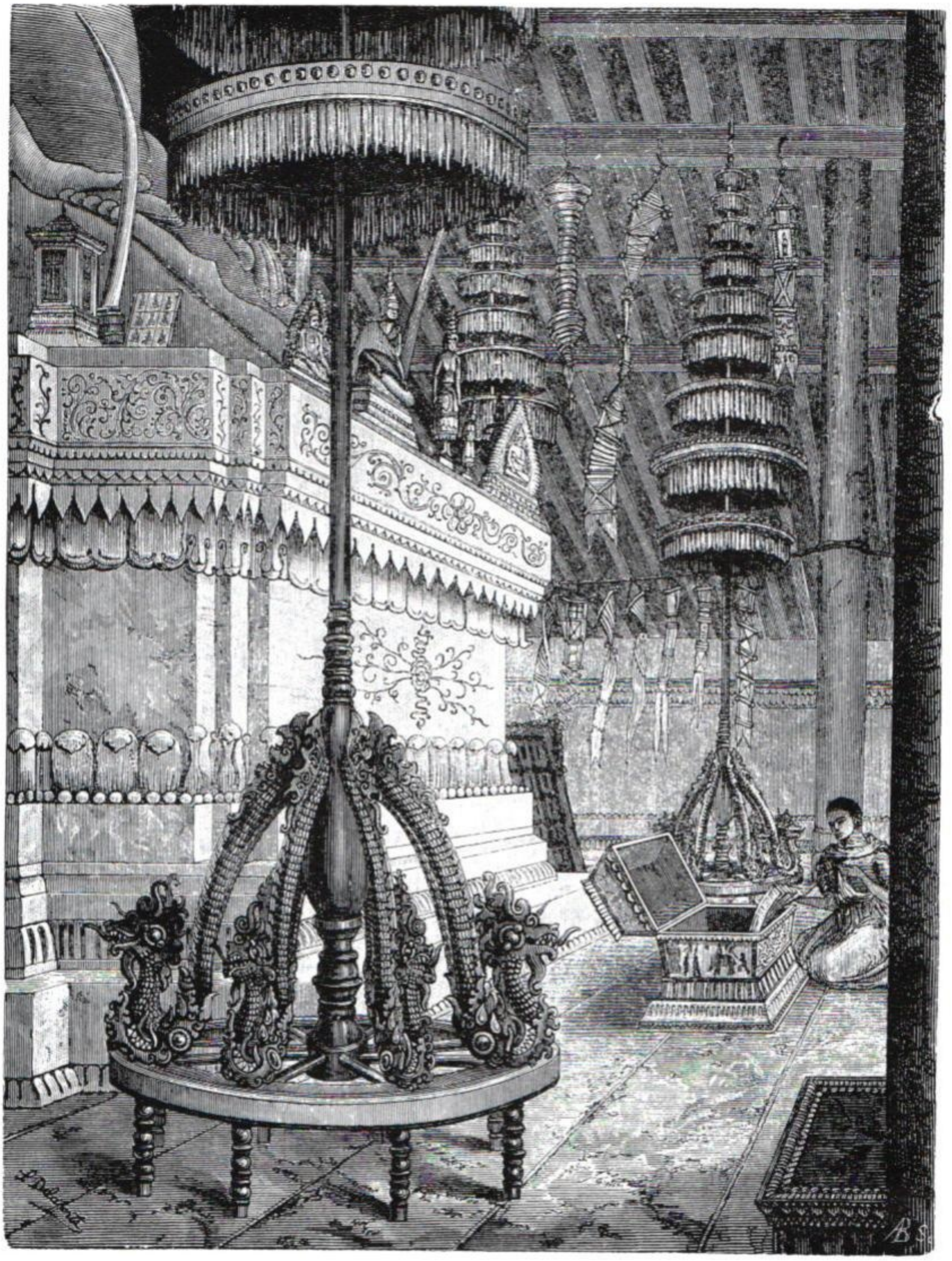


Plate 12 *Umbrella with many layers in the interior of a pagoda (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

We left Muong Yong on 8 September. We had stayed there for more than a month. The letter of Mr. de Lagrée, without telling us of the end of all our problems, at least provided us with the hope that our journey still had some chance of success and we set off, if not full of vigor and health, at least happier and more confident than we had been for three months past.

Chapter 4

Muong You—Arrival of Mr. de Lagrée—The arms manufacture of Samtao—Navigation on the Nam Leui—The valley of the Muong Long—A Chinese road and a bridge—New difficulties—Departure for Xieng Hong—Description of this town—The political state of the region

We left Muong Yong on the best of terms with the local authorities and hastened in a cheerful mood to the banks of the Nam Ouang to follow the right side upstream. At noon, we forded this river. It suddenly entered the mountains which bordered the plain of Muong Yong to the west. Then, we climbed a rather steep slope which led to Ban Tap, a village that formed the border of Muong Yong, located on the dividing line of the waters of the Nam Yong and the Nam Leui. From this point, we were able to enjoy a very wide view and could see the distant spire of That Chom Yong on the flanks of this range which enclosed the plain on the southern side.

A customs post was established in Ban Tap. The Burman of Muong Yong had given me, engraved in the hollow of a bamboo, a passport for the Burmese official there. Thus we had no difficulty whatsoever in establishing ourselves in the village pagoda, where there were already a number of merchants who displayed English cottons which they were trading on the temple porches.

The next day, we left Ban Tap early in the morning. Beyond the village, the very poor road hung on the flanks of the forested hills and followed the banks of the murmuring brooks which were partly hidden under thick greenery. Nothing was fresher and more charming than the rustic landscapes which unfolded before us: we imagined ourselves transported to certain parts of the Cévennes, at the time of that intermediary season which is no longer spring but not yet summer. The springs sprang out in waterfalls from the flanks of the mountains or they

perfidiously ran under a carpet of grass and flowers. The path disappeared sometimes under the water, but the landscape remained too enchanting for one to complain about this.

By eight a.m., we arrived at the confluence of a small brook and the Nam Khon, a rather large river which ran into the Nam Leui and the right bank of which we had to follow up to a short distance from Muong You. A Doe village was located not far from there; its narrow rice-fields rose in terraces on the slopes of the hills. In a few places, they had begun harvesting the yellow rice.

Starting from this point, our horizon widened, the undulations of the terrain became more sudden but also less picturesque and soon we discovered the great plain at the extremity of which Muong You rose up. The Nam Leui opened into this plain by a narrow passage through the mountains which contained it in the west and its waters found rest in slow and capricious meanders. We crossed the Nam Khon two hundred meters from its confluence with the Nam Leui. Tufts of bamboo threw shadows over the access to the wooden bridge which, surprisingly, had been built over this watercourse. Thoughtfully, benches were placed on each side which invited the traveler to rest. This bridge and the river with its limpid waters for me created a scene from an opera or one of those rustic ornaments that the modern Le Nôtres dream up for our parks or our avenues. Muong You, where we arrived at five p.m., extended along the right bank of the Nam Leui, at the very place where this river left the mountains to enter the plain. Part of the village was constructed north of the water, the rest covered the last slopes that hemmed in the course of the river. They installed us in a *sala* situated at the entrance to the village, a few meters from the Nam Leui. Commander de Lagrée had not yet arrived. I communicated to the king that I was ready to present my credentials but that I would hardly be able to sustain a reasoned conversation with him in the absence of an interpreter. He excused me from any official visit until the arrival of the expedition's chief but he asked to be permitted to use our stereoscope to amuse himself.

Nearby there was a saw-mill in which sixteen laborers worked all day. Half a dozen saws were in operation. This was the first time, since we came to Laos, that we had seen anyone using this type of equipment. For its novelty and the number of workers working in one shift we could easily consider this place a real factory. This activity, unusual in Laos, was due to the on-going extension of the king's palace and to the building of a new pagoda.

Not until the evening of the thirteenth did Mr. de Lagrée and Dr. Thorel join us. We had been separated for more than five weeks and the reader may guess with what joy we found that we were all in good health.

Our traveling companions had left Xieng Tong on 3 September at noon. They crossed the Nam Leui in Muong Ouac, a point where the river began to be navigable. To be allowed on to the ferryboat of Muong Ouac, one must have a passport from Xieng Tong and pay some rice and tobacco. After having forded the river [they told us], [they] climbed to a vast, undulating plateau, inhabited only by Doe natives. Then [they] arrived in Muong Samtao, whose chief resided in Ban Kien, a large village built on the highest point of the plateau and where, every five days, a big market was held.

It was in the vicinity of Ban Kien that guns, knives and sabers were made; the Doe sell these to their neighbors. Commander de Lagrée found a hundred workers at this occupation and as many unskilled laborers, divided over five or six workshops. These workshops were subject to special regulations, designed to maintain good working relations and to avoid rivalries. Thus, on one day they bored the barrels, while others worked on the plates. The quantity of work to be done was fixed. A worker was able to finish a gun in ten days. The iron which was used in this manufacture was brought in the shape of ingots by the Chinese. The locals used extremely simple methods. They did not have vices or anvils. They forged the barrels. To bore them, they clamped them obliquely in a mortise set up across a vertical wooden column, in such a way that their extremities were positioned at a good height for the hand of the worker: the latter used a simple drill. In spite of the irregularities inherent in hand-boring, these arms were quite well calibrated. The Doe produced screws themselves with the help of molds; the latter, files, hammers and knives with two handles constituted their whole set of tools.

This manufacture had been functioning for a century and from its beginnings it had produced flint guns while, in the Chinese province of Yunnan, even today they produce only guns with a lunt [breech]. Thus, since their rebellion, the Muslims as well as the imperial troops had come to Samtao for their supply of arms. The price for a gun here was about twenty-five to thirty francs. A pistol was sold for ten to twelve francs.

The Doe were not subject to any tax other than the obligation to produce a number of guns, sometimes more than two hundred a year, with the iron sent to

them by the king of Xieng Tong. Commander de Lagrée estimated the total production of the arms factory of Samtao to be three thousand guns per year and the Doe population massed on the plateau to be ten thousand souls.

In Ban Kien, Commander de Lagrée met a singular visitor, an old man with a placid face whom the inhabitants knew by the name of *Selah* which meant "the man who knows a lot." He was a sort of itinerant doctor, of Phong origins, who hawked his science and his remedies everywhere, without ever settling anywhere and without asking any other salary than lodgings and food. It had taken him three years to come from Ava. This kind of person had a great reputation for honesty and everywhere inspired the greatest respect.

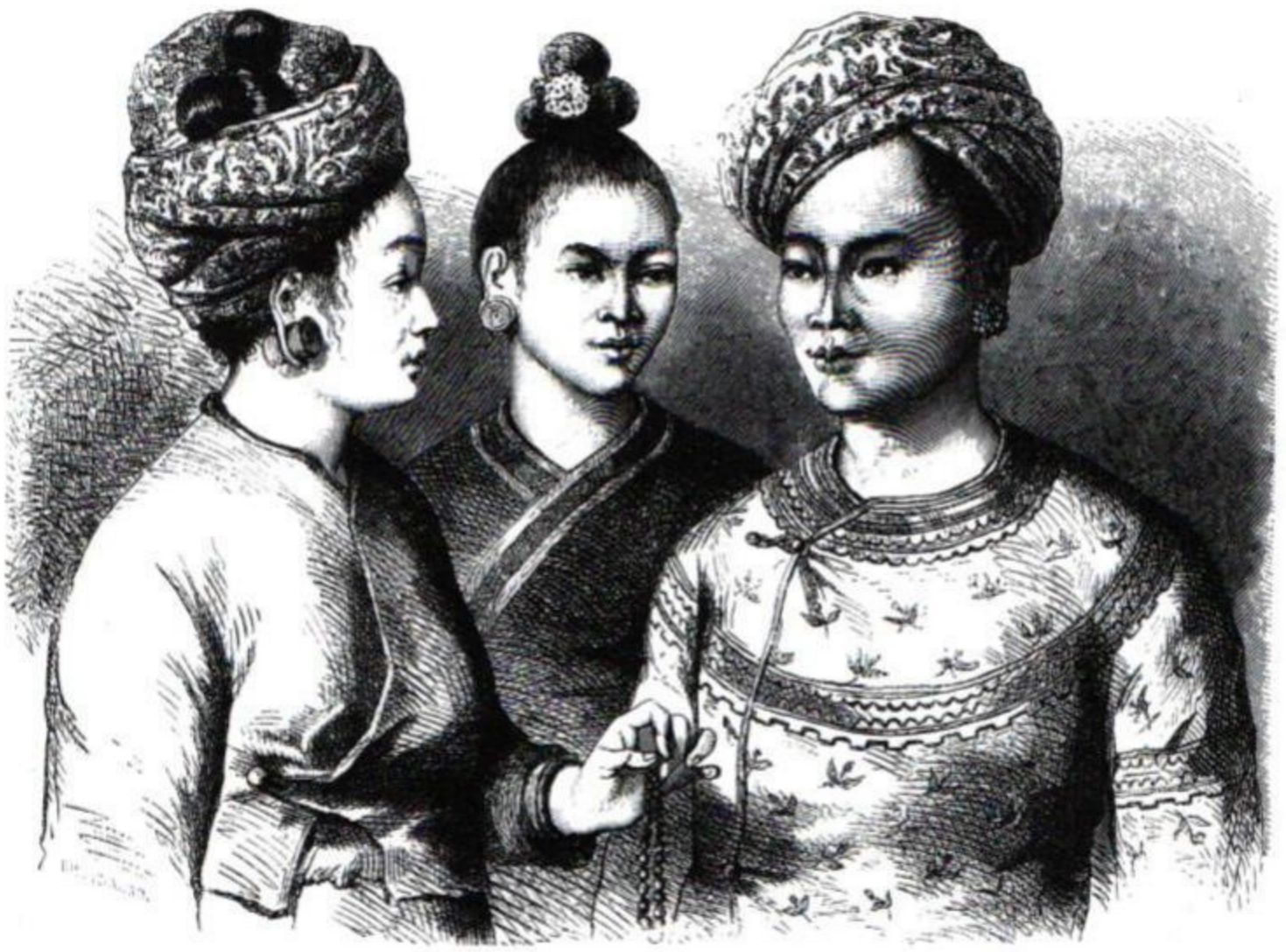


Plate 13 *The king of Muong You and his two wives (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on L. Delaporte).*

On 11 September, our travelers had arrived at the confluence of the Nam Leui and the Nam Lem. This latter river came from the *muong* with the same name and was the bigger [of the two rivers]. The next day, they slept in Muong Oua, a pretty village situated in a small, rather rich and populous plain. A few days earlier

there had been celebrations to honor the *Phi*, or "spirits" in this place—celebrations which were intended to ward off disease. During these celebrations, which lasted several days, nobody could enter the *muong*. Signs placed on the roads warned travelers and indicated the fine they risked if they violated this prohibition. To the horse which had been given to him by the king of Xieng Tong, Commander de Lagrée had added two others which cost him a few hundred francs each. These three animals would facilitate our excursions and reduce the number of porters [needed] for our luggage.

On 14 September we made our official visits to the various authorities of Muong You. We began with the council of mandarins, presided over by a brother of the king, a young man with a soft, fair skin, a little too fat and very timid, who did not know what to make of himself. His plump fingers were overloaded with rings and his ears with golden ear-rings. He was dressed in a large piece of squared cloth that served him as a *langouti,* a satin jacket and a large turban puffed out over his head. Behind him was carried a gilded umbrella with a very long handle.

After the *sena* we paid a visit to the Burmese officer. Whether we were badly disposed towards this class of officials, or whether the Burmese race really cannot compare favorably with the Thais of the north, either way, we met a revolting figure, with an almost white skin and a haughty posture, who was a representative of the king of Ava. Full of his own importance and desirous of producing a strong impression on us, he barely opened his mouth, stared loftily at the skies and left the effort of maintaining the conversation to his wife. The passport from Xieng Tong, with which Commander de Lagrée had arrived, cut short all his objections from the very beginning. Not having been able to make us feel his power, he was happy to wear us down with his solemn gestures. We soon left him to go to the king.

The residence of the latter stood on hillocks that dominated the town and there was rather an extensive view from there. The palace was vast, constructed in hard wood and with very competent carpentry work. The king received us in a great hall, into which daylight penetrated only through narrow windows hidden by silk wall-hangings. He was a young man of twenty-six years with a distinguished face and infinitely gracious in manner. He was dressed in green satin with red flowers and the lights in the rubies that he was wearing in his ears lit up the silky reflections of his rich dress. He was seated on cushions embroidered with gold. All around him were the mandarins of the palace lined up in respectful poses. At

his feet were the insignia of his royal rank, i.e., his saber and richly chiseled golden vases.

We sat down in front of the prince and they placed in front of each of us a platter bearing the boxes which the Laotians use to keep the various ingredients of their chewing. Platter and boxes were in driven silver. This oriental luxury would have blinded us even more if with the rich and decoratively shaped local utensils there had not been mixed some European objects which were highly valued in Laos but which to our eyes were too vulgar in nature. For example, strings of empty bottles hung in the most obvious way on the columns of the hall.

The king was careful to speak only friendly words to us. He expressed his regrets for the obligation to go to Xieng Tong which had been imposed on Commander de Lagrée and he attributed the error to the Burmese official of Muong Yong.

According to the Laotian customs, the village chiefs were obliged to give us gifts in kind when we passed through their area. We had always refused them or at least we had always paid for the things which had been offered to us. The king asked us the motive behind this refusal: "It is that we want to prevent", said Commander de Lagrée, "the poor from suffering by our presence." The king graciously replied: "But from me you would deign to accept something?" He then asked us many questions about France, giving a lively and dynamic tone to the conversation. He knew how to deploy a simple and affable grace which won all of us over.

The next day the king requested Mr. de Lagrée to see him again. Their meeting had a more intimate character: the sight of Europeans awoke in this intelligent young man desires for emancipation from the Burmese yoke, which could not be more justified in view of the latter's administrative practises. In Muong You, the king had been able to push the Burmese agent into the background and he took no notice of his advice in any affair.

"Where Europeans are present," he told Commander de Lagrée, "war and turmoil cease, and trade and the population increase."

It was not the first indication that we observed of a future insurrection among these peoples. The Burmese were too presumptuous to anticipate it, and too clumsy to prevent it.

The king of Muong You confirmed that his kingdom possessed abundant metallurgical deposits. According to him, there was gold, silver, iron and precious stones in the mountains which enclosed the Nam Leui. To support what he said, he showed Mr. de Lagrée a very beautiful sample of iron oxide mineral and some garnets. Unfortunately it was impossible conspicuously to identify the deposits without exposing them to the Burmese who would make their exploitation by the locals obligatory in order to levy a tax on this product. "But stay some time here and I might be able to conduct you there by carriage," the king added. Mr. de Lagrée had too many reasons to depart as fast as possible from this territory ruled by the Burmese to accept this offer.

On 16 September the king paid us a return visit and he passed the greater part of the day in our *sala.* He was accompanied by his elder sister and by some of his ladies. This rendezvous was most cordial and most interesting. After the obligatory demonstrations of our weapons and of our European instruments, Mr. Delaporte tried to provide our hosts with a feeling for the charms of French music. The tunes of Marlborough, the most joyful and most rousing motifs of the *Belle-Hélène* aroused little interest. But barely had the first notes of the *Miserere* resounded from the violin bow of the musician, than the deepest silence reigned: an unknown sensation seemed to reveal itself to the indigenous listeners. This sentimental music was readily accepted.

The next day, the king's brother and the rest of the royal family came in their turn to await the exhibition of our luggage and experience the same enjoyments for themselves. The Thai race was gifted with intellectual curiosity and natural refinement in taste, especially in the north, which, under other masters than the Burmese, would allow them quickly to occupy an honorable place among the civilized peoples. The rapid progress which the Siamese have made since they were in contact with the Europeans was a striking proof of this and even then, the Siamese branch among all the Thai tribes, seemed the one least inclined to elevated feelings.

During these visits the usual exchange of gifts took place. The generosity of the king extended even to our escort; each man received a piece of cloth that was sufficient to have a suit of clothes made. The king gave boxes in chiseled silver, with very refined workmanship, to all the officers.

I have already said that the king of Muong You was a brother of the king of Xieng Tong but of a different mother. Between him and his older half-brother

there was another brother who had long resided in Ava and whom the king of Muong You had never seen. This prince was without doubt the one that MacLeod had seen in Xieng Tong [1] and whom he designated by the name Chao Patta-Woun. The court of Burma probably kept him as a hostage to be sure of the loyalty of his brothers. The third of the sons of the *tsoboua* who had received MacLeod, and the eldest of whom was the actual sovereign of Xieng Tong, was the predecessor of the king of Muong You. He died in 1862, when his nephew ascended the throne.

We left Muong You on 18 September. Our horses and our luggage crossed the river on a raft and took the road to Muong Long which was our next halt in the direction of Xieng Hong. Muong Long was the capital of one of the twelve provinces of which the latter principality was composed. As for us, we embarked on the Nam Leui whose winding course we quickly descended. We stopped a while in Muong Leui, a charming village surrounded by areca palm plantations. From here, this tree began to become very rare, and its fruit fetched a considerable price in this region. Beyond Muong Leui, the river was enclosed by forested hills. Its course, which was so far peaceful, became torrential. When it became entangled in the inextricable maze of small mountains which bordered the banks of the Mekong river, it ceased to be navigable. After an hour and forty-five minutes of navigation in total since Muong You, we landed on the left bank of the river, close to a caravanserai where our escort and our luggage were to join us. They arrived rather late in the evening: the road which was for the greater part destroyed by the rains was very difficult for men and horses.

The next morning, we took the zigzag path that climbed the chain of hills at the foot of which we had camped. The whole morning we followed a winding line of summits. From there, we enjoyed a varied panorama of irregular chains, the rather gentle slopes of which were crowned by Doe villages and criss-crossed by well-maintained roads leading to them.

The fresh undulating green [shoots] of the crops, planted in the lowest depths or halfway up the slopes, provided a pleasant change from the uniform dark color of the forests which covered the higher parts. We took lunch on the edge of a brook that ran northerly: we had, once more, changed basins. A descent of several hours brought us out of the mountainous region which formed the dividing line of the waters and we entered a long, narrow valley, covered with rice-fields and villages, watered by a pretty river, the Nam Nga, which flowed to the north-north-

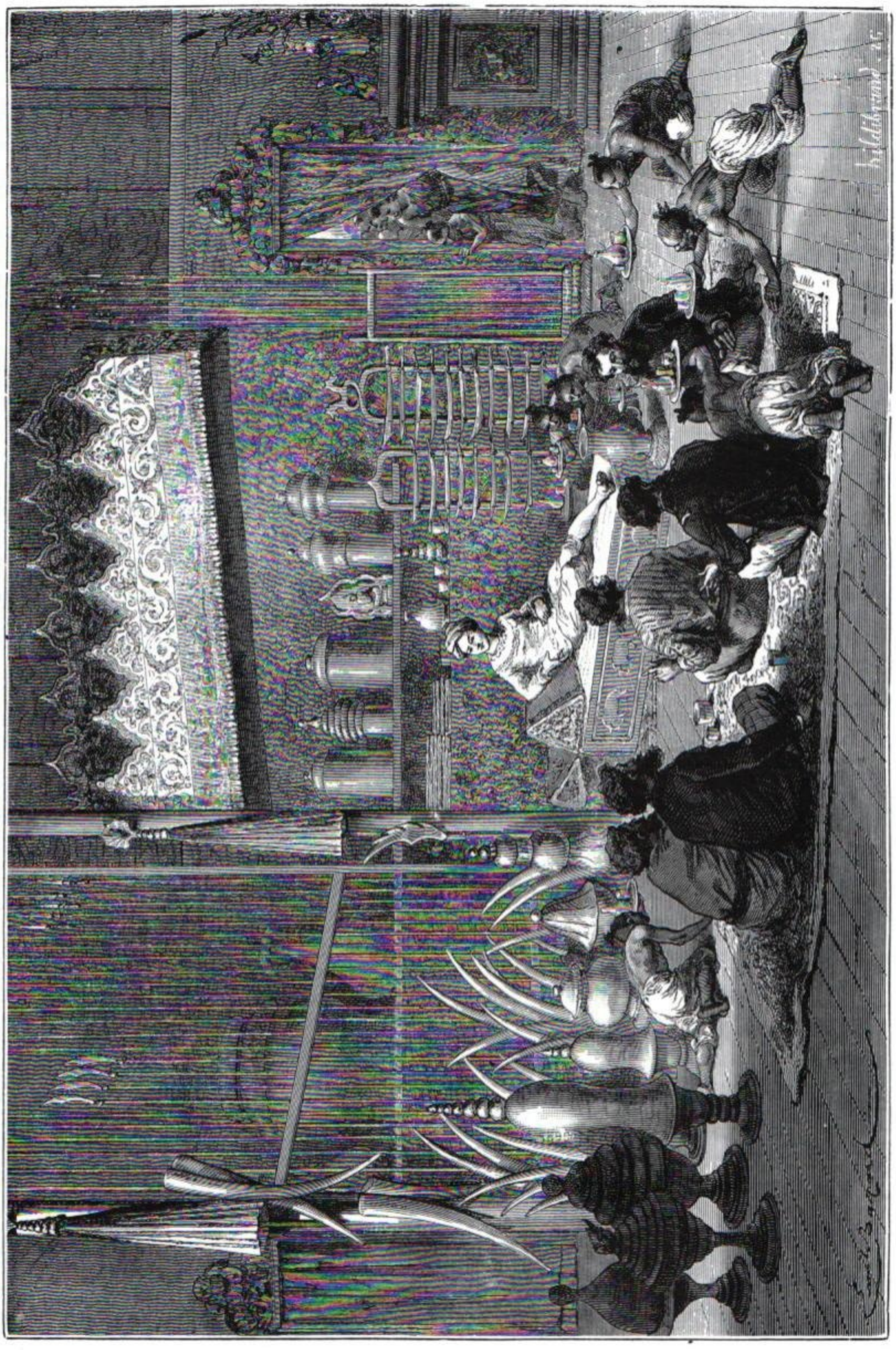


Plate 14 *A meal offered by the king of Muong You (drawing by E. Bayard, based on L. Delaporte).*

east and appeared to come from the west. We crossed this river with the water up to our shoulders. The fordable passage was narrow and the current strong. Thus, a few of our porters stumbled: they got out by swimming to the other side without loss or great damage to the objects which they were carrying. Once on the left bank of the Nam Nga, we hastened to traverse the rice-fields which extended along its banks, to join the less muddy and more shadowy road which meandered at the foot of the hills of the left flank of the valley. From afar, the steep spire of a *that* signaled our approach to Muong Long, a big town of fifteen to eighteen hundred souls, constructed on the edges of the Nam Kam, a small affluent of the Nam Nga. We crossed this river by a stone bridge with an elliptical arch, the breastwork of which was [formerly] adorned with sculptured lions which were [now] lying on the ground. The bridge extended into a brick road through the fields. Such a splendid road certainly provoked enthusiasm. Surely, this bridge and this avenue were not the work of the Laotians. They used it to their benefit without knowing how to maintain it. The construction of the bridge stirred an admiration almost equal to that which we felt more than a year ago at the sight of the monuments of Angkor. The arch revealed a science that was more developed than that of the Cambodians. This surely was a work of Chinese civilization, the marvels of which were extolled by the Burmese of Muong Yong. We found ourselves at the gates of this promised land and hoped that our fatigues had reached their end. These seductive longings changed into certainty when, amid the crowd of curious people which began to besiege us, we discovered two Chinese. Their long robes and their high-heeled pointed shoes stood out too clearly amid the Laotian costumes to escape our immediate notice. I was more or less the only member of the Commission who had for a long time been familiar with the sight of the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire.[2] Thus it was with the joy of a child that I beheld this first appearance of a Chinese woman, which was a small reward for so much fatigue. This sight was usually obtained with less effort, especially if one was a sailor. The Chinese women in question were old, dirty and decrepit but they had small feet: that was sufficient indisputably to confirm their nationality and to justify the admiration of my traveling companions.

Our first relations with the authorities of the country were excellent. The chief of the village made no problems about replacing the porters who had accompanied us from Muong You. [Using]a means of summoning quite similar to that used in the small towns of France, he beat a drum to gather all the men we needed. But

the next day, during our preparations for departure, a letter arrived from Xieng Hong which overturned all our hopes and cut short our enthusiasm. It said in essence this: "It is said that some *Kouta*—which was the name given to strangers in the north of Indochina—came from Muong Yong. If they arrive at Muong Long and they are not merchants, you must not let them continue their journey to Xieng Hong but you must force them to take the road by which they have come. Xieng Hong is not only subject to Burma but also to China."

A similar reply, perhaps in a more polite tone, had already been given to MacLeod by the Chinese authorities of Yunnan. "Our borders," they had written to the English officer, "are open for merchants from all countries but it has never happened that officers representing a foreign power took this route to enter China. The city of Canton has been opened to Europeans for their communication with the Celestial Empire: it is there that they must present themselves." Since 1837, the time when this rejection was addressed to MacLeod, relations between China and Europe have singularly changed in nature. The wars of 1840, 1858 and 1860 have made the Chinese government less exclusive and more amenable. Moreover, we were armed with properly made out passports of the court of Peking and the Chinese authorities of Yunnan should have been informed about our coming. Thus I did not share the opinion of Mr. de Lagrée who saw in this letter a refusal of passage from the Chinese authorities of Muong La, a name given by the Laotians to the Chinese city of Se-mao, situated a few days away to the north-north-east of Xieng Hong. This indirect refusal, which was only given by the *sena* of Xieng Hong without committing [involving] the responsibility of the court of Peking, appeared to Mr. de Lagrée one of those diplomatic niceties of which only the Chinese possess the secret. Conversely, I saw in it the perfidy of the Burman of Xieng Tong; I suspected him of secretly persuading his colleague of Xieng Hong to bar our passage. As we will see later, neither of these assumptions was correct.

Mr. de Lagrée took the decision to send his interpreter, Alévy, carrying a letter for the authorities of Xieng Hong. This letter explained the objective of our mission and insisted on [using] the authorizations which had already been given by the Laotian and Burmese authorities of Xieng Tong and on the letters of passage, solemnly delivered by Peking and signed by Prince Kong, which the Commission carried. Mr. de Lagrée demanded that he should at least be allowed to proceed to Xieng Hong to explain himself in front of the *sena* of this town. Alévy left on 21 September by horse.

The rainy season was approaching its end and signaled its presence by a few daily storms only. The roads dried up. Movement became easy. The small valley of the Nam Kam, along which the houses of Muong Long were arranged, was full of charming views and its gorges, which were abundant in game, invited the hunters to go on a foray. We were witness there to a synergetic exploit, carried out under our very eyes, by a tiger, which were becoming rarer in these areas. One of them killed a ten-horned deer of the biggest size in front of some of us. This exploit, far from furnishing the meal on which it was counting, got it a very unexpected volley which made it retreat, wounded and roaring, into the depths of the forest, where it would be both difficult and dangerous to follow it. The hills which enclosed the course of the river were easily accessible. From the heights of their forested peaks, which died off in soft sloping flanks at the entrance to the valley of the Nam Nga, the members of the Commission, draughtsmen and geographers, discovered landscapes or mountain panoramas which were bound to interest them. The two peaks, between which the Nam Kam opened up, were crowned with two *thats* which had to attract the attention of an archeologist like Mr. de Lagrée. We were thus able to use the enforced idle time, which we obtained by the refusal of the authorities in Xieng Hong to let us pass, more pleasantly than in Muong Yong.

Of the two *thats* which I just mentioned, one, to the south of the town, was well maintained and rose on a big podium from the heights of which one could see the whole valley. It was called That Poulan. It had been constructed recently; had only one spire and one small wall adorned with small niches and *doc bo* for the offerings. The *that* of the north, called That Nô, was built with cement and bricks as the preceding one was. It appeared to be older and today it was abandoned. This monument possessed an original appearance and was designed tastefully and, if it were constructed in stone, its value would be real. From a round base, twelve meters in diameter by two meters in height, rose a central spire eighteen meters high and eight smaller spires, at the feet of which niches enclosing statues jutted out. Each little tower was surmounted by an iron spindle and a Burmese crown. The castings had been done carefully; the ornamentation was simple and displayed leaves and lotus flowers only. The exterior wall depicted snakes, the heads of which were turned back and faced the monument when the gates opened.

Formerly, That Poulan and That Nô were gilded. Behind each there was a covered shelter. The second of these two monuments displayed the imprint of Burmese

architecture as it appeared in the monuments of the end of the last century, in the ruined edifices of Mengoun and the other buildings that could be found in Ava and in its vicinity.

The market which was held every five days in Muong Long was one of the biggest that we had seen so far. One could find in it those small open-air restaurants that were so numerous in Chinese towns and which were indispensable for feeding busy crowds. Cotton, which was brought by the Kho natives who were very numerous in the surrounding area, was sold for from forty to eighty francs per *picul.* Other local produce to be found was raw silk of a rather crude quality and in small quantities, wax, iron, lead, be it purified or in its mineral state, antimony mineral which was used as a medicine, betel and mountain areca, melons, pumpkins, egg-plants, citrus fruit, apples, plums, guavas, onions, capsicum, peppers, *astrus* grapes which are used to produce oil, tobacco, solidified indigo, eggs, fresh fish, pork and buffalo meat. English cotton cloth, salt which was often used as currency in the transactions and which came from the left bank of the Mekong, skeins of silk of Chinese origin, balls of gambier [from the *Uncaria gambir,* Tran. note] and dried areca that came from Xieng Mai, a few objects of ironmongery and haberdashery such as mirrors, combs, weighing scales and needles of English or Chinese origin were the imported products.

Almost everybody and especially the native Kho, spoke the Chinese dialect of Yunnan.

On 25 September, a new letter from the mandarins of Xieng Hong arrived at our camp, accompanied by a message from Alévy. In the mandarins' letter it was said that last year, an order had come from Yunnan, forbidding foreigners to pass without immediately informing the authorities of Muong Ho (Yunnan). That was the general sense of a message which Mr. de Lagrée, deprived of his interpreter, was able only imperfectly to decipher. At the same time, Alévy told Mr. de Lagrée—and that was the important thing—that the *sena* had agreed that the French Commission could proceed to Xieng Hong.

We left Muong Long on the morning of the twenty-seventh. Some distance from this village, the old Chinese road, which was no longer maintained, disappeared and we found only some remnants of it from time to time. Nevertheless, the road remained quite good: small bridges, covered with and

adorned by benches, [had been] thrown over the brooks and the irrigation canals [and] offered conveniently arranged places of rest here and there. The valley, the road through which skirted the left slopes, was very populous and cultivated. We passed a village every fifteen minutes. At noon, we passed a wooden bridge over a wide river, the Nam Pouï, coming from the north-west and which appeared to be the principal watercourse of which the Nam Nga was an affluent. The valley of this latter river came to an end and in front of us, in every direction, there were chains of small hills enclosing the road. We stopped in the evening on the outskirts of this mountainous region and we slept in the village of Sieng bang.

The next day, 28 September, we entered a maze of small valleys and hills with rounded summits and forested slopes, where the road often disappeared in a quagmire, but their picturesque appearance and the varied landscapes made us forget the impracticability [of the region]. The further we advanced into this new region, the more singular was the appearance of the vegetation and the characteristics of these sites. For people accustomed for many years to the particular features of tropical nature, this change was extremely pleasant and entirely new: it was like an unconscious recollection of the homeland which we found in each meander of these narrow valleys. The population, almost entirely composed of Kho, contributed still more to accentuating this change.

A degree of commercial activity reigned on the road. Convoys of bullocks, transporting lead, cotton, tobacco, and tea, coming from Xieng Hong, met us frequently. We were so little used to this movement that the country and our journey gained a new attraction from it. The third day after our departure from Muong Long we ended up in the great plain of Xieng Hong through the valley of one of the affluents of the Nam Ha. It was at the confluence of this river and the Mekong that the capital of the Sip Song Panna rose up. Our porters, who had been hired to finish the entire stretch in three days, were exhausted. Their feet swollen and their shoulders bruised, they stirred our compassion and we agreed to let them stop a few kilometers from the town, on the condition that they join us early the next day. With a rapid pace we traversed the wide plain where recently built villages rose up next to ruins which were the result of past wars. We crossed the Nam Ha in a ferryboat, beside a destroyed wooden bridge and at 4.30 p.m., we stopped at a pagoda situated outside the built-up earthen wall of the town.

Alévy was waiting impatiently for us. He had been very badly received by the local authorities. From his arrival onwards they had tried to force him to retrace

his steps. Alévy knew his fellow citizens too well to accede to their threats: "Do what you want with me," he answered, "kill me if that makes you happy but never would I dare to return to the chief who has sent me, without favorable reply. And if you would know the people with whom you have to deal, you would not expose yourself with confidence of heart, pushing them to the edge. I do not dare to mention what they might do to Muong Long, if you persist in your refusal to let them come here and it would be wise to allow them to come here. The sight of the great men of the country would force them without doubt to be satisfied and you are perhaps more easily able to bring them to reason." This mixture of intimidation and flattery had produced its effect. Thus they had sent us the authorization to come to Xieng Hong, but this authorization precluded in no way the decision that was still to be taken in regard to the continuation of our journey. Alévy had not been able to see the king nor the Burmese chief, nor the Chinese mandarin who resided in Xieng Hong. The evening before our arrival, there was a long discussion in the *sena*, and on the day itself, early in the morning, the Chinese had left with a letter for Muong La.

To sum up, they did not seem to regard us too badly and the difficulties that we still had to overcome were surely more easily surmountable than those that the ill will of the Burmese authorities of Xieng Tong had placed in front of us.

The town of Xieng Hong had been reconstructed to the north of the confluence of the Nam Ha since its destruction by Maha Say, the governor of Muong Phong, and if the plain itself was very densely inhabited, the new town had as yet only attracted a very small number of settled residents. It was still a market town rather than a population center.

The market was held almost every day—five times a week—and it offered all the supplies which we have already listed [as being available in] Muong Long, in much greater quantities. The Mekong—I beg pardon for not having spoken about it yet—flowed at a very short distance from the town. In this place it was from three to four hundred meters wide and it flowed peacefully between high banks bordered by sand banks. Its waters had already receded five meters and it had reached its maximum during our stay in Muong Yong.

A little below the town and after having received the waters of the Nam Ha, the river suddenly became narrower and hills rose on the banks. It was there, on the right bank, that the ruins of the old town, the position of which MacLeod had

determined in 1837, were located. Up river there was a similar narrowing and, judging from the horizon of mountains which limited the view to the east and the north, it appeared that the Mekong definitely entered the [mountain] chains of Tibetan origin where its source were located.

According to the chronicle of the *that* of Muong Yong, Xieng Hong appeared to have been the first seat of Laotian power in the upper valley of the Mekong. It was the town called Tché-li on maps and by Chinese historians. The importance of its historic role made us enthusiastically investigate all the remainders which might tell us something about this unknown past. One of our first visits thus was to the ruins of this old town which were situated an hour's march to the south of the pagoda in which we camped. Among the tall grass which had already invaded the place, we found only the old palace of the kings and a pagoda which merited to attract our attention. The latter especially, built on the summit of the hill on the flanks of which the ruins were located, presented an original architecture and ornamentations which stood out greatly above anything we had seen so far in Laos. It rested on a base that one climbed by ten steps or so and it was surrounded, on three sides out of four, by a gallery, the walls of which were decorated with Chinese paintings. The subjects were new, the colors better. The whole testified to a more advanced art: one could see besieged towns in which the view penetrated into the interior of the houses. Some of the fighters were people displaying a Siamese-style tuft of hair and with quite fair skin. In their adversaries, we thought we recognized Burmese: their skin was black and colored cloths were wrapped around their legs. They also had a tuft of hair and they always played the role of the winners. There were also some scenes of rural life in which there were a few accurately portrayed animals and very good figures of Chinese. The interior of the pagoda was completely paneled with carved wood. The walls were lit by numerous windows. The corners of the frames displayed flower garlands, drawn with a very gracious line, which gave the pagoda a grand, rich appearance. The columns which supported the roof were thicker in the middle: they consisted of a central piece around which plating had been applied. All around the pagoda there were the usual buildings, lodgings of monks, tombs, etc.

Below this pagoda was the palace of the king. It was a vast building, the external walls of which were still standing. The bricks were of two kinds: some were red and small in size, the others were big and gray in color which made them look like rubble stones. Some lions or dogs in sculpted sandstone were lying here and

there in the grass. It was in this palace, all the wooden parts of which had been destroyed by fire, that Captain MacLeod was received in March 1837.

The pagoda in which we resided was filled with cotton elephants and horses, surmounted by huge towers in bamboo and colored paper. A great celebration had taken place on 4 October at a neighboring pagoda: this feast, which the locals call the *Selac* celebration, was held on the occasion of the end of the rains. Nothing was sillier and more infantile than these reproductions from nature to which the most serious people of the place had devoted the best of their time for a month. They were probably less interesting than the snow men, built by European boys and with which one does not dream of filling churches. More adult pastimes had taken place on the stream, where pirogue races had caused the population to congregate for two days. In the evening, very picturesque illuminations lit the waters, the town and the neighboring mountains in fantastic displays.

After some negotiations, the *sena* decided to receive Commander de Lagrée. In Xieng Hong, this high assembly was composed of four high-ranking mandarins and of eight others with a lower rank, representing each of the twelve provinces which formed the kingdom. It was presided over by the *Momtha,* also called Chao Xieng Ha by some, a title which was equivalent to that of prime minister. The *Momtha* was an old man with white hair, a portly body and a placid face. He was wise enough to understand the disadvantages of refusing passage to people who were authorized by Prince Kong himself to enter China. Commander de Lagrée had increased his perplexity by observing the greatest reservations on the objective of our journey and on the means that we planned to use to make our desires prevail. The commander had decided to request the local authorities to choose, with the shortest possible delay, between the following two solutions: either to refuse the continuation of our journey in writing clearly and with reasons (and Mr. de Lagrée would make use of this piece as he saw fit), or to give us in forty-eight hours the means to get on the road to Muong La. Choices so clear and so decisive were little to the taste of the members of the *sena* of Xieng Hong. But unable to conceive that a foreigner was able to display so much resolve, without having a real force at his back or without being certain of serious support, they did not dare to displease the chief of the French mission even more. Our commander had complained loudly about the inconvenience they had caused by stopping us in Muong Long. The mandarins found themselves visibly confounded by this assurance and they consented with the shortest delay to an official

reception, hoping to find a way to get out of trouble.

This reception took place on 3 October. To the left and behind the *Momtha* the Burmese agent was sitting. To the right was an empty place, reserved for the Chinese mandarin, absent from Xieng Hong at the moment; all around the members of the *sena* were lined up.

Commander de Lagrée first showed the letter of the king of Xieng Tong and that of the *Pou Souc*. His colleague of Xieng Hong, who held the title of *Cha-kaï*, remarked that these letters mentioned only the authorization to proceed to Xieng Hong, to which a Thai mandarin replied that it could not be otherwise because Xieng Hong belonged to China and that the authorities of Xieng Tong did not have the right to indicate a further destination without the consent of the king of Alévy. The opposition of the Burmese moreover did more good than bad for our cause; it appeared that he was not taken too seriously. Commander de Lagrée then showed the Chinese passports. They produced no effect. The signature was unknown and one of the most influential members of the *sena*, Phya Luong Mangkala, shouted out that all this did not come from the *Maha sena* and that they did not know what it all meant. Then Commander de Lagrée slowly pulled the letter regarding us, addressed by Prince Kong to the second king of Yunnan, out of its envelope. A great silence fell and a Chinese secretary, respectfully prostrated, read it for those attending. He declared that it came from Peking, that the French mandarins were honest people and very high ranking and that it would be appropriate to receive us as hospitably as possible. The faces had changed in the wink of an eye and the *Momtha* addressed only obliging questions and gracious compliments to Commander de Lagrée.

The chief of the expedition then demanded to see the king and to leave as quickly as possible. It was agreed that His Majesty would receive us on the fifth and that we would leave on 6 October.

On the fifth, at the very moment the Commission went to the palace of the king, the mandarins stirred up new problems which threatened to defer our reception. They wanted to know in advance which presents we were offering to His Majesty. Nowhere during our journey had such a demand been imposed on us. Mr. de Lagrée answered that he did not know the king yet and that he would only decide the choice of the presents when he knew him. "I am not ignorant about the customs," he added, "but, having come from far, there is not much left.

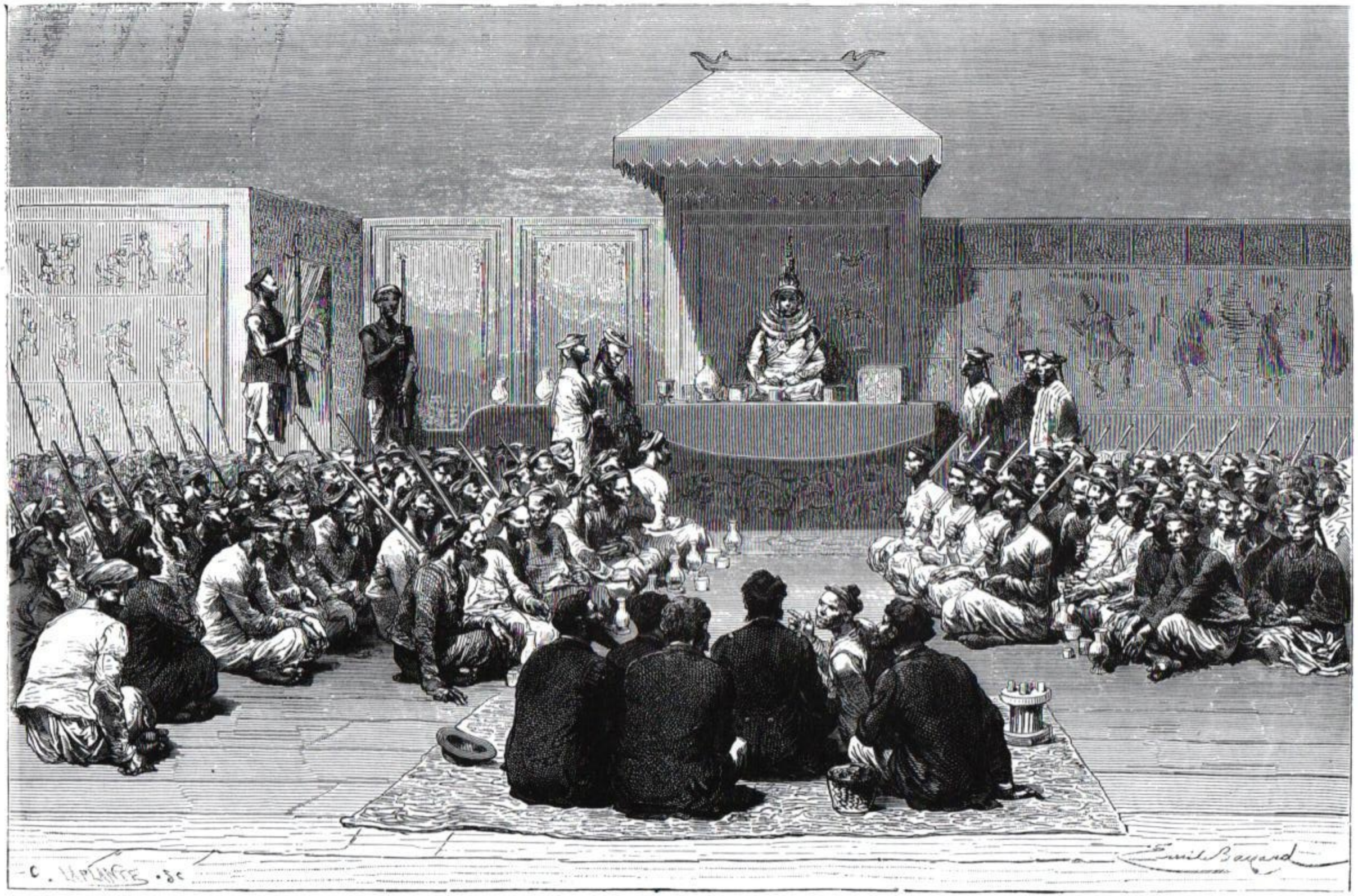


Plate 15 *Reception of the Commission by the king of Xieng Hong (drawing by E. Bayard, based on L. Delaporte).*

Nevertheless, after having seen the king, I will search among the objects that I still possess, what might have for him, for lack of any other merit, that of novelty." This answer was transmitted to the king, who gave the order to show the French officers in.

His Majesty provisionally lived in a poor bamboo house of very ramshackle appearance. The reception hall had been hastily adorned with Chinese carpets thrown about everywhere and, to give an idea of the higher power of the sovereign, they had gathered three or four hundred men, taken haphazardly, armed and dressed in the most irregular fashion and holding their flint guns, lances and sabers, rusted for the greater part and hardly in a state to be used, in the most unmilitary-looking fashion.

After a rather long wait, the king appeared, the assembly bowed, the horns sounded, and four small blunderbusses were fired. We saw a young man of nineteen to twenty years of age, whose dress resembled very much that of the clowns in our country fairs: he was wearing a big Chinese hat adorned with bells and dressed in a red silk tunic with a green undergarment and a pair of white trousers. In his hand he had a saber with a sculptured ivory handle. He sat on a sofa with crossed legs, stiff as a puppet, and spoke some monosyllabic words which Phya Luong Mangkala translated for Mr. de Lagrée into long questions on the objective of our journey, the country from where we came, etc. They let His Majesty add that we were allowed to leave when that was convenient for us. Then they served a light meal consisting of melons, grapefruits and guava. The king retired, surrounded by the same panoply as when he arrived. He appeared to suffer the tutelage of the high-ranking mandarins without complaint.

The next day, Commander de Lagrée sent him a stereoscope, a piece of Algerian cloth, images, gun-powder and some very small objects for the mandarins, the whole barely worth a hundred francs. Here we were able to conceal our poverty under the bad mood that we had been inspired to adopt from the first manipulations of the local authorities.

I had not attended the reception given by the king of Xieng Hong. The little time that we had still to spend in this place had convinced me to make better use of my day. From Xieng Hong we had to leave the river, to rejoin it only after a period of time [the length of] which we were unable to foresee. Once in China, would not the Muslim rebellion prevent us from approaching its banks? Since I

feared that the farewell we would address to this noble river, when leaving Xieng Hong, would be our last one, I decided to make a reconnaissance of the course up river from Xieng Hong, as far as I was able to get in one day. During this excursion I did not find the solitary and grand landscapes which had delighted me during a similar excursion I made above the Tang-ho a few days before our arrival in Muong Lim. On the other hand, I met with almost insurmountable obstacles to travel. In this region, the banks of the river were overburdened with bamboo forests and spiny bushes amidst which one was certain to leave behind some shreds of one's clothes, or even one's skin. Moreover, the rock cliffs that rose straight up soon blocked the walker and made it necessary to use a boat to go further. The few roads which ascended to the north-west, the direction up river from the valley of the Mekong, were very far from the banks, in order to avoid the fairly pronounced curves of the river which was already noticeably contracted, and they were of no use whatsoever for the reconnaissance of its banks. I made do with noting that after its short expansion in the plain of Xieng Hong, the Mekong regained this bizarre and tormented appearance, its bed filled with rocks, and the same rapid waters, narrow and deep, which had characterized it, starting from Vienchan.

Our traveling companions informed me of the grotesque reception given by the king of Xieng Hong. It appeared that his royal rank was greatly at risk of being taken away from him because his right to the throne were very much contested. In the state of disarray in which this region found itself after the taking over of Xieng Hong by Maha Say in 1851 and the death of the latter, numerous rivals for the throne of Xieng Hong sprang up. The Chinese, busy with their war against the Muslims, were unable to lead their candidate, a man of fifty years of age and of high birth, to triumph. In 1860, the Muslims, who were called Phasi in the region, took over the city and they were driven out only two years later after the locals reunited with the imperial forces. The region was in such a state of disorder for some time that the Kouy natives, who lived to the north of Muong Lim, were able to reach the city to ravage and loot it. During this time, Ava had promoted a son of the king who had been vanquished and put to death by Maha Say, and of a woman of the people of Muong Long. This young man, whose rights to the throne were invalidated by the low birth of his mother, had taken the monk's robe and lived in a monastery. He had been installed by the Burmese as the king of Xieng Hong.[3] At the first opportunity, the Chinese tried to have their candidate

gain the upper hand and this unlucky country was again plunged into war. At the moment of our departure, we also received news from Xieng Tong which seemed to predict a future battle between the indigenous people and the Burmese. The king and the *Pou Souc* quarreled about the French expedition and the Burmese mandarin, who was dissatisfied with the over-benevolent attitude of the king towards us, had recruited a certain number of Phongs to add them to the Burmese soldiers who comprised his usual guard. The king had immediately reacted to this hostile demonstration by encircling the residence of the *Pou Souc* and holding him prisoner in it, i.e., both himself and his small army. At the same time he sent mandarins to Ava to accuse the *Pou Souc* and to demand that he be punished with death in Xieng Tong itself or at least that he be recalled to Ava to be tried there. To support his complaint the king enumerated the great exactions committed by the *Pou Souc* in the exercise of his assignment. One of these is worth citing: it consisted in nothing less than the removal of money originating from the taxes collected in Xieng Hong. This tax money, a tax which was set at seven *tchoi* of gold and a thousand *tchoi* of silver (the *tchoi* was a weight of sixteen grams), was escorted by mandarins and had passed by Xieng Tong. The *Pou Souc* sent a group of armed men, commanded by his own brother, to seize this prize, which was destined for the court of Ava.

For its part, Xieng Hong was looking for a quarrel with Xieng Tong. During the previous wars, a lot of inhabitants from Xieng Hong sought refuge with the Kun, who then wanted to stop them returning home, unless they agreed to pay a tax of between three *tchoi* and two *tchap* per person (from two to seven francs). After the celebration of the new moon, said the people of Xieng Hong, we will send a last warning to the Kun, and if they do not listen to us, we will fight.

In this dreadful mess were the political affairs of the country we traversed.

Mixed populations of Xieng Hong—Travel from Xieng Hong to Muong La or Se-mao—Arrival in China

The appearance and the behavior of the population of Xieng Hong showed the effects of the troubled situation of the country. A great number of poor people wandered here and there without having the courage, in the face of such an uncertain future, to settle in one place and build themselves a dwelling. Refugees from the

neighboring regions mingled in great numbers with the locals. Among them we noticed another type of Thais, the Thai Neua or Northern Thais, whom the war of the Phasi had hounded from their native land, the country of Kochampri from where the Phong also originated. They were not tattooed, wore their hair long, a blue jacket, trousers of the same color, wide and short, sometimes leggings as the natives had and a big turban in a deep color, with a flattened shape. Under their jackets, they usually had a kind of colored velvet tie adorned with lace-work. Their women had a similar dress, in which the skirt replaced the trousers. Some of them wore a kind of small bonnet. New native tribes, different from all those that we have already listed, made their appearance in Xieng Hong. The most interesting ones were the Lolo and the Yo Jen. Though they spoke a language rather different from Chinese, it was correct to link them with the Chinese populations of Yunnan. For the Laotians, the Lolo were old Ho who wandered as nomads through the country. The Lolo were rather gentle; the Yo Jen were believed to be very good at shooting guns and in the profession of highway robbery. They frequently gathered in gangs of twenty to thirty to carry out their wicked tricks. [4]

From all viewpoints, it was important to set foot on Chinese soil as soon as possible. On 7 October, after a stay of barely a week in Xieng Hong and despite all that was still to be studied there, we crossed the Mekong, which we would not see again, on a big raft and we started out on the road to the Chinese border.

A little up river from the town of Xieng Hong, rafts and boats continually ferried passengers, beasts of burden, and merchandise from one side to the other. Our luggage, our three horses, our porters and the personnel of the Commission were transported to the left bank, for a due of eight francs, paid to the ferryboat enterprise. Our crossing was made in two trips, on two big boats linked together, supporting a big platform on which we reposed.

It was the last time that we sailed on the waters of the Mekong. We had to say a last good-bye to all those imposing and pleasant landscapes which we had come to know during our long stay on its banks. The celebrations on the water, the pirogue races, the Venetian illuminations, the dangers and the pleasures which had given it a special place in our memories, all these would be replaced on this stage of the journey by new landscapes and impressions of another type. Would we gain by this change?

We passed the night in the pagoda of a village which stood on the left bank, opposite Xieng Hong.



Plate 16 *A family of Thai natives (drawing by E. Bayard, based on L. Delaporte).*

The next day we left early and our small convoy scattered soon on the zigzag paths which climbed the heights of the left bank. Soon the road was running along the cliffs on the flanks of a small chain the general direction of which was north-north-west. At 11 a.m. we traversed the crest of this chain to follow the opposite flank and at this change of route, we observed in a far-away vista, the Mekong and the great plain that surrounded the Nam Ha with its winding meanders. The rainy fog which had hung over the mountain so far dissipated and a warm sun bathed this far-off landscape in light. To the east and the north, one saw only the unending summits of mountains rising higher and higher, resembling the waves of a swelling, petrified sea. On our way we met a few natives with a new, Chinese type of elongated face. In the afternoon we descended the eastern slope of the chain that we were following to enter the small valley of Muong Yang, a village where we stopped for the night.

The few villages that stood on the edge of the Nam Yang were all populated by Thais driven out of the north by the Muslim insurrection. Their country of origin was on the banks of the Nam Thé, which they called Kiang Cha. Muong Choung and Muong Ya were there. Formerly, these provinces were dependencies of Xieng Hong. They had been conquered by the Chinese long ago. These Thai were given to us as porters in Muong Yang. The majority of them seemed to be exhausted and all of them looked miserable. The letter from Xieng Hong which we carried, ordered them to conduct us and none of them dreamed of asking payment for the journey. Loyal to the principle which he had adopted at the start of the journey, i.e., to pay for all the services which were rendered to us, Commander de Lagrée gave to each of our porters three *thès* (two francs and forty centimes) per day of marching. The next day, 9 October, we left the valley of the Nam Yang to enter the mountains. These were heavily forested and almost deserted and they offered us the most picturesque views at the cost of an often excessive fatigue. Perpetual ascents and descents admirably prepared us for sleep in the evening. We slept amid the tall grasses, a little below a summit to which my barometer ascribed an altitude of thirteen hundred meters.

During the whole day of the tenth, we followed a narrow, forested and winding crest, from the height of which we enjoyed almost all the way a very long view. Wells sometimes sprang from the flanks of the mountains, a few meters below us, and from waterfall to waterfall they increased the boiling waters of the torrents flowing at our feet. In the evening we came to a village of natives whose dwellings

were very different from those of Laotian villages. The traditional *sala* which we hoped to find was absent. We had to be content with a reasonably comfortable stable, to which I myself would have preferred sleeping in the forest. The mosquitoes which were beginning to disappear were, to our disadvantage, replaced by myriads of intimate parasites against which one had to fight all night. The male population was almost entirely occupied with field work when we came to this place. To find the number of porters we needed, we had to recruit the women and children but that did not at all slow down our marching. Never, on the contrary, have we been led so quickly. The accelerated rhythm of the pace was beaten on a tom-tom with which the porter preceded us. We soon reached a rather sizable river, the Nam Yot, an affluent of the Mekong from which we were about a day's march away. Since Muong Yang, we had ascended almost directly to the north, parallel to the valley of the river.

The course of the Nam Yot meandered along the floor of a very cultivated valley into which at every instant small rivers [flowed], picturesquely framed by the heights which bordered it. The marching day of 11 October was a charming walk through the gardens and numerous villages. After six hours of marching, we arrived in Xieng Neua, the last Laotian center of any importance we had to visit.

Xieng Neua belonged to Muong La Thai, a small Laotian province the capital of which was located in the east. Since the war, the king of Muong La Thai lived half a day's march to the north-west of Xieng Neua. It was by way of this petty king, who carried the title of *Sa-mom,* that Se-mao and Xieng Hong were linked. The people of Se-mao write Chinese, the *Sa-mom* translated this into Thai language and vice versa. Muong La Thai was one of the four principalities of the Sip Song Panna, the one which the Lu people considered to be the most important. It was, they said, the gate to China. Muong Khie was that of Burma, Muong Long was the gate to Xieng Tong and Muong Phong was that to Xieng Mai. We rested a whole day in the pagoda of Xieng Neua. The thirteenth of October was a day with a full moon and the religious ceremony, which was usually held on this day, was conducted together with the celebration of the end of the rainy season and the inauguration of the dry season. Thus the inhabitants were eager to get rid of the foreigners who had come to occupy their pagoda. To finish with us as soon as possible, they had the effrontery to persuade us to leave the road that we had followed so far to go to Muong Pang. We entered a narrow gorge which dominated Xieng Neua and not much later we left the basin of the Nam Yot. After three

hours of marching, we arrived at our destination. In Muong Pang we learned that we had left the usual road to make a useless detour to the east. The shortness of the stretch was the only reason for the deceit of the people of Xieng Neua.

Muong Pang presented us with an appearance that was too new for us not to dwell on it a few moments more.

This small village, situated at the back of a gorge, eleven to twelve hundred meters above sea level, was inhabited by Chinese and Thai Ya expelled from the south of Yunnan by the war. They brought the customs and agricultural characteristics of the Celestial Empire to Laos: the high Laotian houses were replaced by small, low huts crudely built from kneaded mud, applied on a wooden basket-work frame. However, if the appearance of the dwellings of these poor refugees was miserable, their superior industriousness was revealed in details. It was with a vivid pleasure that we found tables, benches, cupboards and the thousand utensils of domestic life that, every day, we had to improvise to replace. We did not feel at ease finding ourselves comfortably seated in a semi-circular vault, around an abundantly furnished table. To understand the importance that we attached to these satisfactions which might appear, at first sight, a little childish, one must first have been unable, after long searching, to find a comfortable position to eat while squatting. If picnic meals on the grass appear charming to well disposed people, they become in the end horribly annoying for travelers wearied by fatigue. The orderly gardens which surrounded the dwellings of our hosts, the carriages, the winnowing machines that we saw around us, gave notice in a more certain way than the few works such as bridges or the road that we had already met with, the proximity of that famous country where agriculture was the first of the arts. The rice harvest was just finished and people were doing the first work on the harvested fields. It was the first time that we had seen such serious plowing being done in the mountains.

The Thai Ya that we found in Muong Pang were dressed in almost the same way as the Thai Neua whom we met in Xieng Hong. The dress of the women was very characteristic: they wore a skirt and a tawdry corselet above which they put a small jacket and a chess-board shirt. The big, round earrings of silver wire and the buttons of the same metal in the hair gave a rich and original appearance to this costume which was not dissimilar to certain costumes of Switzerland or Brittany.

We received the most prepossessing and cordial reception from the inhabitants of Muong Pang where we passed almost a whole day. In the evening, we enjoyed a local concert which was performed by a single person beating a gong, armed with several hammers and hitting with doubly hard blows on several instruments placed in front of him. The rhythm which he held and the gradation of the tones of the tam-tams gave to this apparatus a faint resemblance with the peal of bells in our churches. The musician was unable to continue this exercise. After a short while he stopped, bathed in sweat and exhausted and was replaced on the platform by another player. We left again for Muong Pang on the morning of the fourteenth with twenty-four porters. After a march as short as that of the previous day, we arrived at 11 a.m. at Ban Nang-Sang-Ko. Again, we saw the valley of the Nam Yot and the village of Xieng Neua from the heights of a peak on the road. On the gentle slopes of the hills with their rounded summits, we saw traces of old crops, which testified to the fact that the land had formerly been settled by a very dense population. The landscape displayed the most varied shades because of the diversity of the crops.

In Nang-Sang-Ko we were on the side of a new valley, at the end of which a small river meandered; it first ran to the north, then turned to the west around a calcareous massif of considerable elevation, the denticulate crests of which separated us from the Mekong river. Each of the hillocks which rose up above the river was crowned with a village and, from a distance, the dark color of the houses, built in terraces, gave them the false look of fortified castles. The transformation of the vegetation and agriculture became more pronounced each moment. Maize had for some time succeeded rice in the highest parts of the mountain. The textile plant which was known by the name China nettle, soon made its spontaneous appearance and Dr. Thorel indicated to us the culture of an acanthus species which provided a blue die similar to indigo. The vegetables were grown on a wider scale: we found fields of peas. Fruit trees such as plums, peaches and apple grew in orchards. The forest had almost entirely disappeared. Here and there, only some oak trees and, on the crests, some clumps of pine trees had been saved from the ax. These landscapes, so different from those we were accustomed to, made us happy at heart. The industriousness which reigned in these villages, the cordial reception of the population and the increasing availability of supplies reminded us at each step that we were getting back into civilized regions. The thousand details of rural scenes which we came across

evoked more than once memories of our homeland. We were not regretting the picturesque appearance and the strange customs of the countries that we left behind us. We arrived at that point of the journey at which new things, for us, were those that looked most like Europe and France.

The inhabitants were more and more of a mixed type between the Chinese and Thai races. Certainly, this mixed type faithfully represented the old populations of Yunnan, or, if you will, the last Thais to have been conquered by the Chinese. The domestic animals underwent a transformation similar to that which we observed in the vegetation and the houses: the horses, the cows and the pigs were bigger in size, some mules made their appearance, the farm-yards were populated with a breed of chicken which reached a larger size by genetic improvement. We were offered pieces boiled in soup which weighed four kilograms. Poultry was sold by weight.

On 16 October, we stayed the night in an entirely Chinese-looking village called Tchou-Tchiai. Inscriptions on red paper, written in those ideograms which have imbued Chinese literature and civilization with its both original and conservative features so variously appreciated by Western philosophers, could be read on the thresholds of the houses. The interior of these dwellings displayed the uniform appearance that is found in all provinces of the Chinese empire, whatever their degree of comfort or wealth, or to whatever social class the owner belonged. We already recognized the uniform style which a civilization, several thousand years old, had been able to imprint on the behavior of an immense population, despite the diverse origins and size of a territory so large that it showed every kind of climate.

In Tchou-Tchiai, we were unable to gather immediately all the porters that we needed to continue our journey. I stayed behind with some men of the escort and a small part of the luggage to wait for the horses and the bullocks which they promised us. I waited until 4 p.m. The people of the village were spread over the fields and in the company of some women who attended to the domestic work, I forced myself to wait patiently.

The Laotian language was no longer understood here: I could no longer recall the few words of Mandarin that I had known formerly. I tried to strike up a conversation with the help of ideographic characters which are understood from one end of China to the other, whatever may the dialect spoken be.[5] Thus I obtained

some information on the military feats of those terrible Muslims, whose rebellion had overturned the whole of Yunnan for some twelve years. The master of the house had been overpowered while he was inside his house which was invaded by them. More than a hundred thousand people had been killed in the country, after the fall of the Chinese city of Se-mao, which for a whole year had resisted the power of the Koui-tse—which was the pejorative name the Chinese gave to these Muslims. The prowess of these ferocious soldiers was surely exaggerated. Their weapons were depicted as of prodigious size. They had small cannon operated by hand which one of them carried on his shoulder while another put the fire to the breech. They used lances some ten meters long which had to be handled by two men. Thanks to these formidable instruments the two thousand of them, helped by a great number of Thais, had managed to conquer the region for a certain time. The present governor of Se-mao had managed to chase them for a little while but their passage had left horrible memories. Cholera reigned, they told me, in this city, and fifty victims were dying every day. I intended to communicate this latter information to Mr. de Lagrée for the sole purpose of avoiding any panic among the expedition's men.

My loyal Annamite, Tei, who helped me with this written conversation, was delighted to encounter customs so similar to those of his own country. For him as well as for the others of the escort, the arrival in China was a true homecoming. Moreover, their pride was singularly flattered at entering, not as conquered people, as people who already knew that they must bow to a traditional superiority, but as soldiers of a power to which China had to bow in her turn. The Laotian pagodas had disappeared and it was with deep respect that our Annamites found in every house an altar devoted to the ancestors, such as one could see in the poorest houses of Cochinchina.

It was only after the return from the fields that I was able to obtain, not the bullocks which I had been promised, but the few porters who were sufficient for the transportation of the packages which had been left to me. I was unable to rejoin the expedition the same day and that night I slept in a small barracks in which some soldiers from Muong La Thai were garrisoned. I again saw the Chinese uniforms and the military traditions with which I had familiarized myself during the war of 1860. The illusion was so complete that when I woke up in the morning to the sight of the Chinese hats covered with red tassels and the lances which adorned the field-bed on which I had passed the night, I thought for a moment

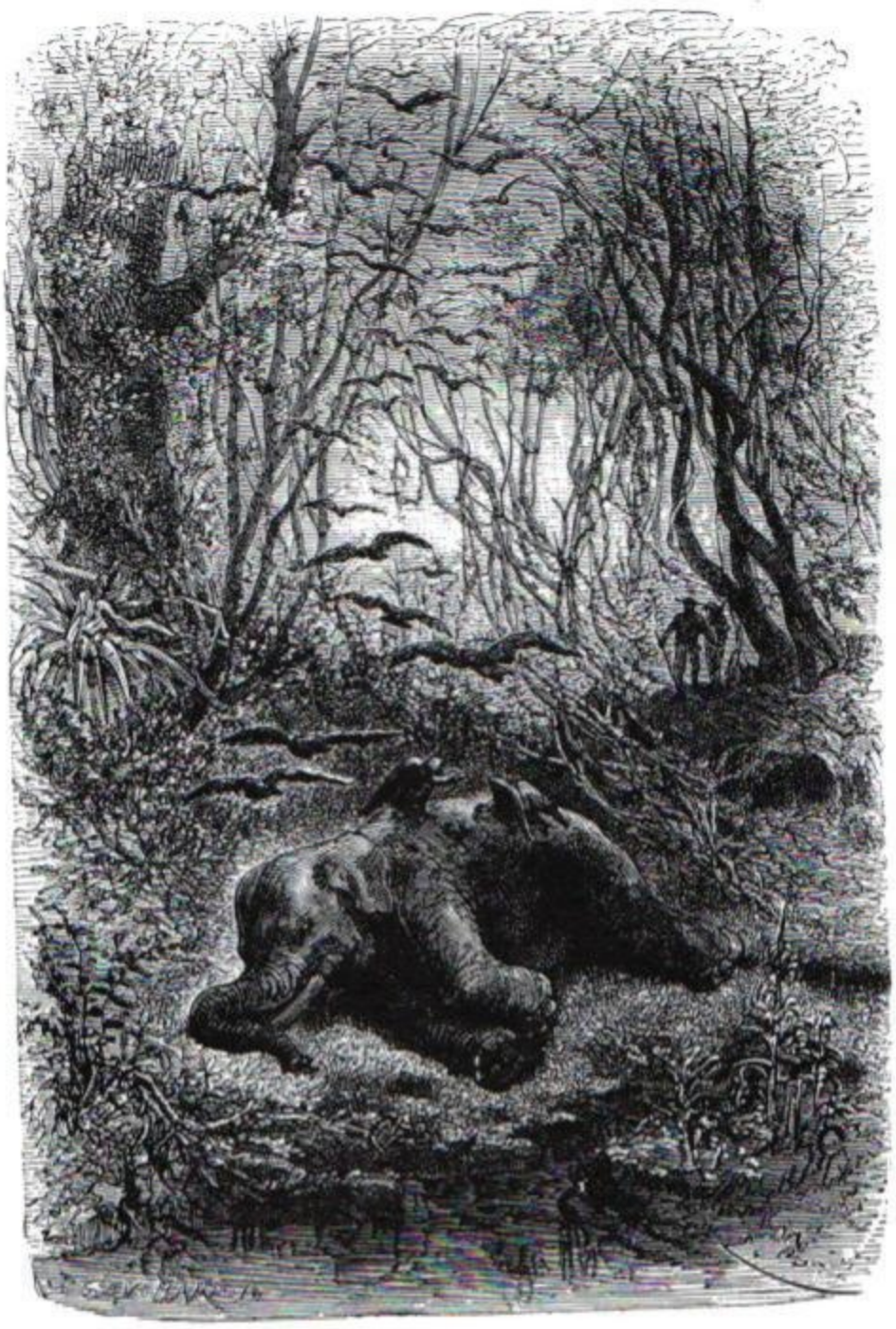


Plate 17 *An elephant being eaten by vultures (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

that I was on the banks of the Pé-ho, wandering between Tien-tsin and Peking in order to try to find the Tartar army.[6]

Quite early I set off again to try to rejoin the expedition. We followed the summit line which was shaded by a magnificent pine forest. On the slopes of the mountain there were a few, mostly deserted houses. The cholera had passed there and destroyed the greater part of the population. We hurried on to a plateau where the Muslim devastations, about which people had told us so often, appeared in all their reality. A big village, almost a small town, revealed its red brick houses and its curved-back roofs in the middle of the cultivated fields. Only the walls remained standing; flames had left their black marks on the walls. A solemn

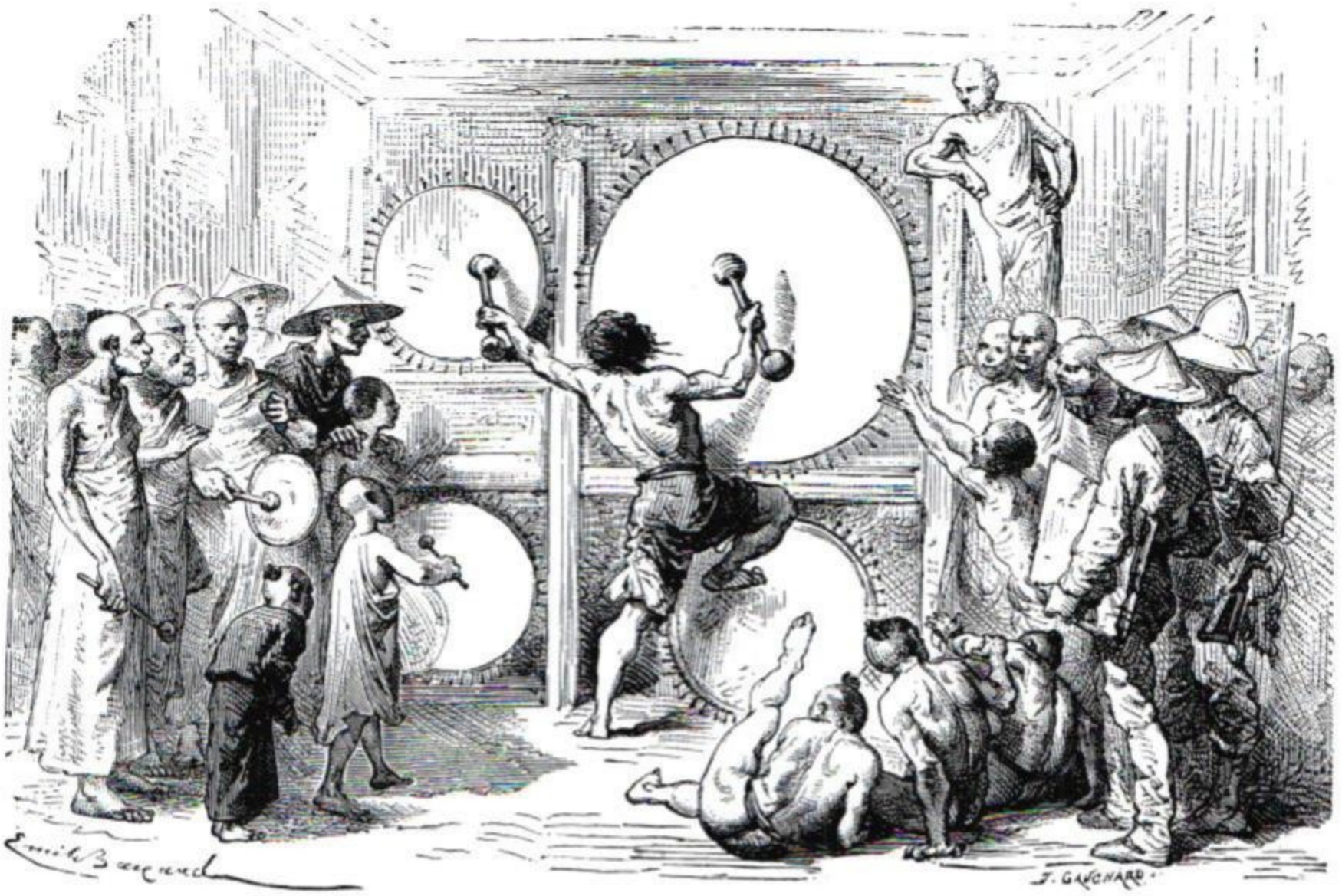


Plate 18 *A Laotian hitting a gong in Muong Pang (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

silence reigned in this village in which we found for the first time the solidity and comfort that characterized Chinese buildings. The people had not fled; the well-maintained crops which surrounded the abandoned houses testified to their presence. They were hiding in the vicinity. It was there that I found Mr. de Lagrée.

After the necessary halt for lunch, the whole expedition set out again. We descended the opposite flank of the plateau again to traverse the valley of a small torrent which ran southwards. Judging from its direction, this watercourse surely had to belong to the basin of the Nam La, which flowed into the Mekong river, between Xieng Hong and Muong You and which separated Yunnan *sensu stricto* from the Sip Song Panna over part of its course. Next we climbed a reasonably high chain: the cliff road was bordered by tombs, some of which were in marble, covered with Chinese inscriptions. In China all the roads in the neighborhood of towns were turned into a sort of funeral route. The traffic having become busier,

the costumes more exquisite, the behavior of the people we met less familiar, we prepared little by little for the spectacle that awaited us around the next bend.

At 4 p.m., an immense plain opened before us: in the center a fortified town rose up, the red and white houses of which spilled out of the enclosure on all sides and stood in irregular districts on the banks of two brooks which meandered in the plain. The kitchen-gardens, the gardens, and the villas radiated out for a great distance and, in several directions, the silvery ribbons of stone roads traced through the deforested gray heights which surrounded the plain.

It was not without lively emotions that we welcomed this first Chinese town which displayed its hospitable roofs before us. After eighteen months of fatigue, after having traversed regions devoid of all civilization, we found ourselves facing a town, a living embodiment of the oldest civilization of the Orient. For the first time, European travelers entered China through its Indian border. At that moment, surely, our enthusiasm was greater than was warranted: the sufferings we had endured made us overestimate the importance of our discovery. For an instant, we believed that China showed itself for the first time to Europe, represented by six Frenchmen.

Chapter 5

Reception in Se-mao—Description of this town—The war of the Muslims—Departure for Pou-eul—The salt works of Ho-boung

Mr. de Lagrée sent a courier to inform the authorities of Se-mao about our arrival. We had hardly set foot in the outskirts of the town than the envoys of the governor, escorted by some soldiers, came to greet us and they preceded us into the streets of the town. A huge crowd had assembled along our way and revealed a curiosity, inconvenient on account of its ardor, but the genuine benevolence of which could be felt. At this time—and only at this time—did we lack confidence in ourselves and we were saddened by our poor appearance. Shabbily dressed, without shoes, bearing no other insignia which would proclaim [us] representatives of one of the first among the nations of the world, than the now tarnished stripes which Mr. de Lagrée was still wearing, we must have presented a pitiful sight in the eyes of a people that was so formal and which attached such importance to appearances as the Chinese people do. Certainly, we would not have been able to traverse a town in France without provoking public comment and rallying boys against us. But it was less our dress than our features themselves which attracted the curiosity of the inhabitants of Se-mao. It was difficult to imagine what singular properties they attributed to Europeans in these distant provinces of the Chinese empire. They knew us only from distorted and inflated word-of-mouth tales which had come from the coasts to the interior. The weapons, the steam ships, the surprising industriousness of these terrible barbarians to which the prestige of a civilization of fifty centuries had succumbed, had given rise to the most marvelous tales and had lent substance to the most bizarre notions. One day a Chinese military mandarin, against all the rules of the etiquette, made his way to the back of Commander de Lagrée and lifted his hat up. When he was asked what was the motive for this

singular act, he said: "I wanted to assure myself of the existence of this third eye that the Europeans possess, with the help of which they can discover treasures hidden under the ground."

In Se-mao we were lodged in a pagoda outside the city. It was only after a struggle of several hours that the policemen of the place managed to eject the crowd which had invaded the sanctuary that they gave us as a dwelling. But our spirits were too high to take offense at the importunities of our new hosts. In our eyes everything was transformed into congratulations at our success. After having had cruel self-doubts about our success for a long time we were finally in China! These magic words left only room for joy. Everything that proved we were in China was welcome. We would have liked to feel and touch China even more. The pot-bellied men enthroned on the altars, at the feet of which we had installed ourselves, appeared to beam welcoming smiles.

I have already mentioned, I believe, that I was the only member of the Commission who had already visited China. Among my companions, I found the same impressions that I had myself when I arrived in the Celestial Empire: they were struck by the authenticity of the furniture screens and the verisimilitude of the images which gave us our ideas of Chinese interiors in Europe. The correctness and the veracity of the types which were displayed in these designs were indeed remarkable. The women, in particular, were perfectly reproduced: dress, posture, intimate details, all this was striking, even a little grotesque, with the amusing stroke of a caricaturist but at the same time quite accurate.

A little while after our arrival, a mandarin with blue insignia came to bid Commander de Lagrée welcome and offer him on behalf of the governor, presents in kind: rice, salt, chickens and pork meat.

The next day, 19 October, dressed as formally as our wardrobes (successively reduced by sacrifices) permitted, and followed by our armed escort, we went to the governor's residence. Passing through the quarters which separated us from the city gate, we were able to see the great damage caused during the Muslim occupation: a great number of houses were abandoned and half-destroyed. Some, quickly repaired, had only a shelter of mats or planks as roofs. A great military liveliness reigned everywhere: soldiers came and went. Most of the pagodas were in use as barracks: their altars served as troughs for the horses. Already desecrated by the votaries of Mohammed, everywhere they displayed only mutilated gods

and ruined squares. The wall, built with bricks on a base of red sandstone, had crumbled in places. It was being repaired industriously. The moat was being widened. In front of the moat, huge friezes were being set in place. We entered the inner keep of the city by a double, arched door and we went to the *Yamen* of the governor. We were halted in the second court: the governor had not yet come. A few moments later a chair [borne by] eight porters came in with a noise of crackers: a man of some sixty years dressed in the official costume of a Chinese mandarin stepped down. A fur cappa magna was displayed on his silk robe and a lump of coral towered on his hat. We were dealing, or so we thought, with an official of the red insignia, i.e., belonging to one of the four highest grades of the Chinese hierarchy. The meeting took place in a narrow stand which dominated the courtyard. The crowd had invaded it and I no longer recognized the usual decorum and the meticulous etiquette of Chinese receptions. But the exceptional situation in which the town of Se-mao found itself, the strangeness of the visitors and the turmoil produced by the civil war were excuse enough for this violation of customs. The soldiers who encircled the pretorian pushed back the wave of invaders with the handles of their lances every five minutes but the crowd retreated only to come back immediately, more pressing and more forceful. It was the more difficult to understand each other because our interpreter Alévy was only able to talk in Chinese and Mr. de Lagrée had to provide him with a young Laotian assistant, taken from the region we had passed through and who, like all people from border areas, spoke the dialect of Yunnan rather poorly. The conversation was limited to generalities and an exchange of courtesies. The governor told us that we had been announced more than six months before and that he had sent a messenger to meet us. He made an allusion to the mysterious letter of which they had spoken in Xieng Hong. "I thought," he added, "that because of the length and the dangers of the road you would not come. How long do you count on staying with us?" "Some fifteen days are needed to rest." "If you want to pursue your itinerary, I must warn you that the region is in a very miserable state: you must fear disease, thieves and enemies of all sorts. Do you intend to continue towards the north?" "I have an order to ascend the course of the Mekong. But, since you have already told me of great difficulties, I request your advice and we will together discuss the best thing to do." "If you fear nothing," said the governor, "I will have you conducted where you want." Mr. de Lagrée gave him a revolver. Such a perfected weapon did not fail to be well received by a man whose role was, before all else, a military one and who was preparing to fight new battles. As soon as the method of handling it

had been explained, he bent forward on the rostrum and, at the risk of wounding one of his subjects, he fired several shots into the walls of the courtyard. This gift seemed to give him great joy. In reality, despite the few doubts which Commander de Lagrée still entertained on the subject of the role played by the authorities in Se-mao in the reception we had received in Xieng Hong—doubts which were only dispersed when we arrived in Yunnan—our relations with the Chinese authorities proved to be very cordial and sincere.

Besides, when examining the political situation of this backward part of the Celestial Empire and despite the Chinese appearances which struck and seduced us at first, I recognized later that, in Yunnan, we were not really dealing with officials delegated with central power. All of them were local people who had promoted themselves to the rank of mandarins and had no significant relations with the government of Peking. The relatively recent conquest of all of these regions, the division into Chinese administrative districts which, for the territory of Se-mao, does not go back further than the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the disobliging characteristics of the inhabitants caused the court of Peking to maintain the municipal franchises in the majority of the cities of Yunnan. Thus areas like Ho-mi-tcheou govern themselves by a council whose members are nominated by the inhabitants. These were unshakable vestiges of the independence which the different parts of the province had enjoyed in the past. Ta-Ly and Yunnan have been the capitals of powerful kingdoms, which have fought, often with success, against Chinese armies. Se-mao formerly must have been under one of these Laotian kingdoms which appeared in the Chinese annals under the name Tche-li and Papesi-fou. Tche-li was, as I have already said, the name with which the Chinese designated Xieng Hong.

The reader may easily understand that the Muslim insurrection stimulated the natural energy of these mixed populations, from which Chinese civilization has not yet taken away their own characteristics and their feeling for their autonomy. Abandoned by the central power to themselves, they had taken their cause into their manly hands, had chosen a chief from their own ranks and had bravely stood firm in the storm.

The governor of Se-mao, who was called Li ta-jen,[1] originated from the city of Lin-ngan, the place where the resistance against the Muslims was for some time concentrated and the population of which was gripped by an implacable hatred against them. Under the direction of a famous chief, whose name alone was a

bogey for his enemies, Leang-smé or Leang-ta-jen, the whole south of the province put up a doughty stand against the votaries of Mohammed. The governor of Se-mao actively took part in this war and, after some success, had been named prefect of Ta-lan, a town situated between Se-mao and Lin-ngan, by Leang-ta-jen. From there he marched on Se-mao, evicted the Koui-tseu from there and was promoted to the red insignia. For a year now he had been trying to reorganize the country, two-thirds of the population of which had fled. In Se-mao only a few shop-keepers remained and to provide for the needs of the officials and the troops who had transformed this city into a veritable camp, immense convoys were brought from the south and the east. All the time long caravans of mules and horses loaded with rice, arms, munitions, cotton and wood were arriving. The governor showed a vigor that is very uncommon among Chinese mandarins: time and again he was seen directing military exercises, sending couriers, overseeing the construction of palisades and selecting the locations in the countryside for other defense works intended to protect the city against a surprise attack. In Xieng Tong he had bought a quantity of flint guns of English make: these arms, which are so outdated in Europe, constitute real progress in this part of China. The breech gun still forms the basic armament of the Chinese troops of Yunnan and, considering the defensive and the offensive weapons displayed around us, we might have thought that we had gone back three or four centuries in time. The long culverins of sizable caliber, the wooden cannons encircled with iron, the guns positioned on pitch-forks appeared to date from the day after the invention of gunpowder and recalled the weapons which had failed the bravery of our fathers at Crécy and Agincourt. The knives took us even further back, to the Middle Ages: the long halberds and lances ending in crescents, designed to bunch up the enemy tightly and to decimate them, the serrated points in the form of saws to render wounds mortal, appeared to us to be grotesque rather than dangerous. [2]

There was fighting at a distance of three to four days march from Se-mao, in Muong Ka and Muong Pan. We had to make a decision on the route that would be appropriate to follow: to go north and enter the territory in the hands of the Muslims was too tough a choice and would expose us to suspicions from both parties at the same time, without any advantages resulting for our journey. Conversely, we risked losing everything, including our notes, in one of those skirmishes in which the advance posts were embroiled.

The governor of Se-mao laughingly suggested to us that we stay close to him to help him fight the terrible Koui-tseu. He spoke again about the letter which he had

sent us in Xieng Hong to tell us not to take the road to Ta-Ly and not to let ourselves fall into the hands of the rebels, in whose eyes our Chinese passports would be only negative recommendations. To this letter which was sent by the vice-governor of the province, was added another, they told us, in European letters written from Yunnan by a European by the name of Kosuto. We were baffled as to who this Kosuto might be. According to public rumor he was very good at the production of gunpowder and in preparing mines designed to blow up the Muslims. He had several of his fellow citizens with him to help him with his work. If the authorities of Xieng Hong had given us Kosuto's letter, we would have surely known what our position should be *vis-à-vis* this singular personality, but again, what were the real dispositions of the Chinese authorities in regard to us? The foolish mistrust of the *sena* of Alévy had deprived us of this precious document, surely because they were unable to understand its contents. The presence of this European, perhaps a fellow Frenchman even in Yunnan, was a very good reason to go in that direction. Only there would we be able to obtain positive information from the highest Chinese authorities of the province and decide the final line of conduct we should adopt. A single road remained open to allow us to go to Yunnan: it was the one to Ta-lan, Yuen-Kiang and Che-pin and, even then, it took us close to the Muslim advance posts.

It was only after great uncertainties that Mr. de Lagrée was able to determine the meaning and importance of the indications which he gathered in his conversations with the Chinese authorities. The interpreter who had been made assistant to Alévy was not very capable of grasping and reproducing anything to do with politics or geography. But nevertheless, it was this person alone that the chief of the expedition would be obliged to count on. Alévy did not wish to follow us any further into a country where the dangers would multiply as we proceeded and Mr. de Lagrée was resigned to sending back a servant whose reluctance and fear made him more harmful than not. It is true that Mr. de Lagrée was able to have written communications with the Chinese authorities by the intermediary, the Annamite Tei, who was able to write down our questions and read the reply. But surely, so as not to compromise the dignity and secrets of the expedition in the eyes of the escort, he used this means to clarify his doubts too seldom, in my opinion. [3]

On 27 October, Alévy left us for good, taking a letter from Mr. de Lagrée for the governor of Cochinchina with him. He planned to descend the course of the Mekong



Plate 19 *Alévy, the Laotian interpreter of the Commission (drawing by E. Bayard based on a photograph).*

again and to return to Cambodia to settle there. He indeed arrived in Pnom Penh some time before our return to Saigon.

Commander de Lagrée's decision to abandon the route to the north and head north-east to the capital of Yunnan, was not made without stirring some demur in the members of the Commission. We were all young and in love with adventure: one is always bolder when one has no responsibilities to carry. Mr. de Lagrée noticed the reaction he had produced and engaged me in friendly discourse about it. For my part, I very much wanted him to authorize me to follow the course of the Mekong river to the west of Se-mao. Alone, I would not compromise any interests and risk only my own person. I was probably over-ambitious to explore the river to a certain distance above Xieng Hong, the point which the Englishman MacLeod had visited before us and which, by a combination of unfortunate circumstances was to remain the last position of the valley of this great river that was determined in a precise manner, when the journey of the French Commission was over.[4] Mr. de Lagrée postponed consideration of my request to the time of our arrival in Pou-eul fou, a town which should be our first stopover after leaving Se-mao. He confirmed moreover that he had not given up on the exploration of the upper part of the river valley but that in Yunnan he would have greater facilities and more certain means of investigation to assess the state of the country and the nature of the difficulties brought by the Muslim insurrection.

The value of the position of Se-mao was difficult to judge, from the commercial point of view. The war had too profoundly overturned the usual conditions of trade. In the market, besides food and local produce, we found only iron which came from King-tong, a major Chinese city to the north and then in the hands of the Muslims. The Laotians called it Muong Kou. We should also mention silk and basket-work, hats, baskets etc., which came from Se-tchouen, cinnabar from the vicinity of Ta-Ly, fine tobacco for the Chinese water-pipes, pepper, colored paper from Kouang-si, wool blankets and copper from Yunnan, and indigenous lacquer. Alévy bought a certain amount of silk to sell on the road. Salt was also the object of a rather active trade. It came from Pou-eul and from Muong Hao Tai, a fairly rich Laotian province, they said, to the south-east, where they cultivated opium poppies and tea. The salt was worth four francs for sixty kilograms and it was exported to Xieng Tong in exchange for cotton which was sent by the latter locality to Se-mao.

The town of Se-mao was about three centuries old. The residence of the king of Muong La, as the Laotians used to call this place, was found a league's distance

from the Chinese town. Under the able direction of its Chinese governors, Yunnan, which was at first a tributary of its Laotian neighbors, soon became the place of residence of Chinese mandarins, who in their turn dictated the law to the surrounding areas.

Se-mao was only fortified in 1811: the wall was square-shaped with rounded corners. It was about a league in length and had four gates. Close to the southern gate there were the ruins of a beautiful pagoda. The members of the Commission, unaccustomed to Chinese architecture, admired for the first time this type of fanciful ornamentation, this miniature representation of the various irregularities of the ground which has given rise to numerous imitations in Europe: it was after the fashion of the Chinese that caves, waterfalls, roads and bridges figure more or less appropriately today in our avenues and parks. The only really artistic part which remained intact in this pagoda was a sort of stone triumphal arch, very accurately constructed, presenting on its sides two round openings, a shape which the Chinese often like to give to their doors. There were also, here and there, statues of real value, to which the stone which was used, a beautiful pink sandstone, gave a warm color which enhanced its effect. It would be fair to say that the Chinese sculptors admirably copied postures and depicted movements very well, but that they applied themselves more to reproducing the grotesque and the funny than to copying nature. They were artists who had only nightmares and never happy dreams. Nevertheless, one could not deny that the general proportions of their monuments were sound. The curved shapes of the roofs possessed a real elegance and gave their cities an incontestably more gracious appearance than do our houses with their straight lines and their steep roofs.

We were on the best of terms with the population. These people were intelligent enough to feel how much superior we were, despite our poor appearance, to the foreigners which they usually received. It so happened that the governor's soldiers had left for dead, in front of our door, a Chinese servant who had fled in order to escape the beating which he had earned by his disobedience. With profound disapproval we had witnessed a kind of manhunt in which the soldiers indulged to catch this unfortunate and we took him in immediately to provide the help he needed. His state seemed hopeless: a large knife cut had opened the small of his back and had penetrated the lung. Other, less serious wounds covered his arms and his chest. The assiduous care of Doctor Joubert warded off the danger and brought certainty of recovery after a few days. I leave the effect that this miracle

of European science produced to the reader's imagination. In addition to the appreciation of the parents and friends of the wounded man, came the requests of all those that war or misery had rendered crippled or disabled. Our residence was never free of the lame, the blind, lepers, and ill people of every kind. Our doctors relieved all the suffering they were able to and spared neither time nor medicines. Diseases of the eyes seemed to be especially prevalent and we made large distributions of copper sulphate which, when used in a weak solution, had already improved many a weakened eyesight in Laos. The mandarins themselves hastened to have recourse to our medicines but the ills which they complained of most often were the result of their vices: it was especially for opium abuse they sought remedies. "There is none other," we told them, "than gradually to give up smoking it." "But we are weakened and unable to make any serious effort. Is there no way to get back at once our lost strength and our intelligence which is fading?" "Absolutely none." "Then why did you bring this disastrous drug for which you do not have a cure?" Since then we have often heard the same anathema being presented in different forms and it will be a long time in dispute between Europe and China. The opium that we found in Se-mao came partly from Canton, where it was brought by the English: it was the best and the most expensive. But after the war of 1840 they had started to grow opium poppies in Yunnan and on the borders of China and the opium from this source, although less well produced, was affordable enough to compete with the foreign opium. On the right bank of the Cambodia river, at the level of Se-mao, the Kha Kouy and the Lawa produced considerable quantities.[5]

On 24 October, a lively commotion was noticed in the city. We were told that a great number of inhabitants of Pou-eul had just arrived, fleeing the Muslim invasion. The Koui-tseu were not far from this city and we had to hasten to leave if we did not want to find the road completely blocked. Thanks to the intervention of the governor, we were able to get the twenty porters we needed, rather easily. On the twenty-ninth, Mr. de Lagrée went to take leave of the authorities of the city, who gave him the best advice on the precautions to be taken on the road and who gave him an escort of twelve soldiers with a sergeant in charge.

On the thirtieth, we set off and on a paved road traversed the plain of Se-mao, where some thirty villages were scattered, most of which were ruined and deserted. Passing a destroyed pagoda, we noticed a large incense-burner and a big bronze clock lying abandoned on the ground. Only their weight had saved these objects from the rapacity of the conquerors. We quickly climbed the slopes which bordered

the plain of Se-mao. What a pleasure to travel over a road that was paved with big marble blocks and regularly laid out on the flanks of the mountains! In Se-mao we had all bought shoes and we enjoyed the delights of this double comfort.

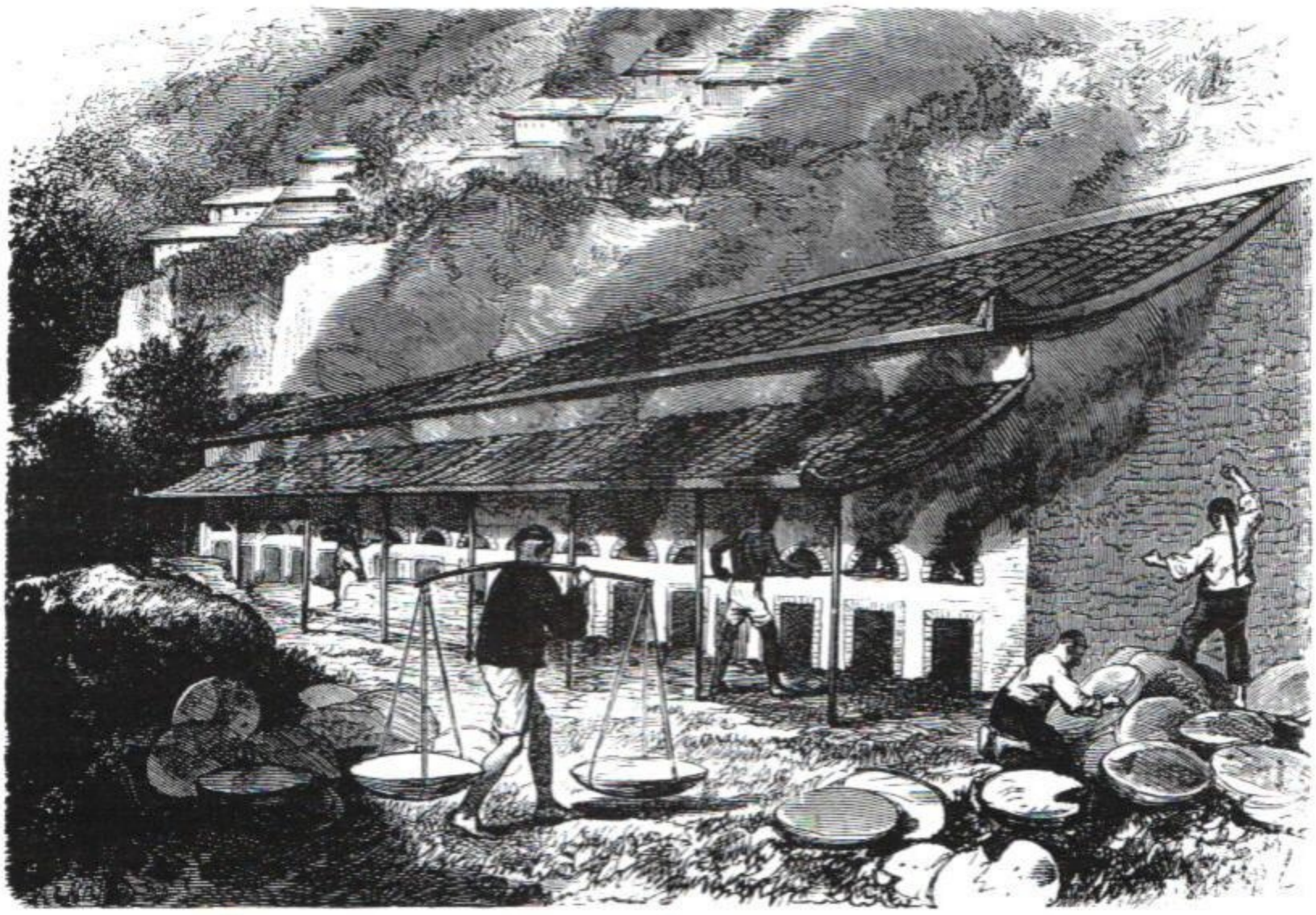


Plate 20 *Ovens of the salt mines of Ho-boung (drawing by Th. Weber based on L. Delaporte).*

We climbed a peak on the other side, below which there was a ruined pagoda where we passed the night. The next day we followed the banks of a torrent which ran to the north, each step increasing its waters with those contributed by numerous brooks. After a short time, it became a true river which the road crossed over via magnificent stone bridges. We lunched in the village of Na-kou-li. Here, with an astonishment mixed with pleasure, we found a name that already figured on the European maps. The present-day village of Na-kou-li barely justified this honor: it was composed of only some ten, partly ruined houses, as everything that we met on this road had been devastated by the Muslims coming to Se-mao. At the time the Jesuits made the maps of Yunnan, Na-kou-li had certainly been important.

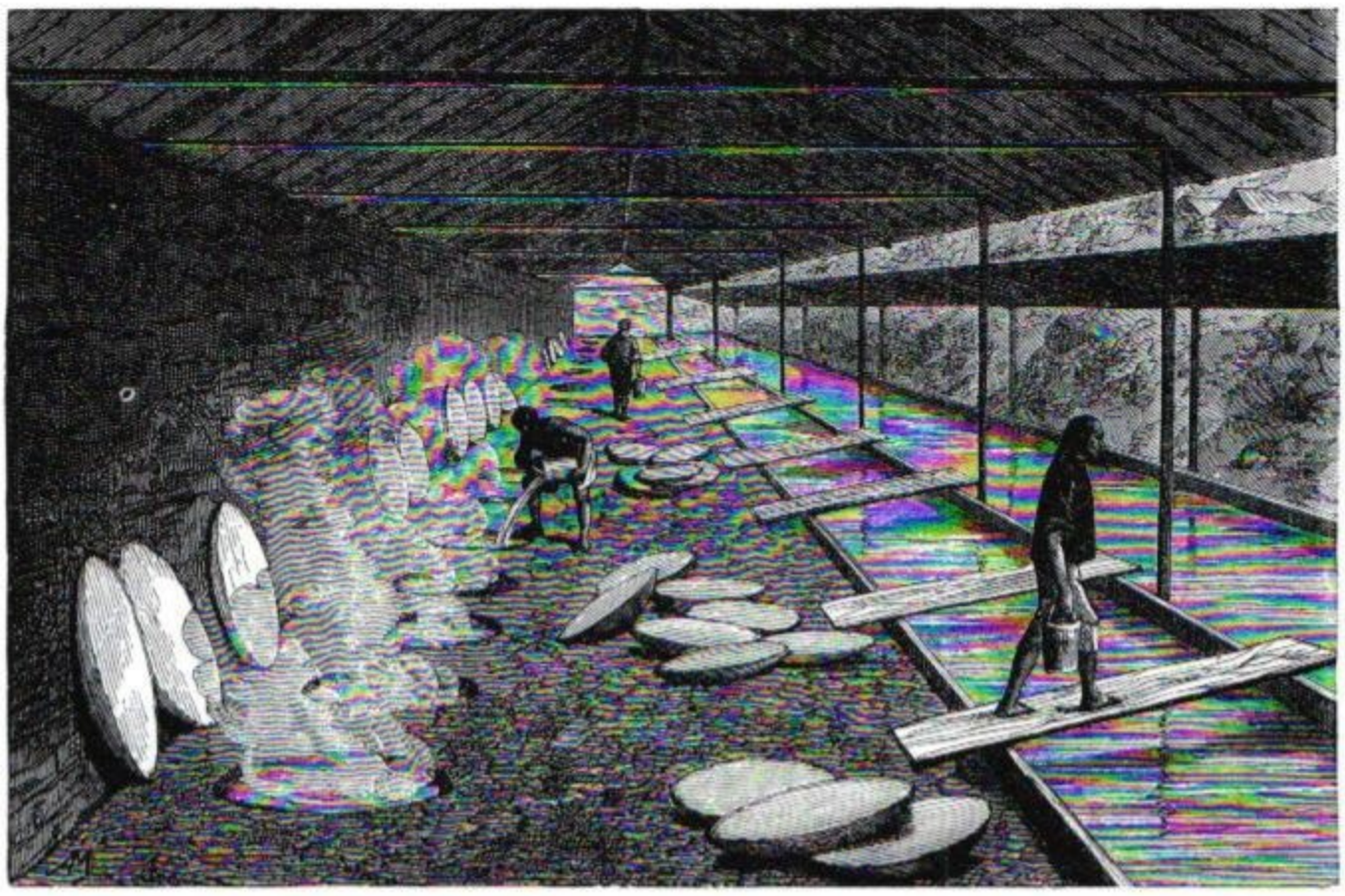


Plate 21 *Saline wells: evaporation (drawing by A. Marie, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

A little beyond this point, the road forked; one arm ran to Pou-eul, the other to the saline wells situated not far away. A customs post stood at the fork. Coal deposits were found nearby. Mr. Joubert visited them. The galleries, open-cast on the flank of the mountain, were some twenty meters deep. They were supported by wooden frames. The coal was used for evaporating the saline waters of the neighboring village of Ho-boung. We explored the latter village. It had at least two hundred houses and a very busy appearance. Eighteen extraction wells were fully active. One of them, which I examined carefully, was eighty meters deep. Hand pumps were stacked along a wooden gallery which sloped at forty-five degrees and which reached about half the total depth. An air pump refreshed the air breathed by the workers who operated the pumps. The water was brought by bamboo pipes into twenty marble troughs, each of which was connected to a furnace. The furnaces had an iron basin in which the saline water was concentrated by boiling the water from the marble troughs. The fuel was anthracite, the exploitation of which we just discussed, mixed with pine wood. Two days of boiling were needed for the water, which was constantly replaced in the basins, to cast a block of very hard white salt in the latter. During the whole time of boiling, they skimmed the mother waters carefully. The block taken from the basins weighed about one picul or sixty kilograms.

Chapter 6

From Pou-eul to Lin-ngan—The salt works of Mo-he—We change basins—The Pa-pien Kiang and the Pou-kou Kiang—Ta-lan—The gold mines—Yuen-Kiang and the Tong King river—I separate from the expedition—Lin-ngan—The quasi-stoning to death

This village of the salt works with its smoke, its black houses, the low hum coming from the houses brought us suddenly back into the middle of civilization and we might have imagined that we were in a small industrial town in Europe. Numerous donkey, mule, cow and horse convoys climbed and descended the long street on the flank, at the edges of which the factories were arranged. They brought wood, coal, rope and took away the salt.

Few races are blessed with energy as great as the Chinese. The Muslims had occupied the villages with the saline works and had almost completely destroyed the material of the exploitation. They had been evicted a year before and already this industry had been reconstituted and had become as flourishing as ever.

At the top of the village stood a pagoda which entirely dominated it, and at its foot the last village clamor died down. We were lodged there by the mandarin of the place, who hastened to send us rice, chickens and eggs. However big the problems of the time might have been, Chinese hospitality was always extended to us in a very courteous manner and we had never had, as in Laos, when arriving at a stopover, to busy ourselves cooking the evening meal.

On the first of November, we resumed our journey and we successively traversed several small valleys. The chains of hills which separated them from each other were crowned with pine forests, in which the ax produced new devastations each day. Because of the saline works in the vicinity, the reader may expect the complete

deforestation of this lovely area in the future. At 11 a.m. we saw the city of Pou-eul, situated in the middle of a small plain. As on the preceding days, we met only ruined villages, abandoned rice-fields, scenes of distress of all kinds on our route. This country was very densely populated and had reached a remarkable degree of prosperity before it had been ruined by the invasion of the Muslims. The naive and implacable destruction to which these fierce votaries of the Koran have given themselves overfilled our hearts with sadness and none among us had so far thought that war, even as fought by barbarians, was able to cause such devastation. Who would have guessed then that we would find the same spectacle and ruins in our homeland and that well within the civilized world, we would witness the same horrors and the same crimes as we had seen in Yunnan?[1]

In Pou-eul we were housed in a pagoda situated at the northern end of the town. The latter was sad and almost entirely deserted. Its houses by no means filled the enclosure of the wall and there was only a very small district in front of the southern gate. Pou-eul was the seat of a *fou* or Chinese prefect whose jurisdiction extended over the entire south-west corner of the province. This town owed its administrative rank to its central position and not to its own importance. The principal towns under its jurisdiction were Ouei-yuen, Se-mao and Ta-lan. But as I have already said, the representative of Peking has only very restricted authority here and the governor of red insignia rank of Se-mao, although he did not possess even the lowest certificate of literacy, was in reality very independent from the melancholic doctor of blue insignia rank, who was the prefect in Pou-eul. The latter immediately paid a visit to Mr. de Lagrée, who went to see him the day after our arrival. He urged us to leave as quickly as possible a town which he expected to fall before long into the hands of the Muslims. He himself appeared to be staying only reluctantly and he took no other measures against the enemy than to prepare everything for flight. In the town there were only a very small number of soldiers and the ramparts were completely disarmed. Only two cannons, one in bronze and the other in cast iron, [were in position] at one of the gates. The ramparts were constructed of brick on a base of marble: they were five to six meters in height by three meters in width. They were crenelated and every fifty meters along there was a stone shelter for the guards on the fire-step. On the fire-step there were piled up stones intended to be thrown on to the heads of attackers. As in Se-mao, the moat was being repaired. The east and west gates had an exterior bastion with a side door. The general shape of the wall was rectangular. The whole structure was about two kilometers in length.

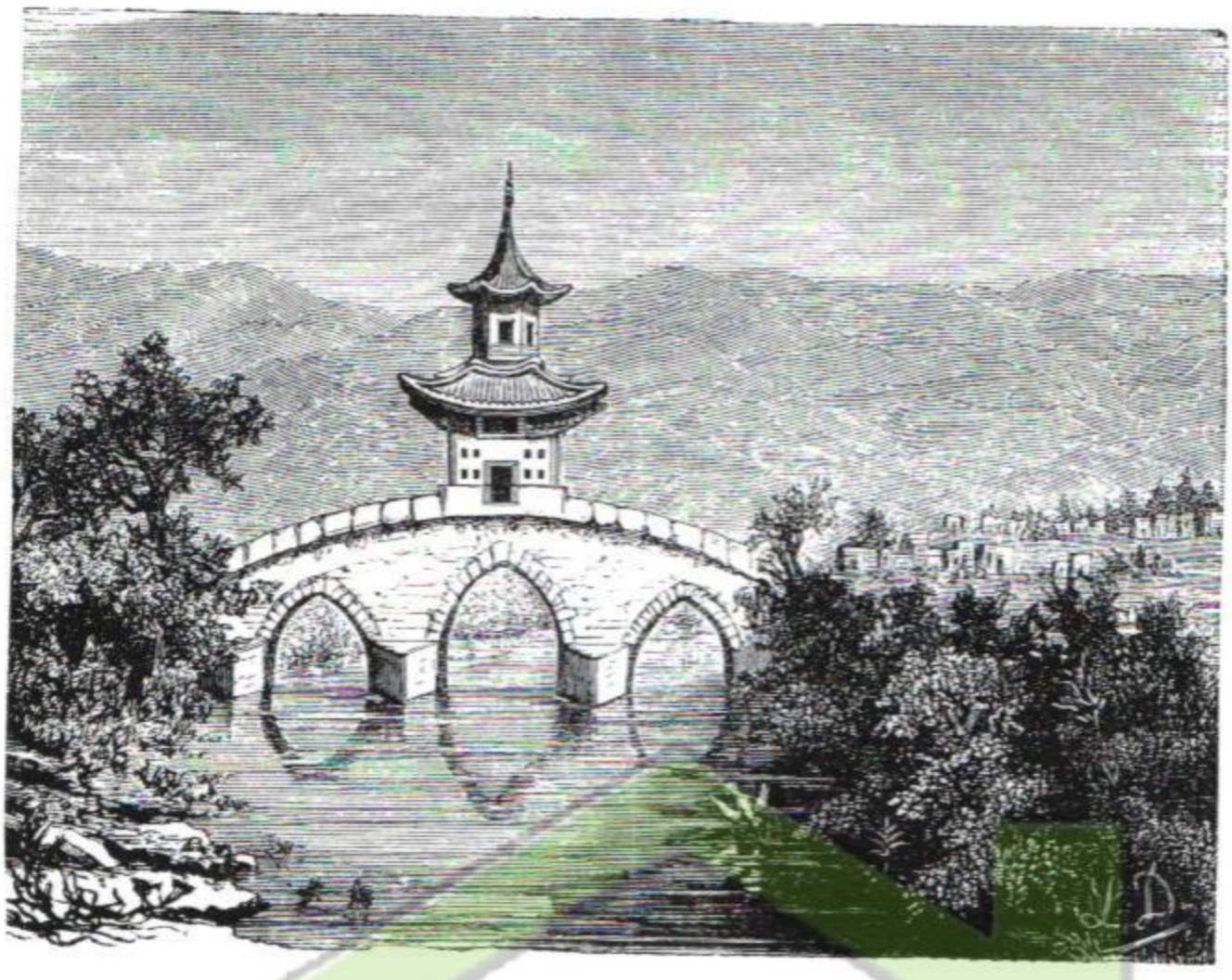


Plate 22 *A bridge in the plains (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

Pou-eul had no commercial importance whatsoever. This town had given its name to highly valued teas which were collected in the upper part of the valley of the Nam Hou and on the southern border of Yunnan. Before the war, this tea came through the town to be carried on the backs of men on the road to Ta-Ly to reach the navigable part of the Blue River. All around the plain of Pou-eul bizarrely jagged, calcareous mountains rose up. A few tombs and a few towers crowned the summits closest to the town. Everything was in marble, even the stones of the roads, but everything was ruined. To the north-east of the town there was a small lake.

The prefect of Pou-eul gave Mr. de Lagrée a passport which indicated the itinerary which he had to follow, an itinerary in which he had great trouble in including the town of Lin-ngan. Only later did we understand the natural repugnance that this Peking official felt to let us travel through a town in which the central power was openly cast aside and over which the viceroy of the province had no say whatsoever.

In Pou-eul, we were seven or eight days march from the Mekong river. I renewed my attempts with Mr. de Lagrée to [be permitted to] make a reconnaissance of the river: it would have been possible to do this without holding up the expedition

which progressed only very slowly and which I would easily be able to rejoin by doubling the length of my walks. Mr. de Lagrée refused to let me go alone into a devastated country, traversed in all directions by armed gangs, and we definitely turned our backs on the Mekong without having great hopes of ever seeing it again.

On 4 November we left Pou-eul. We passed over a series of hillocks which rose higher and higher and which soon brought us to the flanks of a high chain which we had to climb. The weather was rainy and the paths slippery. We had some trouble in getting to the top. My holosteric barometer, which indicated an altitude of fourteen hundred meters in Pou-eul, descended rapidly. It indicated a height of eighteen hundred meters on the crest line. We were now on one of the lowest points of a great chain which came from the north and appeared to go then to the east. The dark, sharply rising line that it traced amidst the mountainous region that we traversed had something very characteristic, so much so that I was convinced from this moment onwards that we had changed basins and that the waters that we would see no longer flowed into the Mekong river. After an extremely steep descent made dangerous by the rain, we arrived at night close to the village of Mo-he, which is the location of salt extractions similar to those in Ho-boung. A river flowed towards the north at its foot. We followed its banks for some time, then we abandoned the valley to climb the heights which bounded it in the east.

The country became wilder, the slopes steeper and the soil more stony. The crops were few and the paved road that we had followed since Se-mao disappeared for long intervals. Nevertheless, the road was still quite busy. All the time, long rows of soldiers and mandarins on horses or in palanquins were moving in the direction of Pou-eul, where Li ta-jen had asked them to meet. He intended, they said, to take the offensive and prevent an attack of the Muslims on Pou-eul.

After a long day of marching, we descended again into a rather wide valley, the denuded flanks of which were terribly eroded by the rains. An almost dry river was lost amidst the stones which formed its bed. We soon heard the roaring, a short distance away, of a wide and rapid river which came from the north. Arriving at the confluence of the two watercourses, we took the right bank of the river, on which luxurious vegetation met our eyes. The river we had reached was called the Pa-pien Kiang by the Chinese. Its muddy waters were reddish and rather deep. I believed that we were arriving at the westernmost arm of the Tong King river. Mr. de Lagrée, conversely, identified the Pa-pien Kiang with the Nam La, an affluent

of the Cambodia river which, as the reader may remember, joined the river below Xieng Hong. We could not expect any serious enlightenment from the Chinese on this interesting geographical problem. The rivers in China changed names every twenty leagues and as the one in question soon left Yunnan to flow into regions that were unknown to the Chinese, they were unable to tell us for sure to which basin it belonged. We had to leave it to time to dissipate our doubts.

At night we slept in Pa-pien, a poor village situated on the left bank of the river which we had crossed by boat. The mandarin, with a white button and a fox tail, who had commanded our escort since Pou-eul, managed to convey the idea that we were rather important, so that the principal inhabitants of the village thought they had to overload us with presents. It was only with reluctance that we accepted these gifts from people who had been ruined by the war, but, risking [otherwise] a loss of all prestige, we had to conform to the customs of a country in which the grandeur of people was measured by the emptiness that they left in the purses and the food stocks of their hosts.

The next day we followed the left bank of the Pa-pien Kiang for a while, then we climbed the heights at the foot of which it flowed, to reach this plateau of Yunnan, which rose higher and higher as we proceeded more and more to the north and which was deeply incised by the great watercourses which traversed it.

On 7 November we passed Tong-kouan. There was a great massing of troops in this place but the mandarin of our escort managed to get us a big room. The curiosity of the Chinese soldiers provoked some conflicts between them and our Annamites, in charge of watching over our luggage and of stopping them from approaching us. A lower mandarin of the area, who thought that his rank authorized him to be indiscreet, was put outside by blows from the butt-ends [of rifles] and went to complain to the military chief who commanded the passing troops. The latter brought him in front of Mr. de Lagrée and ordered him to present his apologies. Mr. de Lagrée told him to be more considerate in satisfying his curiosity in future.

Tong-kouan, which means "Fortress of the East", occupied a dominant position amidst a vast, admirably cultivated plain in which stood numerous villages. It was the culminating point of the massif which separated the valley of the Pa-pien Kiang from that of the Pou-kou Kiang. The troops which had been gathered there left the day after our arrival, with the usual noise of many [fire]crackers. This long queue of soldiers in their showy dress, unwinding their innumerable banners in the distance

and with their differently and strangely shaped arms dazzling in the sun light, was a very picturesque spectacle. Each officer marched preceded by guitar players, horn carriers and a small and a big tom-tom, on which the servants beat at irregular intervals. There was no order whatsoever among the marchers and each soldier busied himself only with choosing the easiest way or the most agreeable traveling companion. At each bend, numerous groups stopped to chat, smoke or drink and the column lengthened inordinately,without any supervision being exerted by the chiefs. A hundred determined men would have routed this whole army.[2] Its commander, a military mandarin with a blue button, wanted to remain in Tong-kouan until our departure to honor us. He escorted Mr. de Lagrée on horseback for a kilometer and we left the village between two lines of soldiers with banners and to the sound of musket-fire.

On 8 November, we crossed the Pou-kou Kiang, a river almost as wide as the preceding and which, true to his first impression, Mr. de Lagrée believed to be the Nam Hou, another affluent of the Cambodia river, the mouth of which we had already met, by boat, a little above Luang Prabang. For my part, I still thought it was one of the watercourses that form the Tong King river.[3]

We ascended the valley of an affluent of the Pou-kou Kiang to the village of Tchang-lou-pin where we found a lower-ranking mandarin sent from Ta-lan to meet us. We arrived in this town the next day, at 2 p.m. It appeared that the courtesy of the Chinese authorities grew in proportion to our further progress into China. The governor of Se-mao had not returned the visit which Mr. de Lagrée had paid to him. The prefect of Pou-eul had thought that he could not dispense with this act of politeness. The first mandarin of Ta-lan, who had a red button, came to meet Mr. de Lagrée and visited him in the pagoda outside the walls where we had installed ourselves, from the day after our arrival. Ta-lan was situated in the valley of an affluent of the Pou-kou Kiang. The town was smaller than Pou-eul: it had only a simple earthen wall as defense. Although it had been occupied for some time by the Muslims, it had suffered less than Se-mao and Pou-eul and trade was flourishing. All the flanks of the neighboring mountains were admirably cultivated and in addition to the tropical fruits, here there were fruits and cereals from Europe. It was in Ta-lan that we rediscovered potatoes for the first time. Nuts and chestnuts mixed with guavas, mangos, quinces, citrons, oranges, peaches, pears and apples in the market. With a little bit more peace and some agricultural improvements, this country, which was one of the most favored by nature, could become one of the richest in the world.



Plate 23 *Natives from the vicinity of Ta-lan (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Nevertheless, all the supplies were very expensive, a rather natural consequence of a war of devastation. Rice was sold for six to seven francs per picul. The misery must be great. With gratitude, we received the magnificent gifts with which governor Tin ta-jen came and which consisted of a pig, a buck, three loaves of bread boiled in soup and a bag of rice. The lower-ranking mandarins followed the example of their superior and for almost the whole of our stay, there was nothing we had to get from the market in the town.

In Ta-lan we received a visit from a mandarin who had recently arrived from Peking and who had already been in contact with Europeans in Tien-tsin. With him we exchanged a handshake, French style. How much we regretted that the legation had not had the blessed idea of giving him a summary of news from Europe. We had been deprived of news for more than a year. We finally learned in Pou-eul that Kosuto was none other than a missionary, who lent very active support to the struggle of the viceroy of Yunnan in his fight against the Muslims. But we were told that he had been obliged to withdraw to Koui-tcheou as a result of an

explosion in the house where he produced his gunpowder. These circumstances would deprive us of the pleasure of having news from France, which we had long hoped to get from his mouth in Yunnan.

The population of Ta-lan was mixed with natives to whom the Chinese gave the name Ho-nhi. In their dress they were similar to the Kha Kho but they were more beautiful and stronger. They had heads which came closest to our Western type: the foreheads were wide, the faces rectangular, the eyebrows horizontal, the eyes black and the skins bronzed. The women were extremely vigorous and our eyes fell with pleasure on these girls with their lively and open ways, who walked, nimble and scornful, beside the poor mutilated Chinese ladies who walked jerkily on their stumps and who were not consoled by the Turkish slippers and bandages which covered their wounds so carefully. The Ho-nhi had joined the Chinese to push back the invasion by the Muslims. They were very good at archery and used poisoned arrows. It appeared that this race, which seemed to be indigenous to the mountains of Yunnan, was the one from which the Laotians descended, just as the natives, who inhabited the great chain of Cochinchina, were perhaps the trunk from which the Annamites split off.

The weather was overcast and rainy and the cold began to make itself felt. The inhabitants seemed very chilled and wore real mattresses on their shoulders. Our surprise was great when we discovered, under the long robe worn by each of them, a true warmer, hung in front of the chest and below which they held their hands when they walked. Although the thermometer indicated twelve to thirteen degrees still, we ourselves would have happily sat near a fire, being people now used to the caresses of the tropical sun. Nevertheless, we were still in the equatorial zone, two to three kilometers away from the northern tropic. The altitude of Ta-lan was about fifteen hundred meters.

We visited the gold repositories situated some distance to the north of the town, at the limits of the territory of Ta-lan and of Yuen-Kiang. In the gorges of a denuded, greenish-colored mountain several little torrents flowed; on the banks of these the exploitation took place. The gold seemed to come from quartz infiltrated in the layers of the schists which formed the soil. Twenty years ago they had started washing the sands of these torrents and hollowing out galleries in the flanks of the mountains but the results had never been very good: they had never extracted more than a thousand ounces of gold per month,[4] i.e., an annual production of fourteen hundred thousand francs. At the time there were ten thousand workers.

Today, the production was not more than fifty to sixty ounces per month. About a thousand men worked in these mines, poor, miserable and without a supervisor. The exploitation was free and the government did not levy any taxes. Some pits belonged to mandarins who had them exploited at their expense. The washing of the sands of the torrents was still what appeared to give the best results. But the hope of finding a quartz-like seam rich in nuggets and of becoming rich in one day, made them dig long deep galleries in all directions. The dug-out rocks were broken up and shaken, then treated like the sands. Sometimes silver was also found but in very small quantities. Never had the *auri sacra fames* revealed itself in a more shocking way to my eyes as by the appearance of this desolate and arid mountain, everywhere rummaged through and overturned with a relentlessness which was seldom crowned by success. Another product of the surroundings of Ta-lan which attracted our attention was the thread won from a particular spider which was found in the bushes and in the coppice forests. This thread was very resistant and it was sent to Yunnan to produce cloth. It was sold for about three francs per pound.

On 16 November we left Ta-lan. We followed the wall of the town and we immediately climbed the hills which bordered the valley of the Lai-phong Ho to the east. This was the name of the river of Ta-lan. On the side of the road, a freshly cut head placed in a small wooden cage witnessed to travelers that the feats of bandits, if not prevented, at least were punished by the local authorities. Close to the summit of the chain which we were climbing, we met with the first opium poppy fields that we had seen so far. As if to forewarn us of the dangerous plant, one of our porters, under the influence of opium, dropped the load he was carrying and fell asleep on the side of the road, incapable of advancing one more step: we had to replace him by one of the soldiers of the escort. Then we descended further into a small plain covered with villages, to which a series of deep gorges gave the shape of a star. The terraces of rice-fields, stacked like an amphitheater on the slopes, were visible all around as a series of level lines with undulating, capricious shapes. The driving rain and the cold made us decide us to seek refuge in the first village that we came to. We were shut indoors there by the bad weather for the whole day of the seventeenth and the temperature, which had fallen to four degrees, obliged us to make a fire. All our Annamites had colds and were frozen. We killed the buck which the governor of Ta-lan had given us and this new meat was judged unanimously as excellent. The appearance of the inhabitants had quite

fundamentally changed by the mixture with the native races of the surrounding region, especially with the Ho-nhi, so that it had almost completely lost its Chinese character. One of the villages of the plain was inhabited by the people of Pou-tou, who speak Chinese. Might this not be old Pou-thai? The Ho-nhi women were easily recognized from the belt that they wore at their waists and from the piece of blue cloth around their heads.

We left again on 18 November and we admired the remarkable agricultural knowledge of the inhabitants more and more. If the country continued to offer numerous traces of devastation, if here and there we met with ruined houses and abandoned villages, the crops testified to a smartness of care and a search for precautions which were delightful to see. Despite the sharp slopes, the narrowness of the gorges and the encroachments of torrents, there was not a corner of soil lost. Each hillock was encircled, from the foot to the summit, with circular terraces which retained, like so many basins, the artfully distributed water. The variety of colors produced by the different crops, the strong contrasts of light and shadow which were formed by the sudden undulations of the land, composed a seductive painting for a watercolor painter. We left the basin of the Pou-kou Kiang and we followed the banks of a torrent which flowed into the Ho-ti Kiang, the principal arm of the Tong King river. From a great height, the road on the crest overlooked the boiling waters of a torrent which foamed in the base of the valley. From time to time, a blackish rock fell down from the top to disturb its course and white spots of foam here and there gave variety to the troubled mirror of the waves. Above our heads, a transparent line of pines marked the summit of the chain like a light crown and gave the landscape the wild appearance which the work of man had almost succeeded in making it lose.

The traffic on the road continued to be busy. Numerous convoys of donkeys and mules, loaded with salt, were going in the direction of Yuen-Kiang. In the opposite direction, we met with convoys of oil, rice wine, paper, earthenware and areca nuts. The last product indicated to us that we were approaching a warmer region or a deeper valley. The majority of these convoys were escorted by soldiers. In Yunnan, all the mandarins were in business and the necessities of government often required that they did it on a large scale.

At each bend of the road, we were told stories about robbers. That was only natural, in view of the number of people that the Koui-tseu had made homeless. A great number of the inhabitants of this region had taken refuge in the territory of

Luang Prabang at the time of the Muslim invasion. After the expulsion of the Koui-tseu, the Chinese mandarins had in vain demanded the return of their citizens from the king of Luang Prabang. From Ta-lan there was, they say, a road that led directly to the valley of the Nam Hou.

We finally crossed the torrent over a magnificent bridge, the product of contributions from the neighboring towns. A white marble plate, which I read for my traveling companions, contained the names of the subscribers and told of the long efforts that had been made to complete the great arches of this beautiful structure over the rapid waters. Several times in a row, the rise of the river in winter had carried away the work of the summer. Beyond this a steep and stony slope rose, from the summit of which it would have been sufficient simply to roll a few stones down to throw us all into the torrent. This place, suitable for an ambush, had been the site of an attack on a convoy belonging to Li ta-jen and Tin ta-jen. They had lost three hundred horses and mules and had only the useless pleasure of hanging five of the robbers in return. After hearing of this adventure and upon the advice of the mandarin of our escort, we believed it necessary to load our guns. After an hour and a half of one of the quickest ascents that we had to climb, we enjoyed a magnificent view. To the west an immense expanse, a sea of mountains, brought together their naked, arid tops in close-pressed waves. To the east, a high chain gave a serrated appearance to the horizon. At the foot of these yellow denuded mountains extended the river[5] and the city of Yuen-Kiang, the blue waters and the white terraces of which we saw across a haze which reflected the warm shade of the mountains. There was nothing more gripping than the Oriental landscape offered by these mountains, with their wild, burnt colors, and this town, the crenelated crown of which was reflected in the waves of a lovely river. The gray color of the houses, the flat roofs and gardens which bordered the interior of the ramparts gave it the appearance of a Turkish or an Arab town. The plain was bare and yellowish. The rice was harvested and its golden sheaves were still stacked here and there. Only a few sugar cane fields, areca and orange groves turned the landscape green in spots. Opposite this town, which seemed to be asleep, there was a vast cemetery on the opposite bank of the river, where we saw high marble plaques covered with inscriptions above tombs that were almost all the same. The palm trees which raised their slender heads, the hot steam which floated above these waters, the dazzling sun, the blue sky which had succeeded the rains of the previous days, indicated that once more we would discover the products and the climate of the tropics.

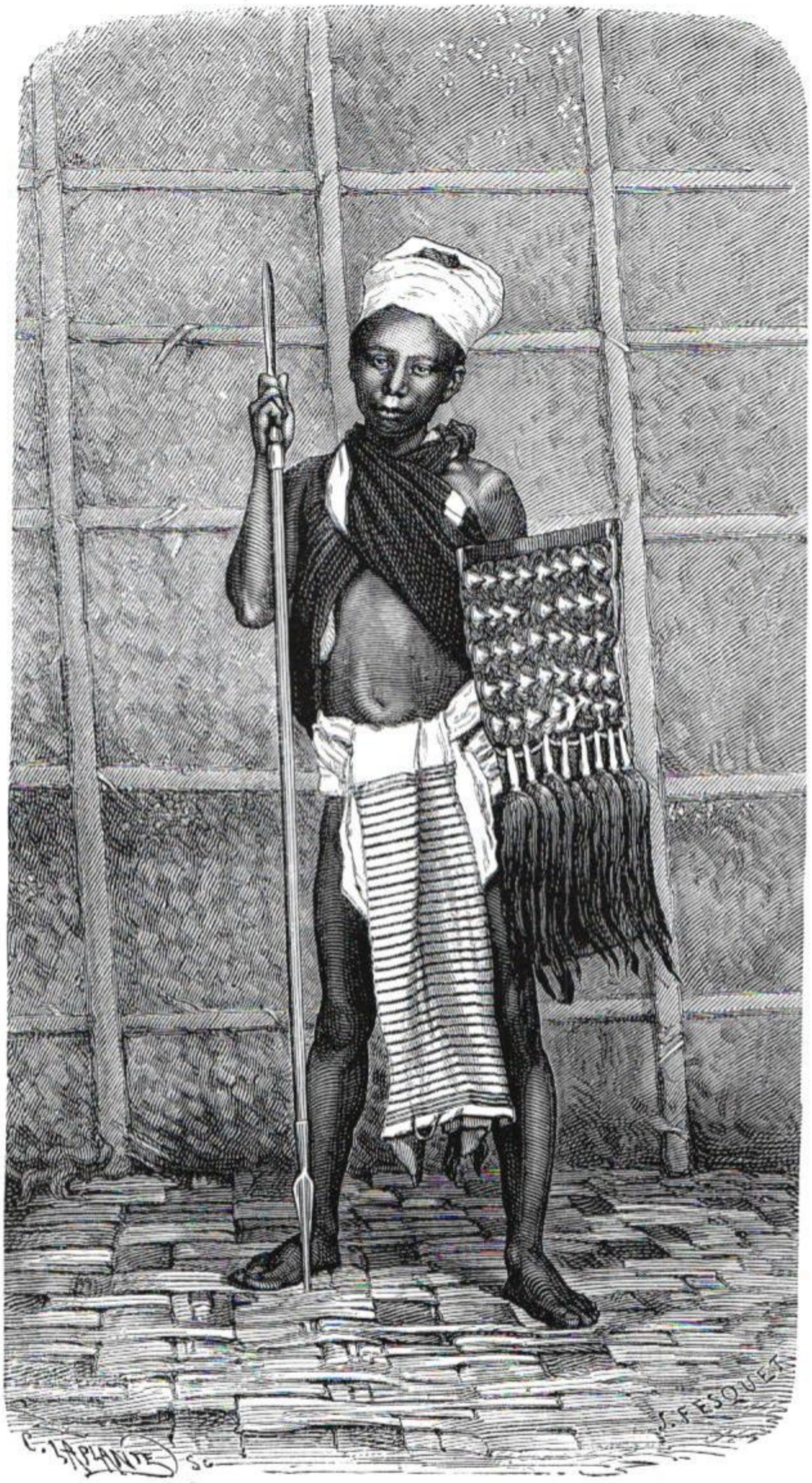


Plate 24 *A Chendou native (drawing by J. Fesquet, based on a photograph).*

A magnificent reception had been prepared in Yuen-Kiang: festively dressed mandarins were waiting for us at the gates of the town. Two hundred soldiers or standard bearers formed a line for our passage. Artillery was fired and music was played at our approach. Never before had we been taken so seriously. We walked down an endless street in which the population crowded in pressed ranks. In front of us there ran many boys, carrying placards on their backs, on which messages of welcome had been written. We were housed in a beautiful pagoda built under Khang-hi and situated at the northern extremity of the town. Its construction predated the era during which Yuen-Kiang became a Chinese town. A century and a half ago, Yuen-Kiang was called Muong Choung and it was governed by the Thais. The Buddha of the pagoda, indeed, was close to the Laotian type. It differed from it in having a magnifying glass on the forehead, while the hands, which were partly joined over the chest, held an object that we were unable to recognize. The dress was of Chinese style. Perhaps it was the work of Chinese sculptors inspired by the Thais. This pagoda would be approximately three hundred years old. I took an impression of a Chinese inscription dating from the fiftieth year of Khang-hi (1712). This was probably the time when it was taken into Chinese possession. Yuen-Kiang, although a second-order town, formed an independent enclosure which came directly under Yunnan. In the vicinity there was a special race called Pa-y, which was only a branch of the Thai family. The Pa-y became more and more numerous and almost independent when we got closer to the borders of Tong King. The Chinese always cited them first when they listed the natives of the region: Ho-nhi, Kha-to, Chanzou, Pou-la, Lope and Lolo. The dialects of these latter tribes varied little and derived from the same language. The Lolo were perhaps the ones whose language displayed the greatest differences, and their dialect appeared to come closer to that of the Kouy of the right bank of the river than did the others. Their language had many common points with those of the tribes who inhabited the north of Yunnan and who were called Man-tse. These populations seemed to have some relationship with the Mons, who have populated Pegu since an era far back in the past. The Akha, the Abor and the Chendou would be the principal links of the ethnographic chain which linked the Peguans to the Lolo of Yunnan. The Pa-y displayed a very pronounced gentleness and regularity in their features. The dress of the women, while having many traits in common with those of the natives of Paléo and of Siemlâp, had other singular features. Around their necks they wore a sort of necklace, about three fingers wide and comprising a red or black cloth on which small silver nails were assembled to form a pattern. From

afar you would have thought it the collar of a bulldog, bristling with nails. A sort of tie, adorned in the same manner, was displayed on the bust. Ear rings, of very fine workmanship, sometimes had many rings, but most often one ring on which hung a square plate with a host of pendants. Long hat pins, at the ends of which hung a profusion of these same pendants, completed the ornaments of this costume; [all the ornaments] were made of silver only and not from stones, pearls and glass. There is nothing more elegant and accomplished than the young Pa-y girls with their very small jackets, their skirts embroidered with a wide, colored ribbon and their tight corset. Some of them were pretty. The men wore a small flattened turban. Their thin mustaches and thin features made them look like Annamites. Might these not be the successors of the mountain tribes mentioned in the history of Tong King who, in the eleventh century before our era, had separated from the tribes of the sea who today have become the Tong King people in the strict sense and who lived in a state of permanent hostility with them?

According to the Chinese, the Laotians who lived in this area no longer had pagodas and, in contrast to what happened to the Doe, they seemed to have come to the point of becoming natives again. Some had a completely Annamite appearance. The conquerors recognized their good nature and considered them much more gentle than the natives.

The gifts we received from the local authorities were up to the standard of the reception they had given us. The first mandarin, who had a blue button, showed us, among other European objects in his possession, binoculars, a watch and a stereoscope supplied with photographs of dubious morality. He told us that in Yunnan European objects were available in large quantities. It became difficult to present gifts to people who were able to assess the real value of most of the scraps of our stock. Only our guns remained priceless in their eyes. Unfortunately, it would not yet be prudent to relinquish them.

Life was less expensive in Yuen-Kiang than in the [other] towns we had visited. Potatoes, which figured much below the batata [sweet potato] in the preferences of the inhabitants, cost only a penny a pound and furnished us a very much appreciated part of our supplies. Geese and ducks were abundant in the yards, but pork was the only meat that figured in the butchers' displays. This animal was available in prodigious quantities. The oranges were delicious and they were available for next to nothing. Duhalde[6] also indicated silk and ebony wood among the products of the region.

The plain of Yuen-Kiang produced a lot of sugar and cotton. Here we found the small hulling machine of the Annamites. They spun the cotton into crude cloth in the area itself and dyed it in bright colors. In the neighboring mountains of Yuen-Kiang they produced musk. The governor gave us two bags of this precious perfume. Mr. Joubert went to visit the copper mine of Tsin-long, a few kilometers to the north of the town. It was one of the smallest repositories in the whole province, which possessed many that were much richer.

The Ho-ti Kiang was one hundred and fifty to three hundred meters wide in Yuen-Kiang; its waters were calm and shallow and numerous sand banks appeared here and there on the banks. The altitude of the valley of the river was only five hundred meters here, which explained the tropical vegetation and the warm temperature that we met when descending from the elevated plateau on which Se-mao, Pou-eul and Ta-lan were situated.

We left Yuen-Kiang by boat on 26 November. The authorities of the town were present on the beach at our departure. We had to descend the river for a few hours to reach the road to Che-pin, which went off from the left bank. Below Yuen-Kiang the valley quickly narrowed and arid, rocky walls, which were not very picturesque, rose on the banks of the river, the course of which became more winding and the waters more rapid. After three hours of navigation, we arrived in Pou-pio, a Pa-y village with flat roofs and double terraces. It was situated on the left bank of the river, close to rapids that boats could not pass. The expedition took up the overland route again, in the direction of Che-pin and Lin-ngan. I separated from it to continue descending the Ho-ti Kiang alone in a boat. Mr. de Lagrée did not restrict my reconnaissance of the river at all and he gave me a rendezvous in Lin-ngan: the first who arrived there would wait for the other.

Like all the villages of this region, Pou-pio was surrounded by an earthen wall. These mountains were not at all safe: a poor native who came in the morning to sell us some foodstuffs came back to us in the evening, bleeding and naked. His purse had been taken and his arm was dislocated. The terraced construction gave the houses an Arab appearance and their gray color helped to accentuate this even more. The roof shape, adopted for reasons of economy or for the reason that bricks were difficult to fire, had the advantage in mountainous country of giving the inhabitants more space; the steepness of the slopes would otherwise have forced the people inside to get closer to one another. The second terrace, which was stacked above the first like the high step of a staircase, was covered with a light

roof under which areca nuts were dried. The gates of the village were closed at night and a guard was mounted.

Above Pou-pio, we noticed an almost horizontal line of greenery which contrasted brightly with the barren rock of the sides of the mountains: it was an irrigation canal which took water at a great height from one of the steeply falling torrents which poured into the river. This canal distributed fresh water to various villages of the valley and vegetation was reborn along its course. It was solidly built in stone, with a road alongside, and it must have required a huge amount of work to construct it. We believed that it would certainly have been easier to lift the water that flowed at our feet. Assuredly the Chinese preferred the greater effort, but that which was done once and for all, as was needed for an irrigation canal, rather than the continuous work necessary for water-raising devices. Once established, indeed, one need not worry any more about water supplies. The water arrived where you wanted it, when you wanted it and always in sufficient quantities. These irrigation works were sometimes implemented on a really grand scale, all over the mountainous regions of China.

On 27 November, I embarked in a light canoe below the rapids of Pou-pio. I descended the river again with a few merchant boats. The Ho-ti Kiang was more and more enclosed. The heights which constrained it soon attained eight hundred to one thousand meters. Schists, calcareous rocks and pudding-stones formed the components of these immense walls, in which they alternated in very steeply sloping layers. Each torrent which came to tear through these rocky flanks took an immense quantity of rocks and stones from them which obstructed the bed of the river and formed rapids in it. During this season, almost all of these torrents were without water, and the sterility of the reddish flanks which dominated the traveler's view was complete. The eyes were obliged to look up to the highest peaks of the cliffs between which [the river] was trapped to find a tree, a shrub or a tuft of grass. Only a few pines were to be seen, rendered microscopic in size by the distance. Nevertheless, sometimes a course of water, on the point of drying up, murmured across the stones and then, when it reached the edge of the straight rocks which formed the immediate banks of the river, it expanded into an iridescent rain in the air. This humidity was sufficient. The trees grew under this beneficent spray, a curtain of moss extended over their leaves and hung under the waterfall in dewy festoons. Some distance from one of these little oases of greenery, the valley of the Siao Ho-yi, the greatest affluent of the left bank of the river, opened up. This

valley was as dark, as enclosed as that of the Ho-ti Kiang. One could say they were two immense corridors which crossed at right angles and the ceilings of which had collapsed.

We passed several rapids which forced us to leave our boats. A single oarsmen was left in it [the boat]; the others, standing on the bank, kept the empty boat steady with a rope, then, when the pilot judged the moment suitable and the boat was well aligned in the direction of the current, they opened their hands and the light skiff passed the dangerous passage as swift as an arrow. The man who steered it landed again on the bank to reload the luggage and the crew. The native tribes of the surrounding area furnished a certain number of men, whose work consisted in transporting merchandise along the edge of the water from a point up river to a point down river of the rapids. These transfers were only necessary in the dry season. They would, moreover, be impossible during the season of the high waters: the river then completely filled its bed and left no passage to walk dry-footed at the base of the immense bed in which it flowed.

I stopped at night at a Chinese customs post located at the intersection of the river and another road which linked Lin-ngan to some centers of Pa-y population, situated further to the south. A ferryboat served to take travelers and merchandise across and, on both sides of the water, a zigzag path climbed the less steep slopes which, at this point, formed the flanks of a vast channel the base of which was occupied by the river. The traffic was quite active and I believed that it would be easy to replace the boat and crew from Pou-pio, who were not willing to take me any farther. Indeed, the Chinese who held the customs post promised me a new boat for the next morning.

I was affected by a very dry cough which almost prevented me from talking. My eyes started out of my head; I had an unbearable migraine. The customs official took pity on me and indicated that I should sleep on his camp bed. He placed a long pipe and a small lamp beside me, plunged a long needle into a pot filled with a blackish substance, took a thick drop from it which he melted in the flame of the lamp and then threw it, burning, into a cup on the pipe with a narrow opening and a wide base. I inhaled two or three mouthfuls. He repeated the operation several times more and I soon felt the irritation of my throat and the shooting pains in my head calm down as if by magic. It was the first time that I had smoked opium for a long time and I noted that, administered correctly, it might become a valuable remedy. Only abuse transformed it into a harmful toxin.

The next day, I managed, but only with great effort, to convince some Pa-y people, who understood some Laotian words, to hire their boat to me so that I could continue my descent of the river. I was accompanied by four or five soldiers of the escort and a low-ranking Chinese military chief who seemed only moderately interested in the exploration that I wanted to attempt. They were impatient to get me to Lin-ngan, as it was their mission to conduct me there, and then to return as soon as possible to Yuen-Kiang. The small chief kept pointing out the mountains to me and indicated that Lin-ngan was on the other side. It was at his instigation that the Chinese customs official had gone back on his word, so that I had to procure a boat by myself.

A little distance down river from the customs post, I met new rapids which my oarsmen flatly refused to tackle. There was no point, it was true, in walking along the banks which in this place went completely straight up, and the boat would have had to pass the dangerous passage with all its crew aboard. The river was more deeply enclosed there than it had previously been: almost vertical walls, eighteen hundred meters high, rose on both sides. Huge blocks of rock had fallen from the heights of these gigantic cliffs to the middle of the foaming waters. Up river from the rapids, at the foot of the gorge (which was a sort of fissure), the cliff and a bank, formed by the rocks and pebbles which the rains detached each year from the flanks of the gorge, presented a small platform on which a village of fisherfolk rose at the water's edge. It was there that my oarsmen landed. Neither offers of money nor threats were able to convince them to proceed further. I was unable to assess whether the rapids were really insurmountable. From the furthest rock that I was able to reach towards the middle of the river, I was able to see only a line of waves, and the particles of water, which had crashed with force against the rocks, were carried back into my face by the wind, in a fine rain. The difference in levels nevertheless seemed less great to me than in Pou-pio. After fruitless efforts to make my oarsmen go back on their decision or to find people in the village who would agree to replace them, I decided on going back on the road to Lin-ngan sooner than I had wanted. At noon I started the ascent of the almost perpendicular heights which rose above my head. After three and a half hours of a very tiring climb over zigzag paths, the stones of which slipped from beneath our feet to rebound in the waters of the river after a thousand hits and falls, I arrived at the summit. From there I was able to view a vast panorama in a single glance. To the south, a high calcareous chain rose up as a barrier between Tong King and

China and pierced the horizon with its sharp summits, which were at least four thousand meters high. Close to me, the Ho-ti Kiang followed its deep gorge. Its yellowish waters appeared and disappeared time and again at a depth of close to two thousand meters, flowing forcefully towards the south-east. Below me, to the east, a small valley, less abrupt and less deep, displayed its terraced rice-fields and its numerous villages hanging above the limpid waters of an affluent of the river. To the north a vast plateau extended, the long undulations of which sometimes bristled with calcareous rocks and pinkish gashes which made them look like waves of marble, and sometimes were covered with a deep layer of red earth on which fields of maize and sorghum grew irregularly to the north-east.

I chose my road in this direction. The plateau sloped slightly. Its highest ridge was that which bordered the course of the river. The villages which I traversed were all inhabited by Lolo and Pa-y. The Lolo women were easily recognizable by their hair rolled on top of their heads with a turban adorned with silver studs, their trousers and their large tunics. Everywhere they had started to bring in the harvest, which was gathered in stacks on the terraces of the houses. From afar, these sheaves gave the village the look of immense beehives. Little by little the crops multiplied and the villages grew in size. They were usually built on the edges of the lakes which always filled the depressions in the terrain. Chinese people appeared again. Carriage roads traversed the plain on all sides. On 30 November, from the height of an outcrop, I noticed some twenty kilometers away the town of Lin-ngan. It was built on the flank of a lovely plain that was watered by a winding river and enclosed by two lines of marble hills. Their barren crowns presented a striking contrast with the beautiful crops which were stacked on the water's edge.

I arrived in Lin-ngan the evening of the next day. My small escort conducted me to a pretty pagoda. I found comfortable lodgings in a side building which formed one of the sides of the courtyard, behind which stood the sanctuary. My arrival was not announced. In so populous a center, the small number of men that accompanied me would not arouse attention. My strange figure attracted attention from only a score or so when I passed. Thus, after having installed myself in the pagoda, I thought I would be able to visit the town for a while without inconvenience. Its wall was very strong and rectangular in form. It was about two kilometers long and one kilometer wide. In the center there were *yamens,* gardens and pagodas decorated tastefully: many of these edifices had been burned down by the Muslims and had not yet been rebuilt. We found admirable specimens of the so varied and

beautifully colored marbles which came to the surface on the plateau of Lin-ngan. Before the northern and southern gates of the town there extended long quarters in which large number of people were busy. A very important market, the activity of which was very picturesque, was held in vast halls set up for this purpose. Many towns in France were far from possessing such a convenient market place.

While I was strolling around the stalls, without thinking anything unpleasant, happy to realize that the town afforded me with plenty to see and study until the arrival of the rest of the Commission, a crowd gathered behind me. I heard the word *koula* circulate in the groups, the term by which in the north of Indo-China they designate all foreigners who came from the West. The boys, becoming more daring every moment, followed all my movements and imitated all my gestures. Since our entering China we had already been able to get used to the intense curiosity of the population, but here I was alone to take the whole weight. Besides, the town was by far the most populous of all those that we had visited and the pressure of the crowd threatened to become too strong for me to confront it to the end. Thus I judged that it was better to retreat and I returned to my lodgings. Before long I was literally besieged. In vain I tried to defend the door to the staircase which led to my room: we had to accede to public fury and allowed this room to be filled by curious people. But in its turn, that too became too narrow. Some Chinese, dressed elegantly, with grave voices and with venerable faces, came to counsel me to give satisfaction to the crowd and to show myself outside, in the courtyard where thousands of people were thronged together. If I consented to this, they told me, they would guarantee me that they would not do me any more harm. But, conversely, they might not be responsible for the demands of the crowd. I thought that I should follow this advice, which seemed sincere to me: I resigned myself, not without inveighing a thousand times against these ill-timed demands, to walking back and forth between two lines of people who breathed on me as I passed. In this way I made a hundred strides for more than a quarter of an hour, examined, rummaged in every nook of my person by an infinite number of avid and stupidly curious eyes. This concession, so humiliating for my dignity, did not at all satisfy the population. From all sides of the courtyard went up a cry, repeated in twenty different languages: "Let him eat, we want him to eat." Outraged by this excessive audacity, I declared that I would not eat and I went back into my lodgings without those around me daring to oppose me. Did my determined gestures gain the upper hand over the curious or were there some charitable souls among them

who judged that it was enough for a first performance? I ignored it. The fact was that I escaped that day from any new demands on me.

The night having fallen, I believed that I would be able to sleep quietly in my new lodgings. Nothing of the kind: by midnight I was woken up by the noise of several persons climbing my wooden staircase on wolf's feet and furtively entering my room with darkened lanterns with the objective, without doubt rather innocent, of observing me sleeping. My patience had come to its end. Being woken up was disagreeable: I jumped for my rifle and, slaving away with blows of the butt-end and with kicks of my feet against these idiots who tried in vain to calm me down with their comical pleas, I threw them down the fifteen steps which separated them from the courtyard. I overloaded my escorting soldiers, who were supposed to install themselves on the ground floor and who should have defended my door, with reproaches. Powerless against the crowd, they were not so against the actors, few in number, of this nocturnal escapade. Decidedly, I had passed to the state of a living curiosity. Perhaps my escort received money to show me. The reader can imagine how eager I was to see the expedition arrive to deliver me from these continuous attentions.

The next day, early in the morning, to gain time and to put the curious off track, I left the town and made a long excursion in the surrounding countryside. First I was followed by some boys, but before long I discouraged them by the length of my walk and I was able to enjoy a few moments of tranquility on a small slope which was dominated by a high column in the form of an obelisk. It was probably the tomb of some important person; it could be seen from any point in the plain. Beautiful kitchen-gardens, interspersed by rice-fields, sugar cane fields and plantations of peanuts lay on the banks of the river. The latter came out of the lake of Che-pin and disappeared, they said, very quickly without it being possible to know whether it belonged to the basin of the Canton river or to that of the river of Tong King. Very long bridges, constructed in Romanesque style, were thrown at very close intervals across this river, which was dammed up over its whole course. Little pagodas, triumphal arches and gates with clocks, preceded and adorned them.

At sundown I went back on the road to town, counting on the evening meal to keep the curious far from me. But alas! The news of my arrival, which the preceding evening had still been unknown to the greater part of the population, had spread like a spark on a trail of gunpowder all over Lin-ngan. Entering the town, I collected

a huge following of curious people. But that was nothing compared to what was waiting for me at the pagoda itself. The first floor, the false roofs and the roofs had all been climbed and displayed only an ants' nest of human beings. Upon my entering the courtyard, the crowd parted to let me through, maneuvering me into the middle of a narrow space in which it counted on confining me as long as possible: the performance had started. Red in the face with anger and shame, I had to endure an hour of these madmen's curiosity. Finally, at the end of my forces and my patience, I suddenly darted into my lodgings, closing behind me the lattice door which opened to the courtyard. This none too solid door soon gave way to the pressure of the crowd, which thought that I lacked goodwill. With the help of my small escort from Yuen-Kiang, I pushed the curious back and tried to shut this flimsy barrier. But the disappointment of the population soon manifested itself by reproaches addressed to those who, close to the door, had weakly retreated before me. A stone flew between the bars of the door and hit me straight in the face. Others followed and at this moment I felt what the old torture of stoning to death must have been like. However, I did not give way and, with one hand holding the two wings of the door which rattled under this shower of stones, with the other I grabbed the revolver which my loyal Tei had the presence of mind to bring me. The barrel of the weapon, ostentatiously placed between the bars of the door, made the closest retreat and the loud bang which followed immediately hollowed out a large circle amidst the surprised crowd. I had fired in the air, realizing very well that at the sight of blood this still indecisive crowd would fling itself on me and tear me to pieces. In a country where there are still guns with breeches, guns with double charges are little-known marvels. Thus, they thought that I was completely unarmed, and after the noise of the first shot had died down, the hail of stones began again as never before. I fired a second time. The astonishment was great because they had not seen me reload. "Bah!" said someone in the crowd, "I have seen revolvers with double charges. There are some in Ta-Ly which come from the Mien country.[7] Now he has shot his bolt we can approach him without fear." I had the luck to grasp the meaning of this reflection and I immediately took advantage of it: three successive shots, one after the other, terrified the crowd which saw my revolver still resting on the bar of the door. An immense panic followed and I completed the rout by suddenly rushing outside with the revolver in my hand, fire in my eyes, and my face bleeding. The sight of me produced an immediate effect; whether from the fear of this weapon that could keep on shooting without being reloaded, or whether from real compassion, the closest Chinese

begged me to calm down and swore that the stone-throwers would be punished. The rest of the crowd continued to flee in all directions, doubtless imagining that I was piling up corpses in front of me. Soon there were none left in the courtyard other than a small group of people who brought me back to my room and took care of me with compassion.

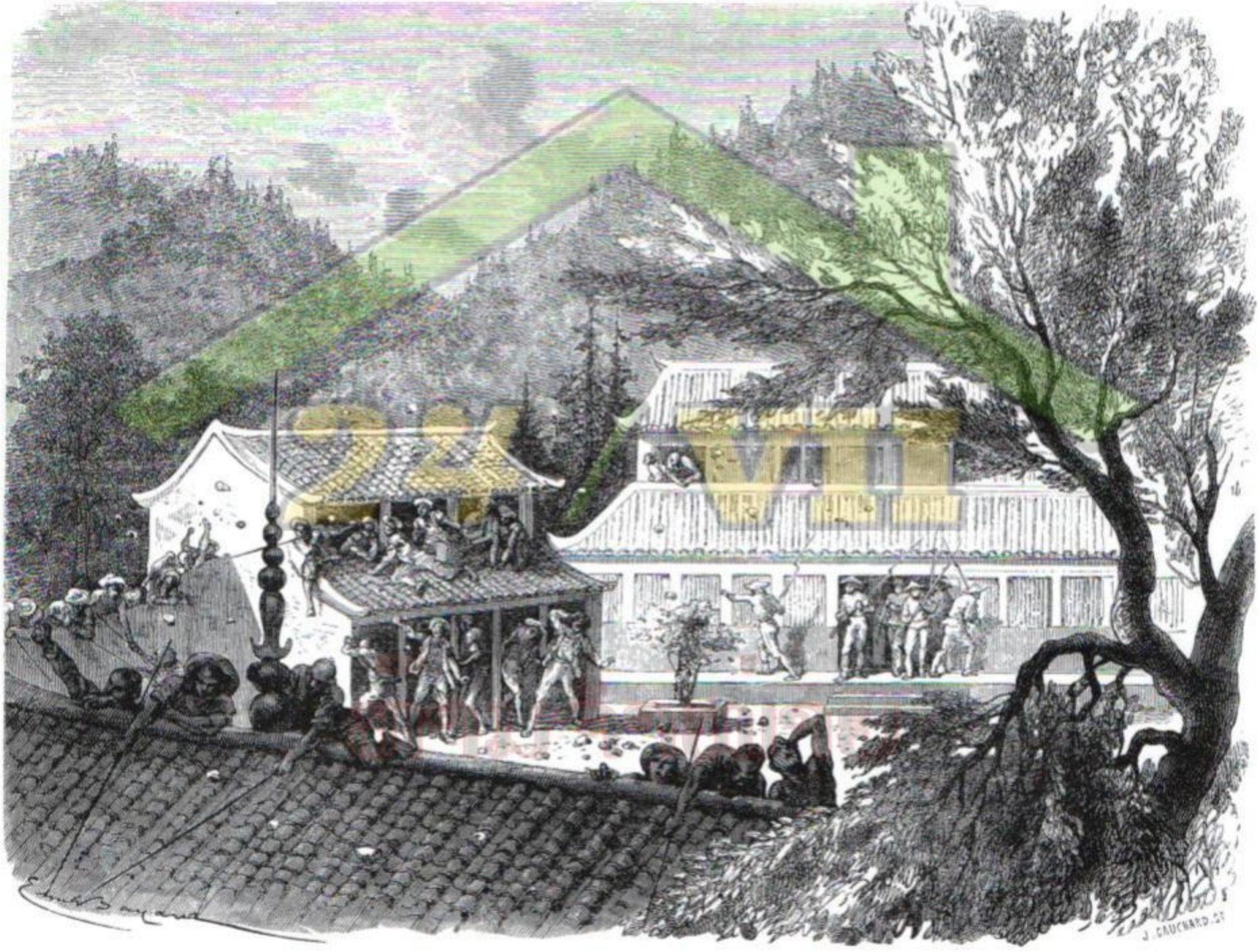


Plate 25 *The attack of the crowd on the pagoda of Tong-hay (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Arrival of the expedition—Leang ta-jen—A new French trade route—Departure from Lin-ngan

A little later, a mandarin in formal dress presented himself and apologized in the name of the governor and said that guards would be posted on all the streets to the pagoda and he promised me a visit from the pharmacists of Lin-ngan. He told me at the same time that Mr. de Lagrée and the rest of the expedition had just arrived and that they had been lodged outside the town but that it would not be sensible to take me to my companions just then because of the excitement of the crowd.

Early the next day, I was assisted to climb over the wall of the pagoda which gave on to the ramparts and by deserted and winding roads I was conducted to Mr. de Lagrée and the others.

Our leader had experienced some difficulties in pursuing his route to Lin-ngan. At the moment the Commission was going to start out on the road to Che-pin towards this place, the governor of Lin-ngan, Leang ta-jen,[8] sent a letter in which he invited the French Commission to stay in Che-pin and to pursue its route to Yunnan directly. "Indeed," this letter said, "it is not possible to go from Lin-ngan to the capital of the province, the routes having been blocked by the Koui-tseu and by robbers on this side." Mr. de Lagrée had insisted on going to Lin-ngan to make the acquaintance of Leang ta-jen, then planning to go back to Che-pin to take up the route that he indicated.

Upon his arrival in Lin-ngan numerous gifts had been brought to him on behalf of the local authorities, among others a well-prepared meal, but they had said that all the principal mandarins of the town, Leang ta-jen first and foremost, were absent and busy with fighting the Koui-tseu who had pulled back seventy *li* to the north-east of the town, in two strong positions, called Po-si and Kouang-si. Mr. de Lagrée did not believe this purported absence and demanded that Leang ta-jen apologize officially with regard to the insults that I had suffered. A crowd of subordinate mandarins came to discuss this in vain and tried to soften our demand with gifts. Mr. de Lagrée received the visitors coldly and refused the gifts. From the interior of the great pagoda in which we were lodged, we heard the crowd complaining loudly that it was unable to get near us. From time to time, a few stones flung over the walls testified to its impatience and brutality. The Annamite sergeant, accompanied by his comrades, managed to grab one of the aggressors

and we handed him over to the local authorities, demanding severe punishment. He was immediately put in the *cangue*.

In the mean time, at the request of Mr. de Lagrée, I had a letter in Chinese written by Tei, my Annamite, in which our leader expressed his grievances and demanded a positive reply and more direct communications with the principal authorities of Lin-ngan. A few hours later, we received a reply in which Leang ta-jen made apologies and announced his visit for the next day. He arrived at the stated hour. He was a strapping fellow, two meters tall, whose feet, hands and large head were well proportioned. His humble and embarrassed behavior contrasted singularly with his giant size. This was the famous personality from the popular tales: a man of the people without education or rank, his valor and his energy had destined him, from the first battles against the Muslims onwards, to take military command of the south of the province. He had distinguished himself with a red insignia and had replaced the mandarins of Che-pin, Tong-hai and of several other neighboring towns with people like himself. The preceding year he had liberated the town of Lin-ngan, which had for some time been occupied by the rebels. By virtue of this fact, he no longer recognized the authority of Peking and acted as an independent sovereign in the south of the province. The moral power which Mr. de Lagrée exerted over a man placed in this position and whose energetic goodwill had subjected all around him, was not less than extraordinary. His visit was very short and he advised the chief of the French mission that he was going to return immediately to the advance posts, in order to relieve him from making a return visit. Placards had been placed on the walls of our pagoda, on his orders, threatening anybody who dared to trouble the foreigners, with death. Besides, in front of us, he was careful to show himself of an Oriental munificence. All the indigenous people, from close or far, who were connected with us received the marks of his generosity. The soldiers of the escort who had come from Yuen-Kiang received money and uniforms. To all the staff of the expedition he gave large silver plates, a kind of decoration which he was in the habit of giving to his soldiers, and on which his name and the word *reward* were inscribed. They were designed, he said, to protect us from bad luck. We had all the trouble in the world refusing, on the day of our departure, twenty complete uniforms, some rather richly made, which he offered to us and our following.

It was regrettable that the state of the region did not allow us to further our reconnaissance towards the east: it was indicated to us there were silver and lead

mines in Mong-tse, a town situated three days march from Lin-ngan. At this point, we were two hundred *li* from Mang-ko, a big Chinese market situated on the banks of the Ho-ti Kiang. It was there that this river began to become navigable, according to the information that I collected during my excursion.[9] Down river from Mang-ko, one came to the town of Lao-kay which was right inside Annamite territory, twelve days march from the capital of Tong King.[10] Numerous gold, silver and copper mines were located in the Chinese district of Kai-koa, which the Nan-si ho, a large affluent of the Song-coi, the Annamite name of the Tong King river,[11] traversed.

Mang-ko seemed to be the center of a very active trade. The people of Canton, who went there by crossing the Kouang-si and the northern part of Tong King, brought wool, cotton cloth and silk and in exchange they purchased cotton and tea which was produced by the Pa-y of the surrounding area and the Thai of the valley of the Nam Hou. The greater part of this silk which was consumed in the south of Yunnan, came by this route and the commercial traffic on the Blue River and of Se-tchouen was becoming more important than the exports from Canton much further to the north. The Chinese of Lin-ngan brought tea which came by the road from Pou-eul to Mang-ko.

Before the war with the Muslims, the mandarins of Yunnan brought tin and zinc, which was used in Annam for the production of the national currency, from Tong-tchouen to Sin-kay, an Annamite market which was located on the Song-coi below and a little distance away from Mang-ko. These metals were exchanged against eight-tenths pure silver, a purity which was achieved in Yunnan. The Annamites were not allowed to enter Chinese territory and so it followed that we would not see a single subject of Tu-duc during the whole of our stay along the borders. A large stretch of land inhabited by native tribes, Pa-y and Lolo, appeared to lie on this side between China and Annam. The troubles and rebellions which have brought misery and ruin to the southern provinces of the Celestial Empire have come to complicate the political situation of this interesting region. The Cantonese, who have possessed the trade of Mang-ko for a long time, had not wasted any time infiltrating *en masse* this rich, fertile and tranquil country, where they could escape from the incessant turmoil of which their province was the theater. A few years ago, a Cantonese chief had established himself with a numerous colony of his fellow citizens in Lao-kay, and proclaimed independence. They lived on the considerable revenues of customs posts which they had installed on the river.



Plate 26 *Leang ta-jen (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a photograph).*

This was a commercial question with a great future and of an exclusively French importance that needed to be studied because Tong King found itself directly placed under our political influence as a result of the treaties which linked us to the court of Hué. [12]

The pacification of Yunnan would provide these beautiful regions with the commercial life and the richness that was assured them by their varied and valuable products and the easy and economical outlet that was offered for them by the Tong King river. If a jealous and exclusive policy had managed until this time to divert the goods, which found distant markets in Canton or Shanghai, from their natural outlet to the sea, it was up to us to use our influence with the courts of Peking and Hué to stop this state of affairs and to plead the cause of these deserving populations. Our colony of Cochinchina was legitimately destined, by the power of the state of affairs itself, to harvest the heritage of Canton and Saigon, the latter of which was linked by active coastal trade to the mouth of the Tong King river, and would offer the products of Yunnan and of northern Indo-China a more advantageous market and an entrepôt that was better situated for exchange against European merchandise. [13]

Unfortunately, the lack of interpreters and thus the difficulty in collecting precise information seriously hampered Mr. de Lagrée in pushing his investigations in this respect as far as he would have wanted. [14]

In the immediate vicinity of Lin-ngan we visited a seam of lignite, the exploitation of which was quite active. This fuel was in general use. The plain of Lin-ngan was entirely deforested and the small amount of wood they used for fires was brought from quite a distance by the natives. The extraction of lignite was done in two vertical pits, to a depth of sixteen to seventeen meters. They gave access to horizontal galleries which were very well developed, cut into the interior of the combustible layer which seemed to have a thickness that varied between a meter and fifty centimeters. The exploitation was monopolized by the Chinese administration. Numerous vehicles swarmed around the pits waiting for their turn to be loaded. They paid on the spot. These vehicles, the first we had met with for a long time, were small, rather low carts, on two solid wheels pulled by a cow or a buffalo. In Lin-ngan they also produced the rather widespread cardboard which was consumed widely in China in the form of matches. Duhalde cited honey and wax among the important products of this region too.

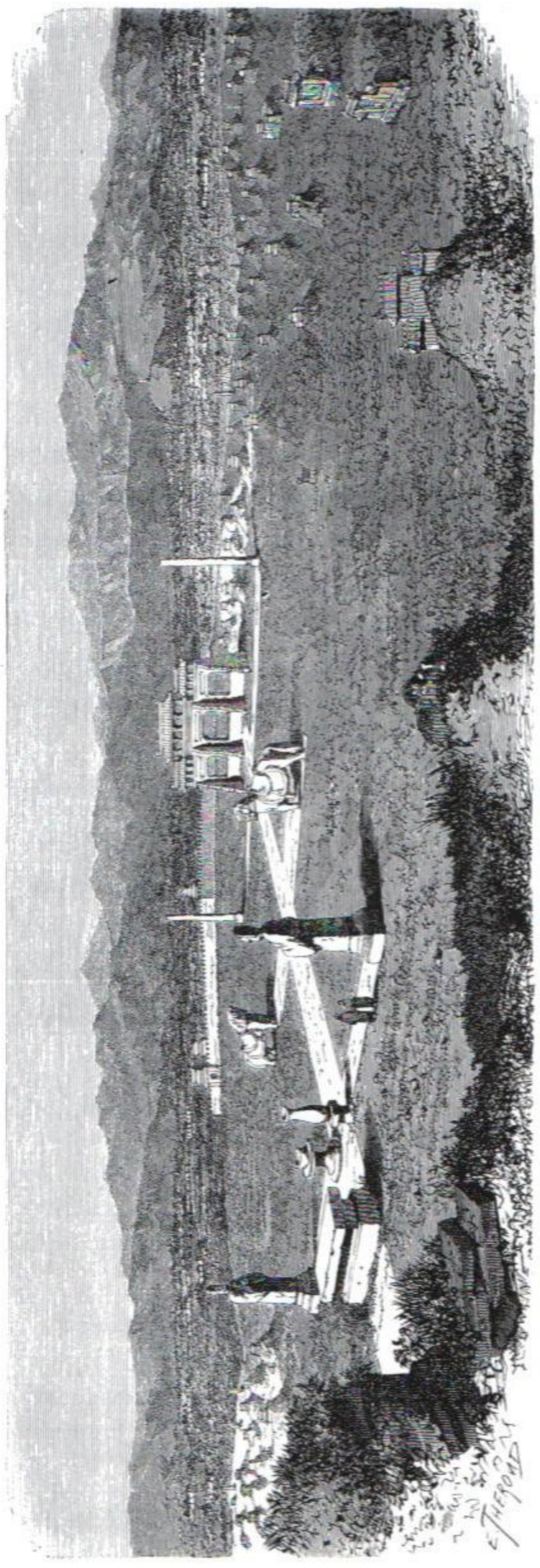


Plate 27 *Fields with tombs in Lin-ngan (drawing by E. Théron, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

On 9 December we left Lin-ngan. The plain we traversed ascending the river was vast, covered with hillocks and tombs. The bridges, the porticoes of marble, the few clumps of trees which stood close to the pagodas recalled a vague memory of the countryside near Rome. What was most amazing, besides the singular appearance of the landscape, was the gigantic works undertaken by the inhabitants to preserve their fields from the stones that were carried down by the torrents. The latter had been put between dikes over their whole course in the plain, between two high walls of dried stones. Each generation built up these walls one or two courses in order to follow the progressive raising which the bed of the torrent underwent after each rainy season. The rocks which were brought down by the water during this time, and which were retained within narrow channels, thus accumulated rapidly. Today, all these watercourses were raised above the plain and their elevation facilitated the irrigation of the neighboring rice-fields. In some places, the embankments of the rice-fields themselves were constructed of stones. We could not help admiring so much ingenuity and foresight and we regretted that this system was not found to the same degree in more civilized countries. Anyone in France who has traveled the Rhône valley has noticed the immense amount of land made infertile by stones broken out of the slopes of the Alps or the Cévennes by the affluents of the Rhône. The plain of the Crau was a saddening example of our inability to match Chinese agriculture. If we knew, as the Chinese do, how to embank our rivers, we would not see their beds take up a space that is a hundred times what is necessary for them and inundations of stones destroy our harvests over vast stretches of land, as sometimes happens in the Gard or the Ardèche.

Chapter 7

Che-pin and its lake—Iron mines—Tong-hai—The first snow—Kiang-tchouen and the lake of Tchin-Kiang—History of the Muslim rebellion—The plain, the lake and the city of Yunnan—We meet compatriots—Ma ta-jen—Arrival of a letter from the French ambassador in Peking

An hour after our departure from Lin-ngan, two cavalrymen at a gallop joined us and announced with the compliments of Leang ta-jen that the wretch who had thrown a stone at our lodgings and who had been put in the *cangue* close to the gate of the town had been decapitated. We had been forewarned that this would be his fate. We had not believed it and this incredulity had caused the death of the culprit. Mr. de Lagrée, who had an extremely good heart, would without doubt have requested and obtained his pardon if he had known that capital punishment was in store for him.

In the afternoon, we arrived on the banks of the lake at the end of which stood the city of Che-pin. This lake was about fourteen kilometers long and its general direction was east-south-east. We embarked on a great launch, while some of our porters continued their route overland and followed the northern bank of the lake which we kept within a short distance. A continuous line of mountains surrounded the lake on all sides and to the south they formed a series of bays in which the azure expanse extended into the distance. The naked reddish tips of the peninsulas which jutted out of the southern bank were strewn with routes which indicated a densely populated country. After three hours' navigation, we arrived in Che-pin. It was the day of the great market. Innumerable boats criss-crossed the waters of the lake in all directions taking the natives of the surrounding area, who had come to the city to sell their products, back to their villages. On this side, the banks of the river were cultivated with rice-fields. The energy of the farmers had reclaimed

a considerable area from the water and the inundated surface of the rice-fields, separated by small terraces, came to meet and join the calmness of the waters. Long streets, which ran at right angles to the banks, furnished an easy landing point for merchandise and for travelers. Close to the bank, there rose from the water two small isles covered with greenery on which had been placed pagodas with curved roofs and crowned with slender clock towers. Coquettishly placed on the banks of the lake, Che-pin wound its white, stone walls around closely built houses. Behind the town extended an admirably cultivated, vast plain.

The interior of Che-pin presented a more agreeable appearance than the towns which we had visited so far. There were no ruins and no abandoned houses and the picturesque costumes of the mixed populations who inhabited the vicinity gave to its streets a lively and original appearance. The latter were entirely paved with marble. The Lolo and Pa-y, whom I have already described, were joined by some small, black natives, called Poula, who seemed to originate from the territory of Yuen-Kiang.

In the market of Che-pin I noticed iron which came from the mines situated a short distance to the north and which was sold at about three centimes a pound. I also saw pottery from Ning-tcheou which filled huge storage rooms; sulphur from Ho-mi tcheou, a town to the east of Lin-ngan; tea from Pou-eul which was sold in packets of six circles weighing about three and a half pounds worth four to five francs. Salt was worth eighty centimes per ten pounds and it appeared to come partly from Mang-ko and thus from Tong King. Cotton was brought by the natives and was sold at two hundred to two hundred and eighty francs per picul. [1] The rice was cheap and was rarely worth more than two centimes a pound. Once again, I could not help comparing the strong countrywomen who passed among these poor Chinese women with their faces sprinkled with flour, their high straight hairdos and who, despite their festive dress, looked like invalids with wooden legs, in the streets. To think that a whole gender was like this in a nation of four hundred million souls!

Some distance from the northern gate of the town there was a well which spouted carbonic acid. The inhabitants, who make no use of it whatsoever, had enclosed it in a rather old pagoda, in the middle of which they had prepared a pretty marble basin for the mysterious water. From the small bridge thrown over the basin, we were able to see gas-bubbles in the middle of the moss which covered the stagnant water.

We left Che-pin on 11 December. After the visit which Leang ta-jen had thought he must pay us, all his subordinates were to show the greatest respect towards us. Early in the morning the mandarin of Che-pin preceded us into the plain which we had to traverse, and amid his armed troops, in great ceremonial style, he proclaimed to us his best wishes for a good journey. We went straight to the north, in the direction of Yunnan, and before long we left the plain to ride amid hills of uneven heights and narrow gorges blocked with stones. The calcareous schists, of which these mountains always consisted, broke with an extraordinary ease and were carried by the rains down the slopes on which no vegetation retained them. Everywhere, we marched on an ocean of stones. On the twelfth we stayed the night in a small valley watered by a minute brooklet. There we found two or three forges which worked with very rich iron ore which was extracted a little distance away. The method of treatment was rather primitive. I could only see a hydraulic bellows which was moved by a horizontal wheel turned by a waterfall. We found that the same machine, but bigger, was employed for rice winnowing. Along the entire route we followed, we found detachments of Leang ta-jen's troops who had been forewarned of our passage and who came to meet us in the evening and escort us in the morning.

The vegetation lost all tropical characteristics and great cypresses gave the landscape an alpine appearance. On the thirteenth, in the village of Lou-nang, we visited a factory making the cast-iron boilers that are found in all the kitchens of the Celestial Empire and the iron basins which especially serve for the distilling of salt. They were cast in earthen molds composed of two parts which left between them the thickness of the metal that the boiler's wall must have. The piece was turned over and the casting was done through an orifice which corresponded to the bottom of the basin. The superior mold was pierced with holes and the interior was coated with a bituminous oil to prevent the metal adhering to it.

At night we slept in Nga-pou-tchiong, a large village situated on the banks of a river which belonged to the catchment of the Canton river. We left the basin of the Tong King river for the last time. [2] From this point on the population displayed clearer Chinese features. The Lolo villages disappeared and the terraced houses gave way to curved and sharp roofs.

On the fourteenth, after having walked for some time on arid heights covered with tombs, we saw the city of Tong-hai at our feet, built on the banks of a lake, bigger but less picturesque than Che-pin and extending as far as the eye could see

to the north-north-east. Rich crops, among which opium poppies and tobacco prevailed, covered the banks and sometimes advanced quite far into the water. These conquests of agriculture over the terrain of the lake made it look like a pond at some points. But this plain appeared to be so rich, the villages clustered in such numbers in it, the crops were so well cared for and of such healthy appearance that we could not criticize these little blots on the landscape.

The authorities and part of the town garrison were waiting for us at the gates, amid an immense throng of people. With grand pomp we were led to a pagoda situated inside the wall. However, the high wall which surrounded our new residence on all sides isolated us too much from the crowd for them to accept the fact. Before long they rushed against our doors. Nobody could enter or leave without a number of curious people crowding into the courtyard, making our work impossible. At our request, numerous guards were installed in front of our lodgings. The inquisitive were not even able to venture to stare through our doors when they were half opened without receiving a rain of wallops with a stick. The crowd got exasperated and tried scaling the walls. The neighboring houses were taken by assault and their roofs served as advance posts to get to us. We had to resort to stronger means. Soldiers climbed on to our roof and pushed back the invaders with lance blows. In the courtyards, the guns were loaded and the breeches set to fire. Nevertheless, I doubt that these threatening preparations would have produced the desired effect, if we had not had, behind our Chinese guards, our Annamites and our Tagals putting on their saber-bayonets. The strange form, the dazzling appearance of this unknown weapon, the determined behavior of those who held it, made a lively and salutary impression and at nightfall, the inhabitants of Tong-hai left us in peace, to take the rest which we needed so much.

The next day, Mr. de Lagrée paid a visit to the *Tche-hien*, or under-prefect of the town, the civilian whose authority was rather diminished in the presence of the military mandarin representing Leang ta-jen in Tong-hai. The under-prefect complained bitterly to the French commander about the demands and the brutalities of Leang ta-jen's delegate. If, after all, they preferred the strokes of the acolytes of this fierce enemy of the Muslims to those of the Koui-tseu themselves, they nevertheless were both regarded as enemies that must be supported and nourished free of charge.

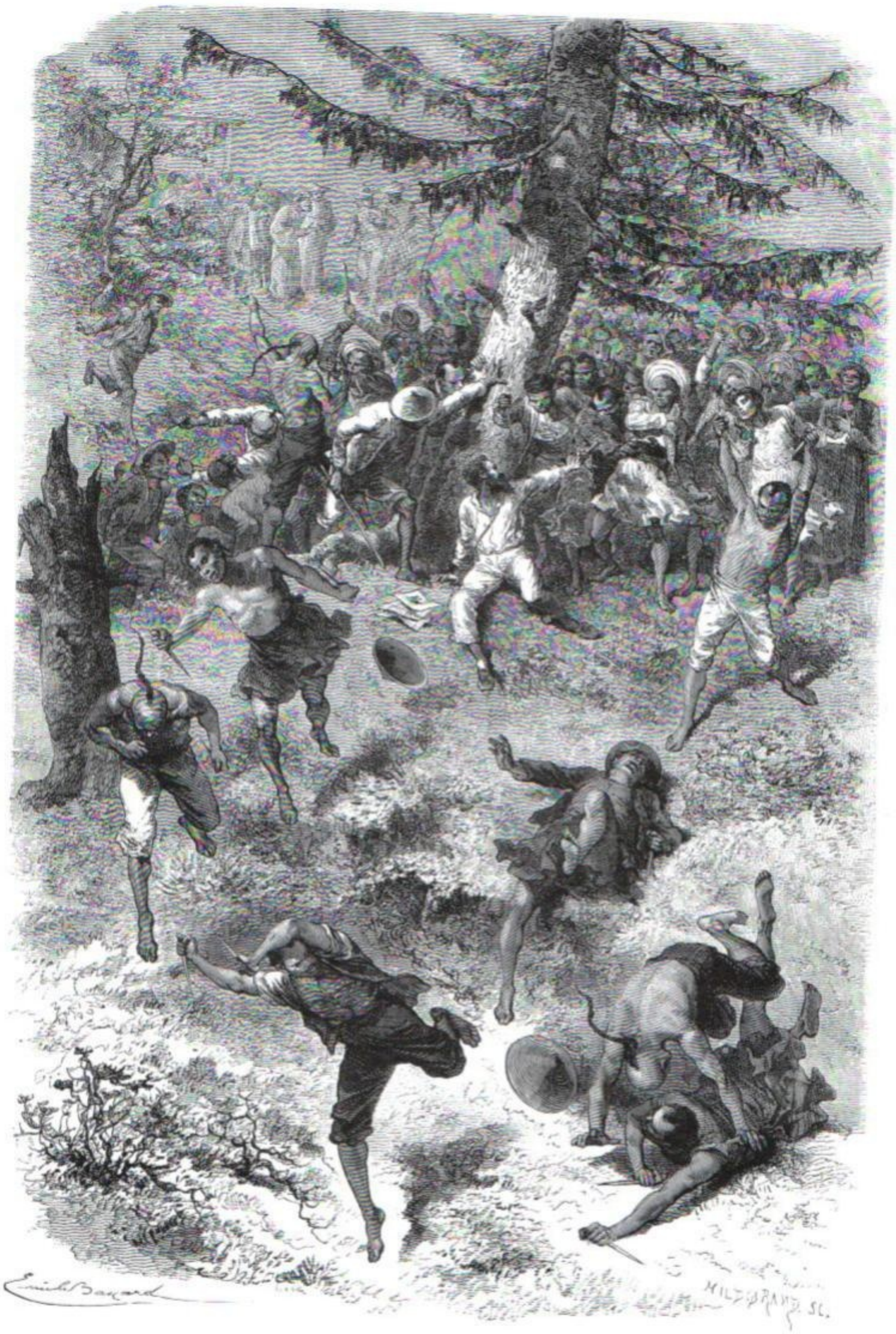


Plate 28 *A scuffle on the heights overlooking Tong-hay (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Out of interest, Mr. Delaporte climbed the heights which dominated the town to enjoy the panorama of the lake. Having arrived at the point which seemed the most favorable to him, he installed himself at the foot of a tree to draw. He had been careful and had placed himself on a very steep slope, in order not to be encircled by curious people who had dogged his footsteps since his emergence from the pagoda. They thronged behind the artist: but, by reason of the spot he had chosen and the size of the tree which served as his back support, only a small number of people in the crowd were able to follow the tracing of his pencil on the paper. Their neighbors found that these favorites of fate abused their situation and kept their places too long. They reminded them what they owed to their companions in curiosity, but in vain. The murmurs grew in coarseness and developed into insults. They were insufficient to make people, who had gained their places by the power of their fists, move away and similar means would have to be used on them. They reacted with knife-stabs. On both sides they unsheathed their swords and the battle became bloody. Some of the fighters tumbled down the steep slope which extended at the feet of the artist. The latter tried to intimidate the boldest with his revolver and to move the theater of a battle in which he might get embroiled. The arrival of Mr. Joubert and Mr. de Carné luckily helped him to get out of this brawl. The reader more often than not ignores at what price in troubles and at what danger travelers bring back from distant countries information which seems at first sight so easy to obtain. Making a drawing from life is without doubt an agreeable occupation, almost an amusement for an artist. What is there to say of one that had to be made with a revolver in one's hand?

At that time there was a big contingent of troops in Tong-hai. In the vicinity of this town, and occupying the summit of one of the mountains which surrounded the lake, there was an entrenched camp where two or three thousand Muslims had resisted all the attacks of Leang ta-jen for several months. Each time they were given some respite, they devastated the region and, by these continuous challenges, enraged the population and the imperial forces. At this very moment as I am writing these lines,[3] I do not know whether the camp of Toung-cao is still resisting the efforts of the viceroy of Yunnan. Vigorously attacked at the end of 1870 and blockaded so that they were unable to renew their supplies, these mad-men, demonstrating a fanaticism that was worthy of the best cause, evicted their women and children from their trenches as so many useless mouths to feed and refused the honorable armistice which had been offered to them. Assaulted from afar by the

new artillery which the viceroy had bought in France, and for an instant in disarray from the explosion of the shells, they soon learned to save themselves by building bastions. Only famine will deal with such invincible obstinacy. The day when the Chinese enter Toung-cao, they will find only corpses.

We left Tong-hai on 16 December in snowy weather which lasted the whole day. It was the first time in six years that I had seen the ground covered with this dazzling whiteness. Despite the piquancy and the newness of this landscape we were too suddenly surprised by the cold and too poorly dressed not to find the ordeal a bit hard. Our poor Annamites, to whom this spectacle was absolutely unknown, found it charming for the first quarter of an hour and were fascinated by these light, white flakes which fell so slowly and without noise and settled as if in regret on their shoulders. But their bare feet and hands, turned bluish by the snow, soon refused all service and I couldn't help feeling pity on seeing the tears, which this suffering caused them, freezing on their pallid cheeks. This day of marching was for them and for us one of the most difficult of our journey. Our long beards were rough with icicles and compass, pencil and paper fell from my nerveless fingers.

We followed the eastern bank of the lake. The well-paved road served numerous Chinese villages, whose inhabitants appeared rather badly disposed towards our escort and our porters. The soldiers of Leang ta-jen here appeared to abate their insolent behavior and told us quietly that the people of the country liked the Koui-tseu more than they should. Halfway along, we found a river of regular appearance, as if it were a canal, and with a rather rapid current by which the waters of the lake discharged. At night, we stopped in a village situated in a narrow gorge, close to the peak of the small chain that enclosed the basin of the lake in the north. We had all the trouble in the world in obtaining the necessary wood to warm our stiff limbs. The escort of Leang ta-jen's soldiers evidently were badly regarded by the inhabitants and made us unpopular. Thus we hastened to dismiss them.

The next day we continued our route under a beautiful sun, which was powerless to melt the layer of snow which covered the soil, the houses and the trees. Seeing the slender heads of some palm trees[4] and the persistent greenery of big trees adding variety to this white sheet, we might have believed it was an error of nature. The red foliage of the poison-oaks, the black spots indicating the straight rocks of the mountain flanks, gave the landscape a motley, truly original appearance. The thermometer indicated one degree above zero when the sun came up and light

skeins of ice floated on the surface of the brooks and the ponds. At 10 a.m. the lake of Kiang-tchouen appeared before us with its azure expanse between mountains covered with snow. Its edges were neither less populated nor less cultivated than those of the lake of Tong-hai. The reddish slopes which came down to the water's edge were covered with plantations of broad beans but the heights which dominated it were arid and deserted; there we found occasionally only some rose-bays. A good road followed the eastern bank of this new lake. It was often cut out from the rocky flanks of the hills, which came to touch the water with their steep feet, and it was protected against the weak swell of the lake by stone piers. A short distance from the end of the lake, an arm of the river, very short, wide and deep, traversed the small chain which ran parallel to the bank and flowed into a second lake which was much greater in size. This was Lake Fou-hien: its banks have a grand and natural appearance. We could not see the southern banks, where the important town of Tchin-Kiang was located. Passing from the basin of the lake of Tong-hai into that of the lake of Kiang-tchouen we left the town of Ning-tcheou, famous for its potteries and for the copper mines in its surrounding area a little way to right.

Kiang-tchouen was a small, dirty town which had been burned down by the Koui-tseu three years ago but which had risen from its ruins by that patient perseverance and indomitable energy which are the most precious qualities of the Chinese race. We received a noisy, less solemn, welcome there but more comfortable and more cordial than in Tong-hai. The deputy-prefect of the town lodged us in a *yamen* adjoining his residence and for two days we were able to warm ourselves, all at ease, without having to fear any importunities. From this place, Mr. de Lagrée sent to the highest civilian authority of Yunnan, Song ta-jen and the highest military mandarin of the province, Ma ta-jen, two letters to announce our arrival.

Song ta-jen, interim viceroy, had replaced viceroy Lao, who died on 22 February 1867, the preceding year. He was waiting for an incumbent to be officially designated to the vacant position by Peking. This nomination had already been done, but, they told us, the newly elected man, who was reluctant to take up the direction of affairs at such a critical moment, was biding his time under various pretexts in Se-tchouen. Ma ta-jen was a soldier of fortune, whose real name was Ma-hien.[5] He was selling barley when the 1856 Muslim rebellion broke out. It may be appropriate to give an overview of the causes and the principal stages of this war here.

The rebellions which during the last thirty years have shaken the power of the Manchu dynasty have not failed to have their repercussions in Yunnan where the Muslims were influential and numerous. Encouraged by the example of their fellow believers of Chen-si they wanted to obtain a preponderant role and they issued intolerable demands. In 1856 they provoked a rebellion in Yunnan during which they looted the city. The high Chinese officials, after having referred the case to Peking, resolved to get rid of them by a general massacre. The governor of Ho-kin, a town situated between Li-Kiang and Ta-Ly, had acquired a certain reputation fighting the Tai-ping in Kouang-si. He was entrusted with giving the signal for this bloody execution. He rounded up all the bandits and the vagrants of the country, supplied them with arms and on a fixed day unleashed them on the Muslims, of whom approximately a thousand were killed. Other massacres took place at the same time in different parts of the province. The Koui-tseu who had been plotting resistance for a long time rose up at the voice of a simple bachelor of Mong-hoa by the name of Tou-uen-sie, a Chinese orphan who had adopted the Muslim religion when he was very young. His small army which first consisted of only forty sectarians soon grew quickly, gaining Muslims who had escaped the massacre of Ho-kin and those whom the fear of a similar fate made flee from Yong-pe and other cities in the vicinity. With six hundred men, they attacked Ta-Ly, the second city of the province of Yunnan, which because of its admirable strategic and commercial position had been taken over by six hundred rebels. The city, guarded by a garrison of four thousand men, partly composed of Muslims, allowed itself to be taken without resistance (April 1857). The governor of Ho-kin immediately came to lay siege. But his army, which had more looters and assassins than soldiers, was routed. The Muslims immediately marched on the capital of the province which they captured. The viceroy, by the name of Pang, managed soon thereafter to chase them out. But an ardent sectarian who had formerly made the pilgrimage to Mecca and who had received from his fellow believers the title *Lao-papa* fomented new trouble soon thereafter, as a result of which the viceroy was murdered and the *Lao-papa* was proclaimed emperor. It was at this stage that Ma-hien, who had distinguished himself several times during the battles against the Muslims, took command of the Chinese troops, entered Yunnan again and installed Lao ta-jen, who was named viceroy in place of Pang, and made that king of a day disappear into the shadows (1861). Nominated *ti-tiai,* i.e., general and chief of all the troops of the province, Ma ta-jen tried to re-establish the authority of Peking. But in the south of the province, Leang ta-jen resolutely refused to obey his orders and the

troops of these two rivals clashed close to Kouang-si-tcheou. Ma ta-jen was even taken prisoner for a while in Lin-ngan where he went to have a military commander nominated by Peking; he has recognized and took recourse to prayers to secure his release. On his return from Lin-ngan he chased the Muslims from Yunnan.

Using these pretexts, the Muslims took up their work of conquest and after solidly fortifying themselves in Ta-Ly, which became their capital, they advanced slowly but surely, consolidating their authority in the annexed countries before starting new enterprises, voluntarily or by force enlisting the populations into their armies and taking the precaution of having the soldiers thus enlisted fight very far away from their countries of origin. Also the Chinese part of the Muslims' army, much more numerous, pilfered, stole, burned and ravaged without scruple. Touen-sie had taken the title of king on the first day of the Chinese year (5 February 1867).[6]

At the time when we were in Kiang-tchouen, the town of Tchou-hiong was infested by the Muslims. Sin-hing, located to the west and a short distance from Kiang-tchouen, was in their hands. We learned of the progress their armies made each day. They were only eleven leagues to the north and nine leagues to the west of Yunnan. The government in Peking did not seem to concern himself about a province which for ten years had not paid any taxes at all, and it relied on the energy of Ma-ti-tai and the ability of Tsen-fan-ti, the head treasurer of the province, who resided in Kiu-tsing and to whom it owed numerous intelligent efforts to reorganize the Chinese troops.

We left Kiang-tchouen on 20 December. A short distance from the town a mournful sight met our eyes. Over the whole expanse of a barren plain, which extended to the gentle slopes on the banks of the lake, numerous coffins lay on the ground awaiting a burial which the hands of the living seemed powerless to give them. In this region, as in the south of the province, a cholera epidemic had broken out as a result of the war, with an intensity which had filled the population with terror. According to the local superstitions, it was necessary to wait for the most favorable days on which to provide a more complete burial for the dead. The Chinese coffins were luckily more solid and more hermetically sealed than ours and only occasionally did some putrid miasmas escape from this mass of corpses. It was with true relief that we quit this funeral field to climb the chain of hills. We reached a high peak, two thousand meters above sea level and four to five hundred meters above the level of the lakes. A magnificent panorama could be observed:

to the east was the vast expanse of Lake Tchin-king; to the south, the plain and town of Kiang-tchouen; to the north, at the end of narrow, well-cultivated valleys which descended from the peak where we were standing to lose themselves in an immense plain, there was a large and deep vista of Lake Yunnan. The latter lake appeared to us to be a true sea, its banks hidden everywhere in the mists of the faraway horizon.

The next day, we descended into the plain which surrounded it and at the entrance of which stood the city of Tsin-ning-tcheou. It appeared to us the most terrifying example of desolation, from one end of the world to the other, which the Muslims excel in spreading on their passage: blackened sections of walls rather than houses, emaciated shadows in rags instead of inhabitants. The authorities came to meet us with a pomp which, amid these ruins or rather this implacable destruction, appeared to us more sad than pitiful. We were lodged in a house on which they had hastily placed a straw roof. It was the only one which offered such a comfort! Chinese troops occupied the surroundings in a military fashion, and camped under canvas or in shacks. A few stalls, built in the center of the city with planks taken from the ruins, served as a market and there we found, not without astonishment, the characteristic liveliness of Chinese cities, a greed that was not subdued by fire or slaughter nor checked by famine or epidemics.

We hastened to leave this sad place. A well-paved and well-maintained road followed the banks of the lake at some distance, and passed a big village every kilometer. Little by little the traces of devastation disappeared. The traffic on the road, the beauty of the crops and the elegance of the buildings all testified to the proximity of a great capital and to the richness which this fertile and admirable plain gave to its inhabitants. On the twenty-second, in the evening, we slept in Tchen-kouang, a pretty town situated on a small hill which dominated the lake and the plain and was as populous and pleasant as its neighbor was deserted and depressing. The Chinese curiosity would not have failed to renew its assaults on the French Commission if we had not arrived so late and left so early in the morning. We were nevertheless escorted at our departure by a large crowd of people. Before long, the road became an almost uninterrupted street, on which numerous convoys of bullocks were passing in all directions. Admirably maintained canals brought constant freshness and fertility to the neighboring fields. At certain intervals the canalized rivers, their banks regularly planted with big trees, were crossed by stone bridges, the first of which had so much stirred our admiration and surprised

us in Muong Long. Never had the powerful civilization, of which we had become the guests, shown itself to us with so much enchantment and so many rich facets. The novelty of this spectacle, in all its details marked with that strange character which is so special to the Celestial Empire, the memories of the forests and of the barbarism in which we had lived for so long, made us sometimes think it all a dream. With surprise we felt ourselves blushing, because of our appearance and our shapeless and soiled clothes, when we passed a palanquin or when we touched the silk dresses of the middle class who rushed to the doorsteps of their houses to see the foreigners pass by.

By noon, we observed the battlements of the city of Yunnan etched into the azure of the sky, when a lower-ranking mandarin on horseback came to meet us and gave a letter to Mr. de Lagrée. It was written in French! Mr. de Lagrée went through it, then handed it to me. It was with a heart beating strongly that I devoured its contents. It was signed by Father Protteau, a French apostolic missionary, and it contained a short greeting and a "see-you-soon" which made us all rather pleased. We knew vaguely that we would find missionaries in Yunnan, without knowing their nationality. Meeting fellow citizens was for us a double joy and this moment washed away the memory of many hard times. Our recompense was about to begin. To gauge the extent of these enjoyments, you must have experienced the weight of isolation, of being removed from the civilized world for months on end. Only those that have suffered a long exile can appreciate the joys of returning.

We entered Yunnan amid a vast throng of people who had gathered along our route in the long and populous quarter which lay before the city on the south-east. The wall was higher, thicker and constructed with more care than those of the towns that we had already seen. We experienced a new sensation as we walked along the long business streets which ended at the south gate of the city: these regularly aligned shops, these clean, stylish, often rich displays, this bustling liveliness, these thousand sign-boards with golden letters, which hung from the front of the shops, and this busy murmur which emanated from the crowd gave us a favorable impression of the capital of Yunnan. They lodged us in an immense, partly devastated *yamen*, of which one or two buildings were fit to receive us. This *yamen* was situated on a small hill from which the view was very wide and picturesque. It was the palace where the secondary school examinations took place. For ten years, because of the troubles in the province, this important function of Chinese life had been suspended in Yunnan. But two months before we were there,

an examiner sent from Peking had ventured as far as Yunnan and it was for his visit that, in great haste, some parts of the *yamen* had been repaired. This high official had pushed his courage as far as going to the neighboring town of Tchin-Kiang and his journey had seemed an act of heroism worthy of high praise. But the negative attitude of Leang ta-jen towards central power had prevented him from getting as far as Lin-ngan.

On our arrival Father Protteau, whom I soon recognized despite his dress and his Chinese manners, came to place himself at the disposal of Commander de Lagrée. I leave it to the reader's imagination how the excellent priest was feasted, encircled and questioned. Alas! he was unable to give us any more recent news from Europe than we already had: Yunnan was far from the coast and couriers are expensive for the slender purse of the missionaries. But he informed us of the situation of the province and made us understand all that the lack of interpreters had prevented us from learning so far. We thus learned that the famous Kosuto of whom we had heard tell so many times in Se-mao and Pou-eul was none other than Father Fenouil, the vicar apostolic of the mission of Yunnan. He had resided in Kiu-tsing since the blowing up of the house where he produced gunpowder for viceroy Lao, whose confidant and friend he was. Naturally his active intervention in the struggle against the Muslims marked him for their enmity and he attributed the accident which had happened and of which he was the victim to their ill will.[7] Song ta-jen sent him a message for him to come to us and serve as our official interpreter in all relations with the Chinese authorities.

It was Father Fenouil who, in agreement with the viceroy, had sent us, at the same time as the Chinese letter which had caused so much commotion in Xieng Hong, the letter in European characters which they had not wanted to show us and which would have explained the whole imbroglio to us. Viceroy Lao, who had been forewarned by Peking of our coming, had believed it was necessary to inform us of the troubled state of the province, of the dangers we would run traveling roads infested with bandits and he had advised us to delay our entrance into China until he, being informed of our arrival at the border, had been able to sent sufficient escorts. Father Fenouil confirmed all this information in French as well as the good will of the Chinese authorities and their lively desire to see us arrive safe and sound in Yunnan. The Chinese letter, poorly translated by people inexperienced in the art of deciphering ideograms, had taken it for a prohibition to enter China; from this came all the difficulties we had met with and which had only been removed

by reading our passports. Ignorance and not Burmese deception or Chinese ill will had caused the difficulties we had had to overcome in Muong Long and Xieng Hong.

Father Protteau showed us a letter from Father Leguilcher, another missionary who resided in the vicinity of Ta-Ly, in which the latter wrote about a rumor which, in other circumstances, would have intrigued us very much: it was about the presence in this town of a certain number of Europeans who produced gunpowder and war weapons for the use of the rebel government. Was this an English expedition, which, starting from the frontiers of Burma, had entered China and of which they had then altered the nature? To tell the truth, we did not worry about this. The success of our journey permitted us to enjoy the success of others. Moreover, we were so used to fables of all kinds, that we considered we should wait for confirmation of this news which had been brought to us as a simple "they say".

After Father Protteau, the *Tche-hien* of the city came in his turn to pay us a visit and to inquire after our needs. Supplies were brought to us in abundance and lower-ranking officers were put at our disposal to make the crowd respect us. But the authorities had lost their prestige in Yunnan and the Muslims were still too numerous and too fanatical for us to expose ourselves by offending one of them and treating the crowd harshly. We policed our *yamen* ourselves and after a few attempts to penetrate to the interior—the curious always successfully pushed back—they finished by leaving us alone.

On 25 December, we attended the Christmas service celebrated by Father Protteau in a modest hall adjoining his house.[8] Some thirty Chinese were met there. The city of Yunnan had only about a hundred Christians. The misery that the civil war had brought and the religious indifference which characterized the Chinese people hardly favor the increase of this small congregation.[9] Formerly, there had been seven or eight hundred persons and the entire province had seven or eight thousand believers. It would be difficult to find a quarter of that number today. The mission of Yunnan consisted of Mgr. Lefèvre, the vicar apostolic who resided in Long-ki on the borders of Se-tchouen and Yunnan with another missionary Abbot Chiroux—this admirable prelate had left France in 1830 before the fall of Charles X—of Father Leguilcher, of whom I just spoke; and of Fathers Protteau and Fenouil. Three or four Chinese priests completed the staff. We had to meet all these members in turn.

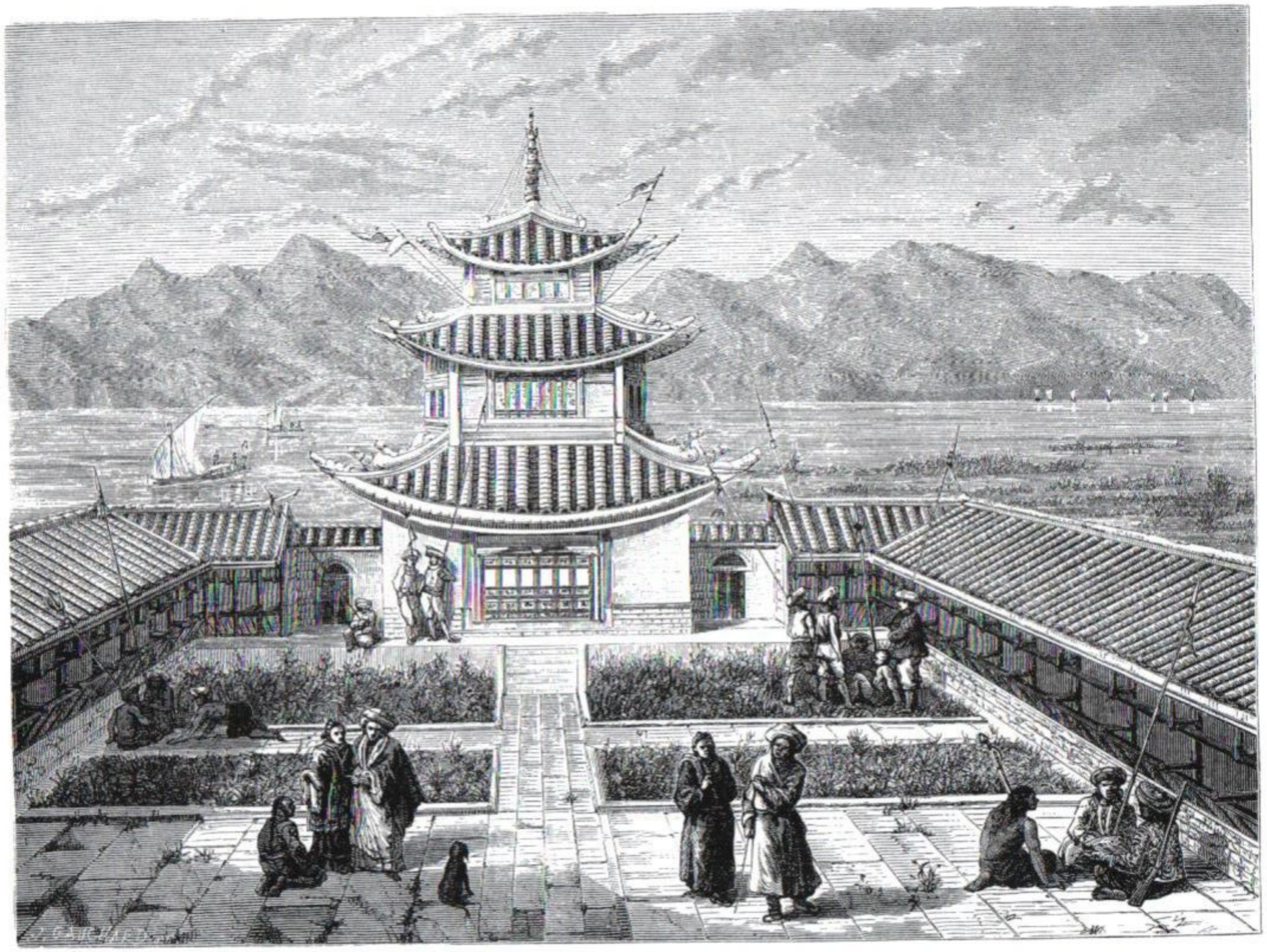


Plate 29 *The interior of the country cottage of Ma ta-jen on the banks of the lake of Yunnan (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

The day after Christmas, Mr. de Lagrée made an official visit to Song ta-jen. The latter, a handsome elder with a white beard and a distinguished face received him with an affability and a courteousness which gave us a good impression of Chinese politeness. Surrounded by all his mandarins in formal dress, he came as far as the second door of his *yamen* to meet the chief of the French mission. His rich costume, covered with fur, indicated how greatly the winter in Yunnan appeared to chill the officials most of whom came from the great province of Se-tchouen, located at a much lower altitude and the vast plains of which enjoyed a hot temperature. Song ta-jen paid a return visit to Mr. de Lagrée the next day.

Leaving the residence of Song ta-jen we went to Ma ta-jen. He lived outside the city in a villa that was pleasantly situated on the edge of the lake. He was a man of thirty-six, forceful but with rather crude ways. Seeing him, we understood how he had managed to dominate the weak Chinese pro-consul that Peking sent to govern this distant province. He was covered with scars and he proudly showed these proofs of his bravery which, more than his diplomas, had led him to power. His residence was truly an arsenal in which there was a surprising collection of European arms of all types: carbines, blunderbusses, repeating rifles, Lefaucheux rifles and revolvers. He exercised all day long with these various devices and had few pieces of furniture in his house which were not literally riddled with bullets. Around him lived a general staff of Muslims,[10] whose dress and features stood out very much from the usual style of the Chinese. We could see that these people were used to being feared and that they felt that, in the eyes of the crowd, the prestige of their terrible master inhered in them. Whether because of jealousy, or because the behavior of Ma ta-jen really had given rise to suspicions, the Chinese loyal to Peking were apt to suspect his behavior and accused him of giving comfort to the enemies of the emperor in time of war. It was certain that a common faith was a very powerful link in the eyes of the Muslims and that even when fighting on opposing sides, they displayed for one another a courtesy of which the Chinese were incapable in regard to their enemies. But we should add that this courtesy was displayed at the expense of the mass of the population which underwent, alas, all the reprisals, extortions, and requisitions of both sides, and in whom the name alone of the Muslims inspired an insane fright, only too justified by their manifold atrocities. We were told about vile excesses on seventy-year-old women. We were told that mothers, hiding in the bushes while the Muslim soldiers passed by, suffocated their babies at the breast with their own hands to prevent their cries giving away their presence!

The uncertainty in regard to what the future actions of Ma ta-jen would be, was clearly meant to maintain the fears of the population and of the officials of Yunnan. The Muslims were numerous in the city. Which side would he take, would the Whites (this was how the rebels were designated because of the color of their flags; the imperials were called the Reds for a similar reason) manage to put him in charge? At this juncture, we learned that he had managed to take Tchou-hiong and the towns of Outing and Lo-tse which were still closer. Fear was acute: it was felt that the arrival of the first refugees in Yunnan would cause a general panic there. The rich people and the biggest traders had long since abandoned the city in which, on the other hand, the countryfolk crowded together. Since that time, I have experienced a similar spectacle in Paris. [11] Father Protteau thought of going to the mountains where he had been accustomed to hiding during great crises, to return later to submit himself to the Whites once they had installed themselves in the capital of the province. Father Fenouil's position was more compromised and in this instance all he could do was to get out quickly before the arrival of the Muslims.

Since the death of the viceroy Lao, Ma ta-jen had demanded numerous services from the vicar of the mission, which the latter had not dared to refuse. That at least was Father Protteau's version of the political role of his colleague. Thus it happened that, in response to general request, Father Fenouil had written a letter to the Ambassador of France in Peking designating Ma ta-jen as the only man capable of pacifying Yunnan, and begging the legation of France to commend Ma ta-jen warmly to the Chinese government. This letter had not gone without troubling the conscience of Father Protteau, who told us that it had been extorted from him somewhat by force. [12]

Ma ta-jen did not return our visit but all the authorities of the city, in which the six great tribunals of the province were located, successively appeared in our *yamen*. Ma ta-jen invited us for a great dinner with our escort on 30 December. What was most singular about this occasion was not the feast, preceded by citrus seeds and exquisite oranges and consisting of birds' nests, according to custom, the tails and intestines of fish, lacquered duck and other dishes that were known from the tourists, but the complete abstention of our host and his officers, who were then observing the Ramadan. We dined alone with one or two Chinese mandarins, surrounded by a gallery of spectators.

On 31 December the Christian neophyte, who had carried to Peking the letter written by Father Fenouil in regard to Ma ta-jen, arrived at our *yamen*. He brought the reply of our ambassador. Father Protteau communicated it to us. We learned from the signature on this official envelope that it was Mr. Lallemand who represented France in Peking. His arrival had put an end to the interim authority of Mr. de Bellonnet, who had signed our passports. Mr. Lallemand's letter started with very wise observations about the inconveniences presented by missionaries interfering in policy-making and playing the role of mandarins in China. Our ambassador, nevertheless, added that he had indeed intervened in favor of Ma ta-jen and that the Chinese government would send him weapons, money and supplies to help him in his struggle against the rebels. We overwhelmed the messenger, who spoke Latin like all the seminarists of the Celestial Empire, with questions to obtain some news from Europe. He was only able to give us rather vague news: nevertheless, we concluded that no new war had thrown the Old World into turmoil and that we would be able to enjoy in tranquility the rest to which our journey entitle us. Our impatience to return was somewhat mollified now and we began a series of visits to, and studies of, this important city where we would rest for a few weeks to recover from our exhaustion.

Commerce and metallurgical richness of Yunnan— Effects of opium culture—The pagoda of King Ou

The population of the city of Yunnan might be estimated at barely more than fifty thousand inhabitants at the time of our passage. The vast, partly destroyed quarters, which stretched for a league and a half outside the walls, must have quadrupled this figure before the war.

The wall had a rectangular shape and measured about three kilometers in the northern and the southern directions and two kilometers in the other directions. It had six fortified gates: two on the eastern side, two on the southern side and one on each of the other two sides. The moat was fed with water from a canalized river which lapped the eastern side of the wall. The land on which the city was built descended in a slope to the lake and a few small mountains made the northern part uneven. Between two of these small mountains, in a depression in the ground, gardens and rice-fields stretched over almost the entire north-western corner of

the enclosure. There were a few restaurants, a few country cottages and tea houses which functioned as cafés in China.

The commercial part of the city had, despite the war, a remarkable appearance and indicated a rich, populous center on which the products of an entire, exceptionally favored region converged. The principal wealth of the province consisted of metals, the most important being copper. There were some forty copper mines in Yunnan and the greater part of the minerals that came from the mines of the south was treated in the capital or underwent its last refinement there. To give an idea of the importance of this product, it is sufficient to state that in 1850 the annual tax paid to Peking by the province was about six million kilograms. The price of one hundred pounds of copper (sixty kilograms), bought in the place itself, was about fifty-five francs. To this production silver must be added; the quantity of this was much less, and seemed to be not more than forty thousand kilograms per year. The most important silver mines were those of Lo-ma and Mien-hoa-ti, situated between Tong-tchouen and Tchao-tong, of Houy-long and Ngan-nan, which were, the former on the banks of the Mekong river, west from Li-Kiang, and the latter on the banks of the Blue River, north of the same city. The gold mines were even less important. I have already spoken of the repositories which were located north of Ta-lan. I mention here the mine of Ma-kang, situated in the vicinity of Ngan-nan and that of Ma-kou, which was on the borders of the territories of Lin-ngan and of Tong King. The tax which the government levied on the exploitation of this metal was only eleven hundred and forty grams of gold annually and did not give any idea of high gold production in the province.

As far as I know, there was only one tin mine in Yunnan: that of Ko-kieou, situated on the territory of Mong-tse, east of Lin-ngan. The lead and zinc mines were more numerous and were located in particular in the north of the province, around Tong-tchouen and Ping-y hien. They provided the State with three to four hundred thousand kilograms of zinc and some hundred thousand kilograms of lead annually. Finally, there were fourteen iron mines grouped in the lakeside region of which Yunnan was the center. They were only very lightly taxed and they paid only two or three thousand francs in taxes to the State annually.

The exploitation of the copper mines was a sort of limited partnership, for which the State provided the capital, reserving to itself the right to purchase from each mine, at a fixed price, a quantity of the metal that was fixed in advance too. The same right was allowed the neighboring province in exchange for a capital input

and the transport of this due in kind gave rise, before the war started, to huge convoys of boats, which descended the Blue River and transported millions of kilograms of copper necessary for the production of the currency of the Celestial Empire, all the way to Peking. In 1850, the sum that was advanced for the exploitation of the copper mines of Yunnan was one million *taels* annually, [13] but the miners complained loudly that the official price of copper was much too low and that the quantity of the metal demanded was much too high. The result was a great reduction in the numbers of workers, who had come from all over the Empire to mine the metallic riches of Yunnan, and after the deductions by the State and by the provinces, the trade did not yield a sufficient supply of copper to support many people.

The Muslim rebellion had further aggravated this state of affairs and the majority of the mines were abandoned today. But we could estimate how easy it would be, when tranquility had returned to this beautiful region, to revive this production and give it a considerable boost. A more liberal regime, more advanced means of exploitation and an easier commercial outlet which would permit us to bring these metals direct to a European market, would make Yunnan the most important metallurgical supplier in the world. From this point of view, it was not necessary to labour the consequences which the opening of the Tong King river might have, bringing the products of Yunnan straight to Saigon. [14]

While Yunnan was, under the present circumstances, the repository of huge quantities of copper, which resulted in busy trade and an important production of copper utensils, this city also possessed a currency mint, created in 1661. The Chinese produced a huge quantity of *sapèques* there. The alloy of which this important currency was composed was, for one hundred parts, 54 copper, 42.75 zinc and 3.25 lead. Before the war, they minted more than 101 million *sapèques* annually, which represented, at the legal exchange rate of twelve hundred *sapèques* for one *tael* or one ounce of silver (close to thirty-eight grams), a value of about 650 thousand francs. One *sapèque* weighed four and a half grams. Since the war, the production of the currency had very much diminished. The urgencies of the moment had forced the composition of the alloy to be changed and the quantity of zinc in it had increased. The value of the currency changed in this way was subject to numerous fluctuations: clandestine production had occurred everywhere. At the time of our visit to Yunnan, the exchange rate for the *tael* was 1,800 *sapèques* and we could find still lower rates.

This was not the only industry of Yunnan. They wove a special cloth there which was called *tong hay touan tse* or "satin of the Oriental seas". This cloth was thick, made of silk thread which I suspected was from the same spider, whose presence I indicated earlier in Ta-lan. It was very strong, not at all shiny and generally black, although it could be dyed in all kinds of colors. The satin of Yunnan was renowned all over China. In Yunnan they also made beautiful carpets, blankets and felt.

The principal local products which we were able to find in the market were: opium, which was worth about one and a half *taels* per kilogram; salt, which was sold for close to two francs per kilogram because of the occupation by the Muslims of the saline works situated twenty leagues to the north-west of the city; tea, cinnabar, musk, silk, medicines and tobacco. Russian woolen cloth and furs, English cotton which had come from Canton and raw cotton imported from Burma were the principal foreign products.

The plain of Yunnan was rich in cereals, in fruit trees and in pasture. They grew wheat, sorghum, maize, oats, tobacco, flax; plums, cherries, peaches, strawberries, nuts, chestnuts and pears were the principal fruits found there. Here and there, groups of sheep, goats, cows and buffaloes grazed on the sides of the hills. The latter contained marble quarries and also quarries of that special stone the Chinese call lazulite.

Opium poppy culture forced an important product off the market of Yunnan, i.e., bees' wax. According to the locals, the bees, formerly very numerous in this part of China, had suffered the same unhealthy addiction to the flowers as the Chinese feel for the juice that was extracted from the opium poppies. When the opium poppies flowered, the insects came in masses to gather nectar but later they had no taste for any other food and they died off in the interval between two consecutive poppy seasons.

They cited another example of this singular attraction that the opium poppy exerts on animals as well as on man. In an opium distillery of the city, they had noticed that rats came in great numbers during the evening, inhaling the fumes which escaped from the furnaces. Because of the temporary occupation of Yunnan by the Muslims, the distillery stopped functioning and was abandoned for some time. When a new owner came to take up occupation, he found several rat carcasses on the trays that had been left in place: they had died of hunger waiting for the enjoyment they felt when inhaling the opium fumes.

Lake Yunnan, which was the biggest in the whole province, flowed into the Yang-tse Kiang, by a river which came out of the south-western end of the lake, close to the town of Kouen-yang tcheou. It had the name "sea of Tien". We know that the kingdom with this name formerly occupied the greater part of the province of Yunnan. It was conquered by China at the end of the second century B.C. But the subjection of this vast region was for a long time only nominal and was interrupted by long periods of complete independence. The government in Peking had almost always had to leave Yunnan the liberty of governing itself according to its own customs and also the right to nominate its own chiefs.

It was only since Khang-hi that the administrative system of the rest of the Empire had been applied to it. I have already mentioned that the cities of the south maintained very large municipal tax exemptions and a real autonomy today.

The last governor of Yunnan, who had the title of king and who enjoyed complete independence, was the famous Ou-san-kouei. The Manchu dynasty, of which he favored the coming, gave him Yunnan and Kouy-tcheou in appanage in 1658. He was an able administrator. He knew how to obtain the affection of the population and before long aroused the suspicions of the court. Khang-hi sent him in 1672 a peremptory order to come to Peking. Offended and with equal defiance, Ou-san-kouie took to Chinese dress again and proscribed the calendar of the Ching dynasty. Kouy-tcheou, Se-tchouen and Hou-kouang declared themselves in his favor. Khang-hi forced these provinces into submission but dared not trouble Ou-san-kouei in his quiet possession of Yunnan. It was only after his death in 1679 that a Manchu army marched on Yunnan, put down the local troops in three consecutive battles and took the city. The son of Ou-san-kouei hanged himself in despair and the conquest of the province was final.

Ou-san-kouei had left lasting memories in the mind of the population. We were still able to see a small pagoda on a small height in the north-west of the city built during his reign and which they called the pagoda of king Ou. It was entirely in copper from the columns of the base up to the tiles of the roof. Despite the intrinsic value of these materials, despite the civil wars and the terrible sacrifices of the treasury, it had so far been respected by all parties. Religious feeling, almost unknown to the Chinese, counted for nothing in this almost miraculous preservation of the pagoda of King Ou: all the honor must be given to that deep respect for tradition and ancestors which renders the memory of good men immortal in China. [15]

Chapter 8

Fathers Fenouil and Protteau—The Lao-papa*—A loan from Ma ta-jen—Departure from Yunnan—Arrival at Tong-tchouen*

On 2 January 1868, Father Fenouil, the vicar apostolic of Yunnan, finally arrived in Yunnan. The arrival of this new fellow countryman was a great joy for us. His renown and his great war feats had for long been the main topics of conversation. Father Fenouil was totally different in disposition from Father Protteau. The latter personified absolute renunciation: he had systematically broken all the ties which might still attach him to his family, his homeland and even to the civilization into which he was born. He denationalized himself by changing his living environment. He took on the appearance and the customs of the Chinese by adopting their dress. This transformation appeared so striking that I sometimes wondered that he did not have the slanted eyes and the skull shape of the Mongol race. It seemed impossible to adopt all the moral similarities of a race without displaying its physical appearance. The apostle thought that the best way to fulfill his role was to become a man of the people. It amazed us, every new day, to see Father Protteau quietly sitting with some Christians of his church in one of those restaurants open to the crowds and which was especially patronized by coolies and day laborers. He consumed a few bowls of rice, talking about the news of the day, or drank a cup of tea while smoking his long pipe. He seemed to take the greatest pleasure in this crude and coarse company. The affairs of the few families that formed his flock, the domestic events which occurred in their homes formed his horizon and absorbed his whole mind. He shared the total indifference which the lower classes in China manifest for all political events and he felt the same holy fright they feel for all turmoil, all wars in which they inevitably play the role of taxable mass and cannon fodder. He extended this indifference to the rest of the universe. The world which

he had left had no value for him anymore. The memory of his early years seemed to have left no imprint on his mind and nobody could say that it still plucked at his heart strings. The young French seminarist was truly dead, gone beyond recall. What remained was a Chinese priest.[1]

Although his exile dated from further back, the transformation of Father Fenouil was less complete. We found a man who still cried at the memory of his mother, a Frenchman whose heart still swelled when we spoke of our homeland. He inspired in us, if not more respect, at least more sympathy. We admired Father Protteau, we loved Father Fenouil. At first we were able to see only an admirable or frightful abstraction of a type of ideal perfection or a monstrosity, according to whether we judged from the point of view of religion or from the human point of view. The second man appeared to us to be a patriot, with whom we had numerous feelings in common. His natural ardor and his lively imagination had led him beyond the role of his position as missionary. He felt that he was born for action. The trouble in Yunnan seemed to him a completely natural opportunity to enter the scene and to put in the balance the weight of his activity, of his special knowledge, the influence given him by the protection of the French legation. He had determined that the interests of religion and France could only gain by his intervention. In the capacity of mandarin, which [status] was accorded to vicars and vicars apostolic by the most recent treaties, he only presented himself to the pretorian in a state worthy of his dignity. His chair, the number of his porters and his dress were scrupulously those that the Chinese sumptuary laws determined, according to the rank and to the season. Hence, he incurred considerable expense. He knew all the officials of the province and was able to elaborate in detail on their character, their origins, their ins and outs. He sought opportunities to get to know them with as much care as Father Protteau put into avoiding them. As I have said earlier, viceroy Lao had become sincerely fond of Father Fenouil. He had given him a huge *yamen* in the city of Yunnan. He had installed a gunpowder factory in it, headed by a low-ranking Christian mandarin. One day, the dastardly Muslims, if we can believe Father Fenouil's story, but more probably sheer carelessness, caused the manufactory to blow up and Father Fenouil was nearly buried alive under the debris of his house. This event caused some moral shock from which he was not entirely recovered. He had imagined since then that he was the target of powerful and numerous enemy persecutions. The Muslims accused him of active intervention in favor of the imperial forces. In the eyes of Father Fenouil, Ma ta-jen himself,

despite his apparent attachment to the imperial cause, was suspected of secretly favoring his fellow believers pursuing their declared enemy through him. This harsh and unscrupulous general had tried several times to get rid of the turbulent priest: the latter had survived several attempts at poisoning him only by virtue of a very good antidote which he always carried on him. In these circumstances, the unfortunate Father Fenouil slept with only one eye closed and trembled at the sight of the lowest-ranking mandarin or the lowest Muslim. He displayed the same courtesy and the same gentle obsequiousness to the lowest armed peasant as to the viceroy himself. Actually, he was on the best of terms with Ma ta-jen, who thought he needed his influence to be confirmed in his rank by the imperial government. He told us that the letter he had written to the French embassy in favor of the Muslim general was only the translation of a letter of Ma ta-jen, which he had been forced to make under threat of death and at the bottom of which he had, without really knowing why, written his signature. Erroneously, Mr. Lallemand believed it was a letter from the vicar and he sent him the grave reply which we have already seen. Father Fenouil was aware of how much he had compromised himself and how much he might have compromised the French legation in its turn by supporting an official who might, from one day to the next, declare his opposition to the emperor. Thus, at every opportunity, he spoke about the treachery against him. However, it would have been quite simple to send a countervailing letter or even to write precisely the opposite of what Ma ta-jen had demanded since in Yunnan nobody would be able to check the contents of a letter in French. It was more likely that Father Fenouil had already made this move and, despite the terrors he had felt since the explosion of his *yamen,* had not abandoned all his pretensions to play an important political role in this province. He still cherished the secret hope of being accepted as the referee by the two parties. We feared that, if he persisted on this path, it would really become disastrous for him. [2]

The existence of these poor missionaries who, by devotion and to keep down the expenses of their fraternity, almost all made a point of honor of never going back to their homeland except in cases of exceptionally serious illness, was too sad and too meritorious for us to feel able to condemn the few political peccadilloes that boredom made them commit. The mistake of our government was to encourage them and even to support them in their ways. It obtained for them and it will continue to ensure the religious tolerance which they had compromised by their insidious quarrels in the eighteenth century. Going any further looked dangerous

to me: we risked sacrificing the general interest of civilization and our commerce to personal questions and purely local rivalries. [3]

After the arrival of Father Fenouil, our contacts with the authorities of Yunnan became more numerous and more friendly. It was only reluctantly that Father Protteau agreed to play the role of interpreter. He preferred the calm and obscurity of his modest life to the dangerous honor of frequenting the city palaces. Father Fenouil, conversely, found himself in his element as soon as political negotiations or questions of etiquette were involved and he certainly managed several times to engage us further than we ourselves wanted.

The resources of the Commission were more or less exhausted. The rigors of the temperature and the requirements of our official situation obliged us to make use of the munificent supplies in the warehouses of Yunnan to replace our clothes and the uniforms of our escort. We were in a civilized country where more than elsewhere we must have an open hand: we had to show ourselves generous towards the crowd of officials and guards who, by the courtesy of our hosts, surrounded our every move. Mr. de Lagrée begged Father Fenouil to negotiate a loan from Ma ta-jen. The latter showed only good feeling and cordial friendship to the vicar in our midst. The crude straightforwardness of this upstart soldier was a guarantee for us that the black designs that Father Fenouil attributed to him were quite imaginary. He immediately offered us all the money we needed, without even wanting to hear talk of repayment and treating as a mere trifle an advance of seven hundred *taels.* [4] "If you really insist on paying me back," he added "send me an equivalent value in French arms when you get to Shanghai."

This first affair having gone well, Mr. de Lagrée wanted to find out the difficulties which a journey to the west and a reconnaissance of the upper valley of the Mekong river would present. The capital of the Muslim rebels, Ta-Ly, was from the geographic and commercial point of view one of the most important centers of this region. Situated between the Blue River and the Mekong, only a short distance from both, this city was the key to the route which linked Burma with China. But would we Europeans find grace in the eyes of the new government which had just established itself there? Would not the Chinese authorities regard a meeting of French envoys and the chief of a triumphant rebellion with the greatest distrust? Would it not see in this move some sort of admission of a *fait accompli*? Finally, the state of devastation of the country to be traversed, the gangs that infested the roads and robbed every traveler without distinction, the fatigue and the sorry state

of health of our personnel, would they not render this attempt very daring? At this stage of the journey, when our principal objective had been attained, while the return route by the Blue River was still open, quick and easy, was it wise to put at risk, for an uncertain result, the prize [attained at the cost of] so many labors and so much suffering? These were the questions that our chief of mission, who was for the first time indecisive, posed to all his traveling companions. We were all of the opinion that we must make this last effort before finally returning by the Blue River route. [5]

Unfortunately, the direct route to Ta-Ly was absolutely impassable. The temporary viceroy, Song ta-jen, and Ma ta-jen started to laugh when Mr. de Lagrée asked them to conduct him to the advance posts and to put him there in the hands of the White troops. There was no well-established authority in the camp of the rebels at all, they told us, for us to negotiate a safe passage for the French Commission and a safe-conduct delivered by one of their generals. Mr. de Lagrée thus resolved to circumvent the war theater by going to the north and thus to make a reconnaissance of the course of the Mekong and the Blue River to the borders of Tibet, at the same time. If, according to what the Chinese authorities said, there was no unity of views and actions among the Muslims; this allowed us to hope that a recommendation from one of their military chiefs would have an influence on his colleagues. Conversely, the religious link was omnipotent and Mr. de Lagrée thought of obtaining the blessing of the *Lao-papa* to facilitate our journey to Ta-Ly. I have already spoken about this singular personality: if he managed to play only a ridiculous political role, he remained the object, from the religious point of view, of deep veneration. Officially recognized by the Chinese government as the religious chief of the Muslims in the province, he enjoyed as such a considerable salary and official prestige. The Chinese government had believed that it was a healthy policy to haggle over neither to indicate clearly to the fanatical adherents of the Koran that it did not at all oppose their religious beliefs only that it rejected their political pretensions.

Upon his arrival in Yunnan, Mr. de Lagrée did not possess the information to appreciate this particular situation well. Fearing to arouse the susceptibilities of the Chinese authorities if he showed too much haste to link himself to one of their old adversaries, he let several days pass before paying a visit to the *Lao-papa.* This touchy old man, whose travels had broadened his mind and who had a more accurate idea than his fellow citizens about Western science and the role of

Europeans in the world, thought we scorned him and was the more hurt since he was conscious of meriting it less. When Mr. de Lagrée finally presented himself at his place, he sent out the reply that he was not at home. Father Fenouil arrived in time to renew the compromised relations. The grudge of the *Lao-papa* could not withstand his curiosity. The vicar adroitly let him know that one of the members of the expedition was in charge of astronomy and that he would find in him an enlightened adept of his favorite science. Very soon I received a series of questions and problems about the distance of the planets and the stars, about eclipses and comets, from the Muslim mufti. I answered them discreetly, letting him understand more or less in these terms the admiration that I felt for the author of questions so learned: "certain parts of the message that he had the good will to send to me, testify to studies so deep that I have everything to gain from a conference with him only. A discussion in person can clarify a few doubts."

The *Lao-papa*, finally seeing himself appreciated, forgot his grief and agreed to a meeting.

I went in to him with Commander de Lagrée and the vicar. A number of believers respectfully attended this conference which, in their eyes, would shatter the deep science of their master. A magnificent telescope placed on a tripod, a few maps displayed on a table, completed the performance. I soon discovered that the owner had little familiarity with the use of these objects. The telescope especially had never been used and the *Lao-papa* confided in us with a certain embarrassment that, despite the high price he had paid for it in Singapore, this instrument must have been damaged on the road because since its arrival in Yunnan they had not been able to see anything through it. The maneuver of calibrating, which was done with a screw, had completely escaped the learned Muslim mufti. I replaced the astronomic eyepiece by a terrestrial one, I pointed the viewer towards a distant point on the lake which we were able to see from the windows of the apartment, I declared, to save our host's face, that indeed there was something wrong in the mechanism of the instrument which I had been able to repair and invited him to make use of the instrument. His joy was of the greatest when he saw that this beautiful piece of equipment, brought to Yunnan at such great cost and which had until the present time been left idle in his hands, had recovered all its optical powers. The whole assembly successively set their eye to the telescope and put its powers to the test, searching all points of the horizon. Then, changing the glasses, I made them study the sun and the *Lao-papa* used the occasion to present a theory

about this star. Father Fenouil made me use the most suitable language to show off the knowledge of the mufti and increase the admiration of his listeners: from then onwards the friendship of the *Lao-papa* was won irrevocably.

We then confided to him our travel plan and our fears that we would see our scientific mission held up and our geographical research compromised by the mistrust of the two warring parties. The [mufti] said: "Do not have any illusions in this regard. I am the only one here to appreciate the objective of your journey. It is impossible for the ignorant and crude people who surround us to believe that the progress of science is the only motive which makes you endure so much fatigue and run such grave dangers. But fortunately I enjoy great influence over my co-believers in Ta-Ly and I place it entirely at your service. I will immediately write a letter which will, I hope, serve you as a passport and facilitate your work."

Indeed, a few days later, he sent us a long statement of his case, in which he explained at length in the bombastic and pretentious style of Chinese writers that for centuries China had attracted the curiosity of foreigners and that they had been seen coming from the farthest countries to bring tribute to the Middle Empire. Then he added: "The French chief La (Lagrée), five of his colleagues and a few soldiers have obtained from the emperor the authorization to enter China and to freely visit every part of this vast territory. Their objective is to report to their sovereign the most exact number of mountains, of lakes and of rivers that they traversed, surely in order to offer him a new map of their journey and obtain the ranks and the honors so much deserved by this work of patience. That is the objective for which the foreigners have undertaken the effort of such a long and difficult march, the extremes of climate and the dangers of wild animals and bandits. I have questioned them and I found their heart true, their honesty irreproachable and their ways gentle. They intend to visit Ta-Ly, Li-Kiang, Yong-pe and the borders of the countries of the Mien and the Tse-Yang. I request all the Muslims, all the Chinese and all the barbarians that inhabit these regions to let these Frenchmen pass without let or hindrance in any way. Doing so will conform with the holy dynasty of Ta-tsin who vouchsafes an equal goodness toward everyone, without distinction of country or nationality.

"On the strength of which, I, by the grace of the emperor, dignitary of the second order, grand mufti of the province of Yunnan, reformer of the old family Ma-te-sin, and charged by eighty years, have given the above letter. [6]

The reader can see that nothing was more orthodox from the political point of view than this passport of the *Lao-papa*. He made no allusion to his past rebellion and showed himself to his co-believers of Ta-Ly as a loyal subject of the emperor.

The viceroy of Yunnan gave us in his turn a *fou-pay* or permit to circulate. The only itinerary which was indicated in it was our return journey by Tong-tchouen, Tchao-tong, the Blue River and Shanghai. A low-ranking Christian mandarin wearing a copper globule was deputed to accompany us up to Tong-tchouen.

We left Yunnan on 8 January. Despite a rest of two weeks, the health of some of the Annamites of the escort was too badly affected by weariness and the demanding climate of Yunnan for us to ask to go to Ta-Ly. For such an expedition, we needed solid escorting men, good marchers who were not likely to become a drawback. So Mr. de Lagrée had resolved to send our weaker escorts, with our notes, maps, documents and all the unnecessary luggage, to the vicar apostolic who resided not far from Siu-tcheou, a town on the banks of the Blue River where we would have to embark finally for Shanghai, to wait for our return from Ta-Ly. It was in Tong-tchouen that this division of the expedition into two parts would have to take place. We did not know then that the chief of the expedition would be among the sick and incapable too.

Father Fenouil left Yunnan with us. He was returning to Kiu-tsing. We traveled together for two days. He went in a chair: we went on horseback or on foot.[7] Leaving from the south-east quarter of Yunnan, the paved road went towards the north of the province, crossed two small chains of hills and passed Ta-pan kiao, a big settlement situated on an affluent of the lake. That was our first stopover. Ta-pan kiao was famous in the history of Yunnan. The Mongol officer who was in command of Yunnan in 1381 came to this place to surrender to the general of the army, sent by the Mings to ensure that their authority was respected. At this time, the prince of Yunnan, a descendant of Khoubilai Khan and the last representative of the conquered dynasty of the Yuen in the Empire, threw himself into the lake with his wife, his family and his first minister, Ta-ti-lou.

Beyond Ta-pan kiao there was a vast, undulating, uncultivated plain, criss-crossed in all directions by convoys of beasts of burden and narrow, low carts, bringing to the city the necessary fuel wood which the completely deforested immediate surroundings could not supply. A squad of Chinese troops were following the

same route and arrived at the same time in the village of Yang-lin. The inns of the market town were soon filled to the brim with soldiers and the lodgings which we occupied on the first floor of a pretty, big inn were under threat of being requisitioned by them. At length, but in vain, we explained to them our status as guests of the emperor. The Chinese soldier did not recognize any chief and did not bow to any discipline. Father Fenouil addressed the army crowd that thronged the courtyard and the steps of the staircase that led to our rooms. His eloquence was useless: they wanted to see the foreigners and the soldiers had already climbed up and filled the anteroom. I had recourse to heavy measures: our Annamite sergeant, who was only waiting for the signal and champing at the bit at such lack of respect, jumped on them, together with his friends, and started dealing blows with the rifle-butt to those who entered first and tumbled them back into the courtyard. Two guards took up their posts at the door to the staircase, with bayonets fixed. Great shouts rose from the crowd, stones reached the windows. I begged Father Fenouil to announce in good Chinese that we would open fire on the aggressors. But the poor priest had lost his head completely, seeing the unheard-of audacity of our Annamites, and he was astonished that we had not yet been cut to pieces. Instead of threats he addressed pleas to the soldiers. He admitted our wrongs. He alleged our ignorance of the customs. He said that we asked forgiveness. Trusting in this language, an officer presented himself at the door and was met with the point of a bayonet. He stepped back, scared, and started to shout that the guilty person should be executed. The noise redoubled. Their lances and halberds moved, but they were too long to be anything but a nuisance on the narrow staircase. Father Fenouil begged me and our escort not to oppose men who were used never to meeting any resistance. He placed himself between the guards and the audacious men who were getting ready to renew the assault on the door and he saved them many thumps. These terrible people were happy to appear to grant his entreaties, but they demanded that their chief should be allowed to approach Commander de Lagrée. The latter agreed to show himself. It was at this moment that they asked him whether he had an eye in the back of his head. Revolted by such childishness and finding the language of Father Fenouil too emollient for the circumstances, he was in a state of suffering which already revealed his feelings clearly, and Mr. de Lagrée drew back into his room and declined new parleys. I had to receive them in his place.

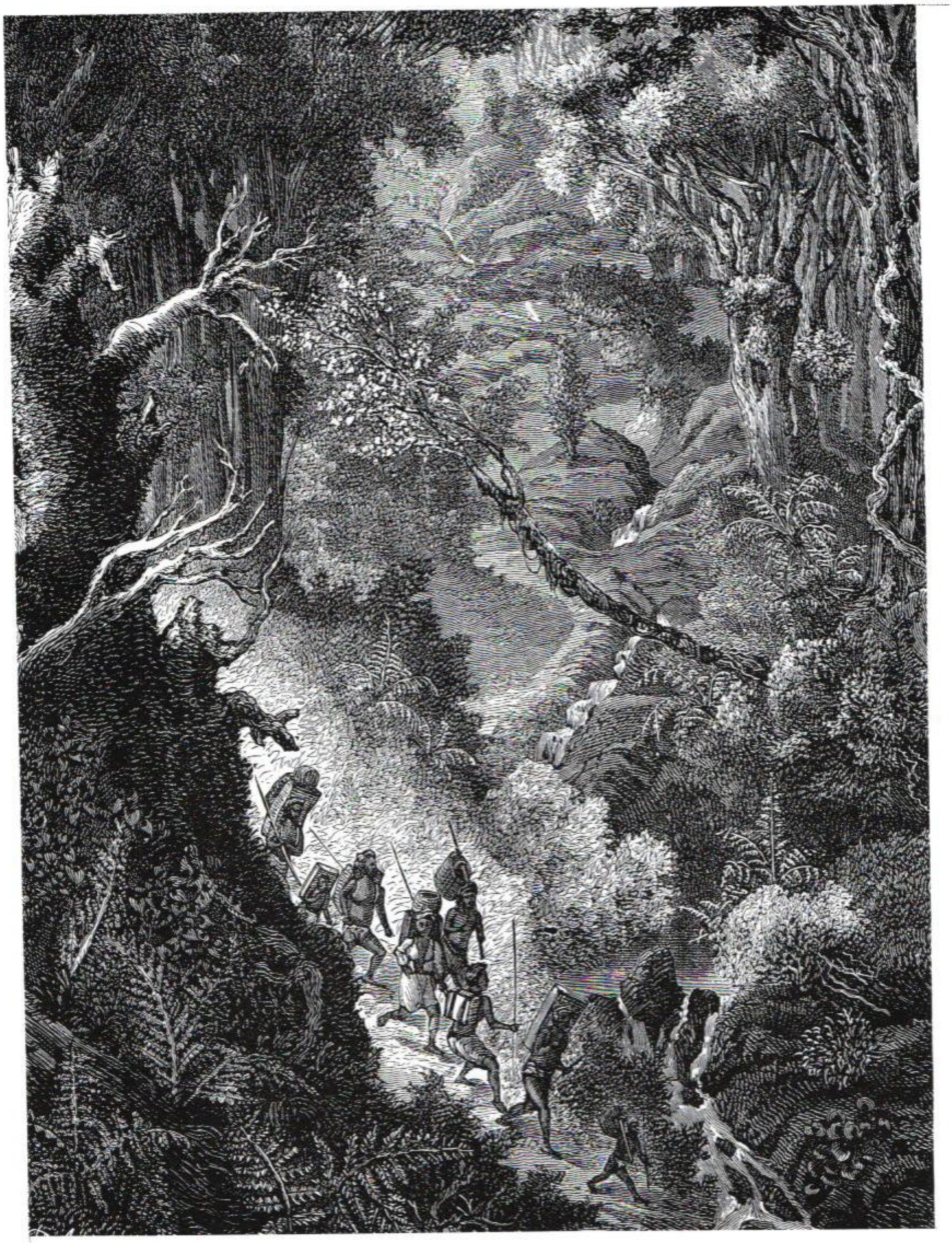


Plate 30 *The arrival in the valley of the Kon-tchang (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

The different officers of the regiment of troops and the authorities of the village successively came to talk with me, or better with Father Fenouil who passed me their demands for appearance sake, but who only answered them as he fancied. More than his repeated apologies, the resolution of our men actually put an end to the turmoil. The vicar had heard the most atrocious threats against them and he had begged me to stop them entering the courtyard, to attend to the varied care that our horses and luggage needed. I did none of that and the vicar was amazed to see them come and go without hindrance amid the crowd which respectfully gave way to allow them to pass. [8]

Yang-lin was situated close to a lake, on the shores of which a chain of mountains going straight to the north here, died out. It was to the east of this chain that the cities of Song-ming and Ma-long, principal stopovers of Father Fenouil's journey to Kiu-tsing, were located. For our part, we would go to the west side of this chain. The hour of parting had come. This priest, whom we had known for barely six days, had become our friend. As for him, he left, never to see again the fellow citizens with whom, for the first time in twenty years, he had been able to talk about France and those close to him. His eyes glistened with tears and we were only able to hold back our painful feelings by exchanging a last handshake with him.

On 10 January we proceeded across a vast, intensely cultivated plain which was admirably watered by numerous canalized brooks. Curtains of cypresses bordered the roads in the vicinity of villages. Big farms spread out in all directions amid the fields. Agricultural utensils, mules and beasts that were seen close to the dwellings, the nature of the crops, the appearance of the vegetation and the snakes which shone in the branches, gave this landscape a European appearance which filled us with joy. Anyone who would propose to exchange this monotonous scene, lacking in picturesque or new things, for the prettier and more virgin forests of Laos, would certainly be received very badly.

The next day there were some hills in the plain. A few lakes appeared in the folds of the terrain. Hills rose on our left side and formed a narrow and reputedly dangerous chasm, with the chain, to which we had come much closer, on the right side. The red, uncultivated hilltops, which rose on both sides of the road, seemed to be afflicted by an incurable barrenness. The villages became rarer. Most of those that we passed were only heaps of ruins. The Muslims had ravaged terribly this region where they had numerous co-believers. The latter continued after their

departure to hold the Chinese population, which to us seemed trembling and cowed, in subjection.

On the twelfth we descended the bed of a ravine which soon changed into a brook. A deep valley opened before us: it was that of the Li-tang-ho, the river which flowed into the Blue River not far from Tong-tchouen.[9] We followed its banks, on which beautiful and leafy foliage soon appeared, to the village of Kon-tchang, at the confluence of a tributary from the right bank. Before we arrived there, we had the painful experience of seeing Royal, the horse which the king of Xieng Tong had given to Commander de Lagrée, succumb on the road. Our porters thought he had been poisoned by a Muslim whom we had disciplined the preceding evening. This insolent person, being used to seeing everybody give way to him, had claimed the exclusive right to sell us supplies and had raised his demands so high that we had put him out of the door without further ado, to his great loss of face and the astonishment of the inhabitants of the village. According to report, this incident would have resulted in the poisoning of one of our horses. But Doctor Joubert, who had extended his care to the poor animal, confided to me that it had died of indigestion. If the doctor had had at his disposal one of those instruments which Molière managed to put on stage, Royal would have escaped the consequences of his greediness. His body was cut up by the Chinese locals who enjoyed their good luck. In these times of war and scarcity, meat—everywhere in China a luxury—became an invaluable food. It is known that the Chinese do not at all entertain the prejudices against certain meats which even the sieges of the last war did not manage to eradicate in our own country.[10]

We rested at Kon-tchang the whole day of the fourteenth. Mr. de Lagrée was afflicted by a continuous fever and by a stitch which obliged us to stop. This place was poor and without resources. As might be expected from its name (*tchang* means mine in Chinese), there were repositories of copper and zinc in the vicinity. A small river cut its winding bed, littered with stones, in the flanks of the plateau which bordered the valley of the Li-tang-ho to the east. We ascended this bed for some time and climbed again on to the plateau which was at this point of an average altitude of two thousand six hundred meters. The population of this region, rather thinly spread, had lost its Chinese look again and showed quite a lot of foreign blood. The houses were built of adobe. Only oats and potatoes grew on the summits, which were incessantly swept by glacial winds. A few stunted bushes barely managed to find shelter in the folds of the terrain. Here and there we met long trails of snow which the weakened rays of the sun were unable to melt.

Our porters from Kon-tchang, frightened by the long itinerary that they still had to cover in this barren country, ran away during the night and we were obliged to summon the inhabitants of this poor hamlet by force.

The same evening we met a low-ranking mandarin, sent to meet us, with an escort, by the military commander of Tong-tchouen. He procured sufficient means of transportation for us and Mr. de Lagrée, whose illness persisted, would [be able to] continue his journey by palanquin.



Plate 31 *An immigrant from Yunnan on the western border of China (drawing by Gilbert, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

The next day, we passed over a high peak on which the barometer indicated 533 millimeters. Not far away, on our left side, rose a peak crowned with snow, the altitude of which would be a little less than four thousand meters. Large deep crevices, which looked like vast trenches, cut the plateau on all sides and it seemed to fall away slightly towards the north. We descended to the bottom of one of these huge channels, which served in the spring as drainage canals for rainwater, and we arrived at the sizable market town of Tay-phou, where the shops were magnificently supplied, because of the approaching Chinese New Year. A population with the most mixed and picturesque appearance had thronged from the surrounding mountains and gathered before the displays. The inn of the place was decked with flags in our honor. We received a comfortable reception there.

Tay-phou was situated on the banks of a brook which a little farther on became the river of Tong-tchouen. On 18 January, after having walked a few kilometers on foot, we were able to board a big boat and rapidly descend the river, during which time our luggage went on the backs of porters along the route which followed the sides of the valley. The waters were low and the rapids plentiful, but our vessel with its flat bottom glided easily over the stones, thanks to the vigorous efforts of the crew who often stepped into the water. Despite the ease of progress and the speed of our [journey], the horrible landscape we saw made the eight hours' navigation which separated us from Tong-tchouen seem quite long. Two walls of bare, reddish rock, cut into by ravines [caused] by the rains, without a single tree, without a blade of grass, restricted our view on all sides and our eyes searched in vain to find a resting-point. Not a single cloud came to temper the blazing light. The sky was clear blue and of a dispiriting uniformity. A wind blew from the south-south-west with intermittent gusts and it produced a strident and dismal noise by howling through the hollows of the valley. There were a few sparse fishermen's houses, the walls of which were composed of stones, placed one on top of each other without cement. This was surely how we should envisage a country in whose veins ran copper and which replaced the fruits of the soil by metallurgical products. By 4 p.m. we entered a lateral canal which delivered part of the river's water to Tong-tchouen. The mountains with their denuded crowns grew more distant, forming a huge circle. A great plain opened before us. Crops reappeared and the city of Tong-tchouen with its rectangular crenelated parapet rose before us. We passed through a partly ruined quarter where numerous stone bridges forced us to lower our heads every so often.

Night had already fallen when we arrived at the pagoda in which lodgings had been prepared for us. This pagoda was situated right inside the wall and severe orders had been issued that our rest was not to be disturbed: large courtyards and solid doors separated us from the exterior. The luxury of the building and the space which was reserved for us left nothing to be desired. We had never come so close to comfort. The existence which we had led for two years, was surely enough to make us appreciate the quietness and rest of this comfortable retreat. Unfortunately, it would be the endpoint of his difficult odyssey for our highly esteemed leader.

Chapter 9

Yang ta-jen—The illness of Mr. de Lagrée—Resistance of the Chinese authorities to our departure for Ta-Ly—A letter from Father Fenouil—I leave with part of the expedition for the Muslim countries of the west—The Blue River—New difficulties—Houey-ly tcheou—Hong-pou-so—We make the acquaintance of Father Lu—Coal mines and the mixed populations of Ma-chang

Yang ta-jen, a military mandarin with a red button and the superior commander of the region of Yunnan that was called Ton-tao, [1] of which Tong-tchouen and Tchao-tong were the principal cities, hastened to make a visit to the chief of the expedition the day after our arrival. We found him to be one of those generals that were a little improvised but whose energy and military talents had immediately elevated them to the first rank. He had [achieved] great successes over the Muslims who, thanks to him, had never been able to reach Tong-tchouen. He had even pushed them back to a little distance from Ta-Ly by chasing them out of the cities of Houey-ly tcheou and Yong-pe. The Muslims who had been driven back to the borders of Kin-cha Kiang, seemed lost without [hope of] return when Yang ta-jen abandoned the pursuit and quietly retraced his steps. The story went around that . . . a mule loaded with silver, which they had sent, had reminded Yang ta-jen that the enemy general was also his relative. It was further said that his father had committed suicide on learning of this forfeiture. Yang ta-jen had a Muslim wife.

The rumors one obtained when traveling in countries in which there was virtually no publicly expressed opinion could only be accepted with the greatest of reservations, and news remained indefinitely nothing but rumors and "they say". The awe of some, the exaggerations of others, the cautions and the popular

prejudices could always lead their lives because the tales they produced escaped contradictions and any controls. Suppose for a moment that the press did not exist in Europe; the reader can imagine, especially when turmoil and political upsets had interrupted the regular course of events, what fantastic rumors and what singular news would spread among the public. Twenty leagues away, the simplest facts would be altered to the point of becoming absolutely unrecognizable.

That was the difficulty we had met with, each time we wanted to get an exact report of the events that had happened in any theater of action that we visited in China. The missionaries who lived with the Muslims had given us diametrically opposed assessments of the role of the principal actors of the battle, as compared to those we could obtain from their colleagues in the east of the province. On both sides they lacked the means to check and to ascertain for themselves the reality of the accusations or the facts of war which the public rumors depicted. By the fact that one lives in a certain environment, one ends up sharing its rancors or its sympathies. Our presence in the region gave rise, in its turn, to strange rumors and incredible exaggerations, of which I have already cited examples.

Facing this uncertainty, the reader can understand how difficult it was sometimes to assess the conduct we should maintain *vis-à-vis* military commanders. The struggle was entirely supported by the locals, among whom the imperialists of yesterday often were the rebels of tomorrow. Conversely, the civilian mandarins, who were all strangers to the province and incontestably loyal to the emperor, were without authority and prestige and they were trembling for fear that their head would be offered as a token to the opposing party. This being the case, the majority of them thought it more prudent not to occupy their post and to wait, in some neighboring province, for the end of the storm to come. The viceroy himself, who had been nominated as a replacement for the *Lao,* adopted this wise temporization by his own example. The central power, which for several years had not given a sign of life, nevertheless sent money, arms and supplies to Ma ta-jen upon the intervention of Mr. de Lallemand. We still trembled for fear that this shipment might be being made to a traitor and the thousand rumors we collected during our journey to Ta-Ly confirmed us in this impression.

But it is only with the benefit of the preceding observations in mind that I continue to give [our impressions] of this [struggle] day by day. It is improbable that a detailed and flawless history of the war in Yunnan will ever be written. The little that the reader will find here might perhaps suffice for him to appreciate its dramatic

interest and the novelty and the originality of the types which it revealed.

Yang ta-jen appeared to be a man [possessed] of an energy equal to that of Ma ta-jen but blessed with a more well-thought-out strategy and a less whimsical mind. His outer appearance had none of the brutality of a soldier and displayed only his candor. On 20 January we paid our return visit and we were pleased to find at his place the elegance of furniture, the Chinese luxury of good taste which the ruined *yamen* of the viceroy of Yunnan was unable to offer us and which contrasted with the poor-quality riches and the upstart tone of Ma ta-jen's villa. A delicious meal was served in a pleasant boudoir, which was separated from the rest of the palace by a garden adorned with rare flowers and the miniature trees in the reproduction of which the Chinese excelled. While we were eating mangos and sweets, accompanied by the unavoidable cup of tea, our host displayed a whole collection of European weapons which had to cede in no respect to that of Ma ta-jen. His objective was not to show them off to us, but to ascertain the real prices and the respective merits of each system. He felt that in the battle that would decide the fate of the province, victory would belong to the chief whose troops were armed with rapidly firing rifles. The confidence inspired by these new guns, more so even than their superiority over guns with breeches, did wonders for the morale of the soldiers. From this moment, all his efforts were directed towards attempting to persuade one of us to send to France an order of arms for his account. The arrival of these arms would allow him, in a decisive manner, to weigh the balance more heavily and to ensure for himself the preponderant role which was his ambition. But to which side was he thinking of tilting the fate of the war? That was what we did not know.

However, Mr. de Lagrée, whose illness seemed to dissipate during the first days of our residence in Tong-tchouen, fell seriously ill not before long. Serious symptoms of an afflicted liver manifested themselves. He had to stay in bed all the time. The journey from Yunnan to Tong-tchouen, which he had made in acute pain, had exhausted his forces. The uninterrupted study of the language and the customs, the fear of misunderstandings which might result from the lack of interpreters and the serious consequences that an error might have had for us, had excessively inflamed his senses and lit a raging fever in his veins. His strong and vigorous strong constitution fought for a few days against the inevitable decision which his state dictated. He felt a great pain when he had to admit that the evil had won and that he was unable to endure further exertions.

He charged me to fulfill the kind of moral engagement we had made in Yunnan, to complete our travels by an excursion to Ta-Ly. I did not hide from myself the many difficulties involved in the task that he gave me. Without interpreter, I had not even the recourse of taking with me the Annamite Tei, who was able to write when needed what I was unable to express. Tei's state of health had included him in the part of the expedition which was going in small daily stages from Tong-tchouen to Siu-tcheou, to embark there at last with Shanghai as the final destination. I was unable to inspire in my traveling companions the same degree of confidence which Mr. de Lagrée inspired—a confidence which in an undertaking of this nature was the first condition for success. I counted on their goodwill and their devoted support, which indeed did not fail to materialize. Nevertheless, I asked Mr. de Lagrée to give me written instructions which might, while giving me a general line of conduct, give more weight still to my authority. He asked me to write them myself and to bring them for his signature. [2]

The authorities of Tong-tchouen, Yang ta-jen and Kong ta-lao-ye ([the latter being] the prefect of the city), who had been informed of our intentions, made all possible efforts to stop us. They described the dangers that we were going to run, our ignorance in regard to the disposition of the government of Ta-Ly towards us, the roads infested with bandits, the epidemics and the famine which reigned in part of the region which we must traverse. Seeing that they did not manage to convince us and attributing their failure to our insufficient knowledge of the language, they wrote to Father Fenouil to join in the attempt to dissuade us from our journey. Here is the letter I received from the vicar, the very evening before our departure for Ta-Ly.

Sir,

It would be deplorable if Mr. the commander were to become seriously ill, during the last stages of a journey as long as yours. I hope to [be able to] persuade myself that a few days of rest and the wise care of Doctor Joubert will be sufficient to restore Mr. de Lagrée to the best of his strength.

Yang ta-jen and Kong ta-lao-ye, your hosts in Tong-tchouen, have written me a joint letter. These two persons deeply regret that they cannot communicate with you without the help of an interpreter, which is always awkward. Because, they say, it would be much easier for them to treat your

noble personalities with all the distinction that is due to them. Moreover, these gentlemen begged me to dissuade you from continuing your journey via Houey-ly-tcheou. They wish to see you go directly down to Siu-tcheou fou. I request you *with all my force* not to go to the west and I tell you or *understand you have been told* all that you might find to be the most persuasive.

After having conveyed my message, I add—and this really comes from me—in view of the bad faith of the authorities, you will meet unusual difficulties, if not insurmountable ones.

My intention is certainly not to make myself disagreeable by troublesome exhortations but if we were able to find the means of satisfying our desires without displeasing the mandarins, at the same time avoiding a lot of trouble and dangers, which are easy to anticipate, would we not feel happy about it? The Kin-cha-Kiang [3] flows past Mong-kou, i.e., thirteen to fourteen leagues from Tong-tchouen. Go up to Mong-kou, without crossing the river; follow it for three to four hundred leagues, up and down river on its banks, more or less at your desire, then come back to Tong-tchouen to take the road to Siu-tcheou fou, where you will still find the same Kin-cha-Kiang. *Seeing this river in Mong-kou or going to examine it for fifteen days up stream, towards the border of Tibet, is almost the same thing.*

And then, do you not have to take into account [the fact] that your health is more or less compromised, so that this [course] looks even more sensible?

You would oblige me, please, by letting me know what you decide.

I respectfully salute Mr. the commander de Lagrée as well as his fearless traveling companions and I wish all of you the accomplishment of your desires.

I remain with deep respect, your very humble and very obedient servant,

J. Fenouil, vicar.

Was not the opposition of the Chinese authorities inspired by the importance that they attributed to us and the dangers that we would run? Was there no resistance, no political susceptibility at play? The difficulties which we would meet with—were they really insurmountable as Father Fenouil confirmed so insistently? His

personal opinion yielded too easily to outside pressure, his fears had seemed too often without base for me to take his assessments at face value. The solution he proposed proved how little he was conscious of the geographic importance of our journey. Saying to explorers that it was the same to see a river at one point as seeing it at a point fifteen days march up stream, was reducing the search for the sources of the Nile to the discovery of its mouth.

The reader may certainly think me presumptuous: the inadequacy of the argument of this letter did not shake my resolution at all. Now that I know all the unknown sides of a question which at that time I had to assess more or less like a blind man and although our journey to Ta-Ly did not by any means yield the results that we hoped for, I regret only one thing, i.e., that I did not take more risks.[4] With the prestige that Europeans still possessed in these distant regions, an energetic and prudent willpower must undertake and obtain everything.

I communicated the contents of Father Fenouil's letter to Commander de Lagrée.

"Do you persist in leaving?" he asked me.[5] And when I said Yes: "You are right," he said to me, "but be careful to come back at the first serious difficulties. You must allow for the fatigue we are all feeling, the little physical effort of which we are still capable and the discouragement and moral weariness which some of your companions are feeling already."

I submitted the draft instructions which the commander had asked me to write and I believe I should summarize them here:

> Mr. Garnier will leave on 30 January, accompanied by Messrs. Delaporte, Thorel and de Carné and five men of the escort. He is going in the direction of Kin-cha-Kiang and of Pe-chou-Kiang, where he will collect commercial and geographic information and, at the same time, all intelligence that can clarify the situation of the Muslim areas of the west. Following the nature of his instructions, Mr. Garnier, will decide to proceed to Ta-Ly or to Li-Kiang, after requesting authorization in writing to do so. The aim of this part of the journey will be to specify as much as possible all that concerns the Lan-tsang Kiang (the Mekong river), its origins and its navigability. In any case, Mr. Garnier must return to Siu-tcheou fou by the end of April at the latest.
>
> If at any given moment of the journey, Mr. Garnier believes that he can easily reach a point of the Mekong, whichever it may be, he will proceed

alone and in the most expeditious manner possible. [6]

Mr. de Lagrée underlined the last paragraph. The reconnaissance of a point of the Mekong river situated in the vicinity of Tibet would crown our long journey in a brilliant way. That must be the principal aim I must set for myself. It would have been easy for me, traveling alone, to reach it in very little time. Mr. de Lagrée thus recommended me, if there was no danger, to leave my companions and my escort behind, to save them unnecessary fatigue. He had only decided to attach a considerable fraction of the expedition to this mission because he believed that a nucleus of determined men ran smaller risks than an isolated traveler. If the dangers which had been forecast vanished, I must go alone to save time and arrive in Siu-tcheou before the rains.

I did not surmise that the signature which Mr. de Lagrée affixed under these instructions on 28 January was to be his last act as the chief of the expedition.

Doctor Joubert, the sailor Mouëllo and three Annamites remained with him. After exchanging a last handshake with us, he gave us a rendezvous in Siu-tchouen fou, where he would proceed as soon as he had recovered to prepare the boats needed for our return.

The day of Chinese New Year had been 25 January. This annual celebration was held with great solemnity in China. Commercial life was interrupted for several days. The members of each family gathered in front of richly decorated domestic altars for intimate festivities. Public games, fireworks and dazzling merrymaking ensued for a more or less longer time after this indoor contemplation. In these circumstances we had some trouble finding porters. Our luggage, which was reduced to the strictly necessary, luckily needed few people: nine men were enough instead of twenty-five or thirty. We ended up by finding them thanks to Yang ta-jen and with the promise of a high reward. We were equal in numbers: four officers, [7] two Tagals and three Annamites, all well armed, healthy and determined. On 30 January we started out, deeply saddened by the state in which we left Mr. de Lagrée but still having good hope for his recovery.

Coming out of the valley of the Tong-tchouen we passed a small, well-cultivated plain where the bed of a torrent, which was highly walled in, formed a kind of street two or three meters above the ground. From the sides of this street numerous canals led off, which distributed water to the fields. Here again, the patient industriousness of the workers had transformed a wasteful and destructive force

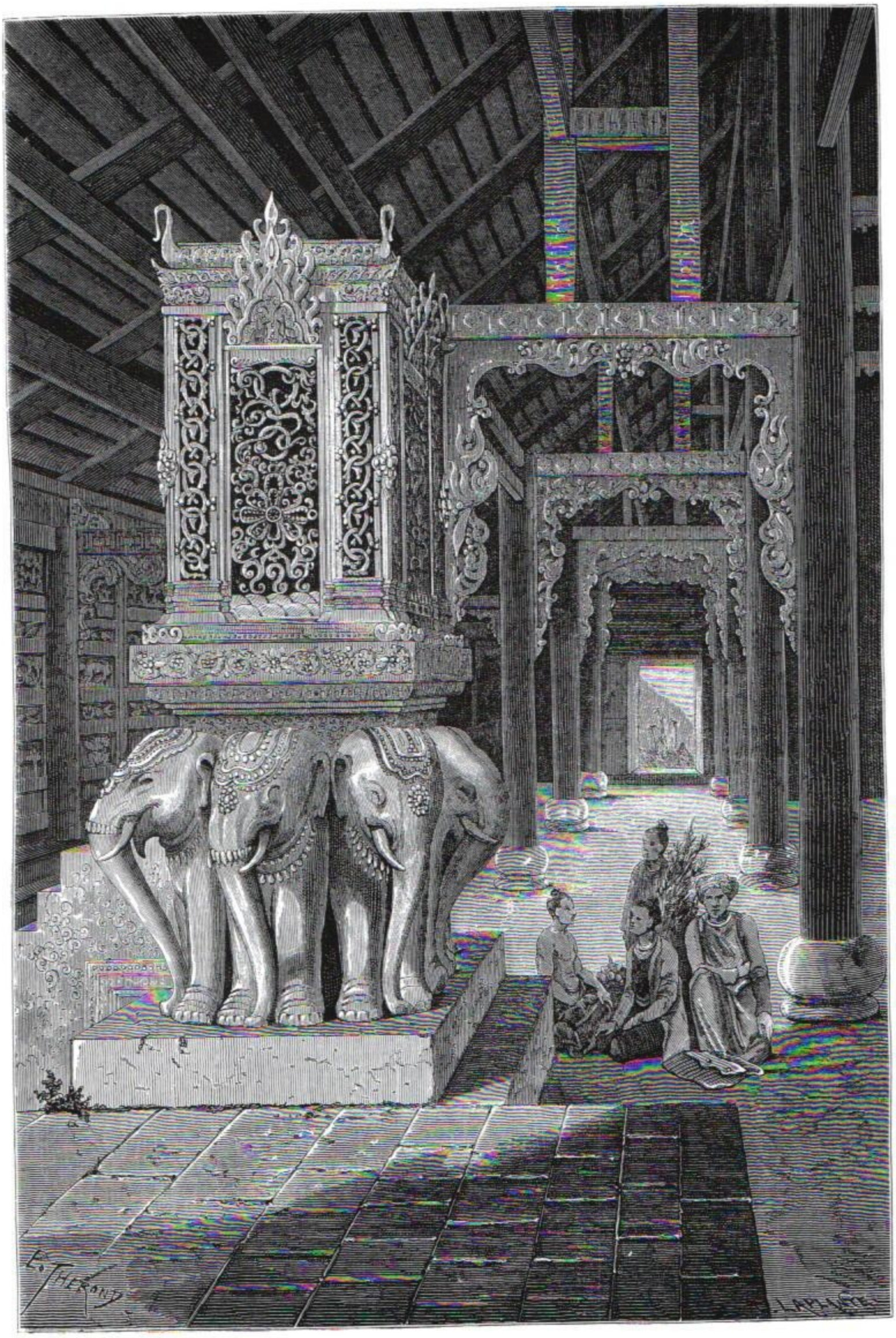


Plate 32 *The altar of a Chinese pagoda (drawing by E. Thérond, based on a watercolor of L. Delaporte).*

into a source of fertility and wealth. This plain was pleasing to the eye. Bunches of yellow linseed blooms mixed with the solitary white or purple corollas of the opium poppies. From the peak at the end of [the plain], we saw a deep furrow in the undulating sea of mountains which stood on the horizon. This was the valley of the Blue River which was called the Kin-cha Kiang or the "River with the golden sand" in this part of China.

We descended the flanks (which sloped at forty-five degrees) of schistose mountains covered with calcareous outcrops immediately frozen along the slopes. The continuous destruction of these rocks under the action of the sun and the rain obliged the peasants to construct a protective wall around each field, house and path. Nowhere must man fight against a more destructive nature than here.

After two hours of descending in zigzag fashion, we got to the bottom of a narrow gorge. The waters of a boiling torrent were below us and the route continued hanging, along a vertical wall which supported these flanks of the plateau, riddled with ravines. [The construction of] this route had cost prodigious efforts. In several places, the pickax had been insufficient to cut into the rocks and it had been necessary to use explosives.

The colonizing and commercial abilities of the Chinese people were revealed by these gigantic works: without any government help, a few communities, a few bands of merchants, managed to triumph over huge obstacles to establish communication lines and to bring out the products of the most inaccessible regions.

On 31 January, at one of the bends of the hanging road, we observed for the first time the Kin-cha Kiang, rolling, six hundred meters below us, with clear, deep waters. The torrent whose banks we had descended flowed at our feet into a river which was none other than the Li-tang ho, the valley of which we had followed for a while when going to Tong-tchouen. This river ran parallel with the big river, which came from the south-west, then meandered towards the north describing a large bend. In the middle of this bend, the Li-tang ho mixed its miry, reddish waters with the blue waves of the Kin-cha Kiang which it dirtied for more than a mile.

Not since the time of Marco Polo had a traveler seen the Blue River so far from its mouth. [8]

In the evening we slept in Mong-kou, a big market town situated on a small plateau, two hundred meters above the river; there we found banana trees, sugar

cane, in a word, tropical vegetation. At 5 p.m. the temperature was twenty degrees. That very morning, we shivered on the plateau in a cold of four to five degrees.

In Mong-kou the troubles which Father Fenouil had predicted began. The local authorities remained invisible and I was unable to obtain the porters I needed. We had to engage the porters who had come with us from Tong-tchouen at a very high price [to continue] up to Houey-ly tcheou, an important city five days' march away on the other side of the river.

On 1 February, we crossed the Kin-cha Kiang. A ferryboat, which was able to carry a load of fifteen to twenty tons, moved continuously up and down between the two banks of the river in front of Mong-kou. The river was more than two hundred meters wide at this point. The speed of the current was about two knots an hour and in the middle of the river I did not touch the bottom at twenty meters depth. The rise and fall of the water was ten meters. Despite this appearance of easy navigability, they said that rapids, a short distance up river and down river of Mong-kou, prevented navigation.

Setting foot on the left bank of the river, we entered the great province of Se-tchouen. After four and a half hours of difficult progress on stony paths traced in zigzag fashion on the flanks of the mountain, we had barely distanced ourselves, horizontally, from a stony outcrop of the bank of the river but we had climbed to a height of more than twelve hundred meters and were able to see the Kin-cha Kiang as a narrow blue ribbon only. Long queues of pedestrians and beasts of burden spread out from the edge of the river to the crest of the plateau, where a great cold reigned. The sun, which dressed the water of the river and the large leaves of the banana trees with silvery shadows that maintained a mild temperature at the bottom of this narrow valley, shone without power or brilliance on the plateau.

The next day we continued our journey across a region with deep ravines, all the roads of which were nothing but an unending succession of break-neck climbs and descents and all the summits of which gradually rose to the north or the west.

Two days of snow now came to increase the hardship of the journey, making the sharp slopes, the slippery paths cut in the rock and the soaked, sticky red soil horribly difficult. The slow, difficult progress of our march during those days convinced me that we must not, at any price, let ourselves be overtaken in these mountains by the rains of the spring, the season when the roads were absolutely impassable for men carrying loads. To reduce our hardship and increase the speed

of our progress, I had bought three horses in Mong-kou, and during the next stage these in addition to those we brought from Tong-tchouen provided mounts for two persons. The reader will probably find that even under these conditions and after all the hardship we had suffered, we traveled in a way that was little in accordance with our situation and as men that had to be more economical with their purse than with their legs. But past privations had made us economical and hard under duress and we did not want to abuse the purse of the Chinese authorities.

On 3 February we passed the highest point we were ever to reach during our whole journey. The barometer indicated an altitude of more than three thousand meters. The natives who inhabited these heights received us with open bursts of laughter. We probably looked like the most comical beings in the world. They were dressed in goat skins and huddled around a fire lit in the snow.

At night, after a long descent, we arrived in the village of Tsang-hi-pa, situated in a bend of the valley at the confluence of two rivers. A pall of snow covered the landscape. But, despite the weather, considerable liveliness reigned on the road and in the village: long convoys of beasts of burden contested the entrances to the hostelries.

In Tsang-hi-pa, a few Christians came to us and made themselves known by the sign of the cross. They talked to me about Father Lu, a Chinese priest who lived near Hong-pou-so, at the confluence of the Kin-cha Kiang and the great affluent which had the name Ya-long Kiang on the maps, but which was called Pe-chouy Kiang or the "River with white water" in the country itself. Certainly because of my ignorance of the language, I did not obtain sufficient information to send a letter to this young priest, whom Father Fenouil had mentioned to us and who might render us great service as an interpreter. At the next stopover, that of Tchang-tchou, I was luckier and I learned from other Christians that the residence of Father Lu was in the village of Ma-chang, thirty leagues from Hong-pou-so.

From Tchang-tchou onwards, the country presented a less wild appearance, the slopes became less steep and more cultivated. The wide, pretty valley, in which the town of Houey-ly tcheou stood, began to open up in front of us. The traffic was very busy. We constantly met convoys with salt, coal, pelts, copper, and substances used in dyeing and in medicine. Traveling in the same direction as us were caravans loaded with cotton and cotton cloth. Houey-ly tcheou was a very commercial town, which appeared far ahead of us, its red roofs shining on the admirably cultivated

banks of a pretty river which ran to the south. In this direction, the mountains were lower and we knew intuitively that at the horizon the large vale of Kin-cha Kiang opened.[9] To the north, behind the town, a high mountain displayed its crown of snow, on which the outline of the crenels and the clock towers of Houey-ly tcheou shone in the sun.

As we entered the outlying districts, two men with red hats came to meet us: they had been sent to us as guides by the mandarin of the place. They took us through the entire town from south to north and brought us to a big hostelry situated on the other side. Despite the merrymakings of New Year's Day, which were still going on, the town appeared to be a market town of first rank. It was also a considerable warehouse of merchandise and a place of manufacture for saddles, harnesses, and travel and copper utensils. There were mines of the latter metal in the immediate vicinity.

The mandarin of Houey-ly tcheou sent me a few gifts as soon as we arrived and the next day I paid him a visit. Our difficulties in understanding each other cut the meeting short. I gave him to understand my intention of entering Muslim territory. My host tried to dissuade me from this, painting for me the darkest picture of the danger I would encounter. It was impossible to definitely enter unknown and perhaps enemy country without having serious and precise information on the state of the region and the respective situations of the fighting parties; my inexperience of the language prevented me from obtaining this. In any case, I mistrusted any information given to me by the Chinese authorities. Thus, I sent a letter to Father Lu, to beg him in the name of his bishop to have a meeting with us in Hong-pou-so, a point to which I was proceeding. Between him and me, the Latin language was a means of communication more within my reach than Chinese. At the same time, except for three of them whose intention it was to remain with us, I sent back the porters who had accompanied us from Tong-tchouen, and I gave the most reliable one of them a letter for Commander de Lagrée.

We used our stay in Houey-ly tcheou to complete the equipping of our cavalry. Chinese merchants are the most skillful in the world at duping buyers, even their fellow citizens. What is there to say of their deceit and duplicity when the buyers were foreigners and they passed for mandarins? The asking prices were ten times the real prices and if you thought you had bought a new object, you were completely astonished to see it replaced by an object that was already used or was broken. Despite all the vigilance of Mr. Delaporte and Mr. de Carné who had taken charge

of these purchases, they managed to make them accept broken bits and torn horse covers. The latter were of Russian origin.

We left Houey-ly tcheou on 7 February, accompanied by two or three low-ranking officers, ordered by the mandarin of the place to transport our luggage and attend to our needs up to Hong-pou-so. We ascended the valley of a small affluent of the Houey-ly tcheou river, the calcareous walls of which were broken up by bizarrely shaped excavations and which offered pleasant miniature landscapes. Very high above the hanging path along which we traveled, there were a few caves, from which a fine line of water oozed. Small gardens, a few houses and a pagoda stood at the entrance to the cave, the dark depths of which made a striking contrast with them and transformed them into a charming cameo.

After having traveled over one or two peaks, from the heights of which the valley of the Blue River appeared again a short distance away, we traversed a fortified peak which dominated the plain of Hong-pou-so and [the fortification of] which formerly was closed by a gate. The latter was now broken down to the ground and the fortification had been dismantled. New inns had been constructed at every corner of the route. I would say that life had started again after the long interruption of the war.

The chief of the village, where we stopped to change porters, had prepared a light meal in great haste to which he personally invited us [, meeting us] many leagues away from the place. When traveling you are always hungry. Thus we did honor to the table of the *tsong-ye* and we acknowledged his attention by presenting him with a set of gilded Ruolz cutlery.

The exposed hillsides to the south, which we descended, and the lower altitude produced a significant change in the flora of the country, in which Mr. Thorel rediscovered the major plants which were prevalent in Xieng Hong on the banks of the Mekong. In Hong-pou-so, where we arrived the day after our departure from Houey-ly tcheou, we were seven to eight hundred meters below the plateau and the presence of the river, only a few kilometers away, noticeably increased the temperature. This was a lucky circumstance for me: since Houey-ly tcheou I had been afflicted with a thoracic muscle pain which sometimes hindered my breathing and caused me almost intolerable pain. I was obliged to have myself supported by two Annamites in order to continue walking, especially in the mountains, and for a while I had feared that I must stop the journey. A rest of three days in Hong-pou-so and the warm air I breathed made me recover completely.

Hong-pou-so was a big market town on the banks of a small river, the inordinately wide bed of which scattered stones all over the plain. Quite a big detachment of troops was garrisoned there when we arrived. The Whites, or Muslims, had made a salient of Se-tchouen and had been pushed back, with losses. The banks of the river which served as the frontier between the latter province and Yunnan and which ran ten kilometers away from Hong-pou-so, were covered with fortified posts, built every two leagues and guarded by imperial troops.

The low-ranking officers who escorted us from Houey-ly tcheou, had difficulty in making room for us in the village gallery. Moreover there was, apart from the military chiefs whom we inconvenienced, more curiosity than ill will. The festivities for New Year were still going on and at nightfall, the musicians of the area arrived to give us a serenade in the courtyard of our lodgings, together with a comical transvestite performance by the light of torches for which they earned a small reward.

On 10 February, we visited on horseback the confluence of the Kin-cha Kiang and the Ya-long Kiang, one of the most interesting and important geographical points of our journey. It was situated fourteen kilometers west-north-west of Hong-pou-so. The Kin-cha Kiang was far from being enclosed, as it was in Mong-kou, and we reached it by a very slight slope; small denuded hills bordered its banks. The river came from the south-west, then described a sudden curve which directed its course to the south ten degrees east. It was at the summit of this curve that it received the Ya-long Kiang; the latter came from the north and was enclosed between perpendicular rocky banks along which no traffic was possible. Its width was more or less the same as that of the Blue River and its current was fairly strong at this time of the year. I was unable to measure the depth of these two rivers; it was very great. As in Mong-kou, the rise was ten meters. With astonishment, I observed that the local people there gave the name Kin-cha Kiang to the Ya-long Kiang, i.e., to the affluent, and Pe-chouy Kiang to the principal river. If, from the point of view of the volume of the water, we might at first sight hesitate between these two rivers, the appearance of the two valleys immediately showed which one should have the name Kin-cha Kiang. The mouth of the Ya-long Kiang was a kind of accidental break in the belt of hills which bordered the Blue River. The orographic configuration of the country did not leave a moment's doubt that this river came from the west and not the north. Moreover, the inhabitants of the confluence knew that the one they called the Pe-chou Kiang was the more

important of the two from the earlier development of its course. This anomaly seems less singular, if we remember that in China the names of rivers are always local and they change every twenty leagues. A little higher, for example in the vicinity of Li-Kiang, the Kin-cha Kiang had taken on its name again and it was the Ya-long Kiang to which they gave the name Pe-chou Kiang.

A ferryboat operated right at the mouth of the Ya-long Kiang. It was one of the [sources of] revenue of the mandarin of Houey-ly tcheou: for a horse you paid two hundred *sapèques* (a little more than one franc, according to the exchange rate of the *sapèque* at the time we crossed) and for a traveler alone, sixty *sapèques.*

On returning from this trip, I received a short message in Latin from Father Lu who announced his arrival in Hong-pou-so and his visit for the day after celebrating his mass.

He was in time for his meeting. We saw a frail, young man, distinguished and diffident. Seven years before he had come back from the seminary at Poulo Pinang [Penang Island, Malaysia, Tran. note] and was then placed in charge of his double parish of Ma-chang and Hong-pou-so. His friendly manner soon inspired in us the fullest confidence. The details he gave us of the state of the country were not encouraging and confirmed in certain respects what the Chinese authorities had said. The direct road to Ta-Ly was never closed to traders but the Muslims turned back without fail all travelers who arrived empty-handed. We met their first outposts some hundred *li* from the other side of the river. At this time, the road was so infested with robbers that the traders gathered in caravans of eighty or a hundred people to travel. The closest Muslim chief was the one in Yong-pe but the country between this town and Se-tchouen was in a sorry state of devastation. Gangs of five hundred men belonging to all sides set about looting what the armies had spared. Moreover, the road from Yong-pe to Ta-Ly was closed and the mandarin of Yong-pe did not have authority to give passports for travel outside his own territory. It was likely that, if we received his permission to go to Yong-pe, he would detain us in this town until the arrival of orders from Ta-Ly.

For a while I had been hoping to go to the north, avoiding as much as possible contacts with the Muslim authorities and trying to reach a point on the Mekong situated in Tibet. From there I would have tried to come back by Ta-tsien-lou and the valley of the Min Kiang to Siu-tcheou fou. This journey, which would have allowed us to make a reconnaissance of the course of the Mekong and of the Blue

River, up to the thirtieth degree of northern latitude, could ordinarily have been completed within the time limit which Mr. de Lagrée had set, if we avoided any hold-ups and made long marches. I admit that we had to drop this ambitious plan. It was impossible to avoid Yong-pe by going in that direction. Farther north than this town and, over the whole area between Ning-yuen fou and Li-Kiang, they told us, the country belonged completely to Man-tse or Lissou natives, who did not allow any foreigners in their mountains. Direct communication between Ta-tsien-lou and Houey-ly tcheou had been suspended for several years and we found nobody who would agree to accompany us in this direction.



Plate 33 *A Lissou man and woman (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Since we simply had to obtain an authorization from the Muslim authorities to reach the Mekong, it would be better to try to obtain it in Ta-Ly. The ill will of an intermediary might lead to an irreparable failure; his good will might cost too much. In either case his intervention was a considerable loss of time and our days were numbered. Thus, I decided to go to Ma-chang, visit the deposits of coal which the people had talked of in the surrounding area and then proceed to Tou-touy-tse, a small Catholic mission directed by Father Leguilcher a few leagues north of Ta-Ly. The new information which I would obtain from this missionary would determine the further route to be followed.

Father Lu had left us for a while to consult with the mandarins of the place in the neighboring hall. I heard a few cries of rage which I did not take seriously. As long as the celebrations were going on, we usually saw officials themselves fail [to observe] the rules of temperance and the proper tone of voice. Father Lu came out soon thereafter looking rather upset. Nevertheless, he confirmed that nothing to worry me had happened: a quarrel with drunks, he said. He asked my permission to leave us to attend to his duties in his parish. We agreed to meet for the evening meal to fix all our plans, finally.

A few hours later, he sent me a short note telling me the order of the Chinese chief of Kieou-ya-pin, a border post commanding Ma-chang, immediately recalling all the Christians who had accompanied him, to counter the attack of a body of Muslim troops whose approach had been signaled. "This having happened," he added, "I dare not stay in the country and I'm leaving for Ning-yuen fou, regretting that I cannot be of any further help to you."

This sudden farewell stunned me and at first I was unable to understand the reason for it. The next morning I visited the young priest, who was in tears. The coming invasion of his community was, he told me, the only reason for his fright and sorrow. I made efforts to reassure him and to persuade him to accompany us to Ma-chang. He objected that the time had come to make his pastoral visits and if he put these off any longer, the bad weather, which would make this impossible, would arrive. I promised to write to his bishop, but I soon saw that the reason that he gave for leaving us was not the real one: indeed, he admitted that the previous evening he had had a row with the chief of the village, who had reproached him vehemently for acting as interpreter to foreigners whom every good Chinese must hate, and he feared that another such scene would occur. I explained to him that we were official guests in China, armed with letters the value of which he, more than any other person, was able to judge and that if they allowed themselves to commit such a wanton insult towards us, I would obtain punishment for it. At that moment a letter arrived from Father Leguilcher confirming the plan to attack the border post, of which they suspected the Muslims of Yong-pe, but it advised the young priest to remain at his post. This counsel and the desire to be useful to us overcame his fright. We all left for Ma-chang together at noon.

After having crossed over in the ferryboat of Ya-long Kiang, we followed the left bank of the Blue River, the course of which was winding and which little by little became enclosed from this point onwards. Nevertheless, it appeared to be

beautifully navigable from Ma-chang to Hong-pou-so, and even a little below the former, traffic by boat would be very easy. This itinerary was cut short by a very considerable rapids, almost a waterfall. Finally, the Blue River between Li-Kiang and Mong-kou was only used for the transportation of logs, cut in the forests surrounding the former of these two cities. Even then they had to break up the rafts to cross the rapids and it [sometimes] happened that pieces of wood broke during transit.

A little before arriving at Ma-chang, we visited galleries dug for coal mining along the banks of the river itself. They were dug out from layers of sandstone schists, a few meters above the water level. The seepage which took place required continuous clearing work. The coal extracted was oily and shiny in nature, but it was so arenaceous and it produced so much dust that they were obliged to transform it into coke first. This was done in a furnace with two openings. In the center, large pieces of coal were placed; the circumference was filled with dust. The whole was made wet, then the fire was lit underneath. When the production of smoke had ceased, the transformation into coke was finished. This coke were called *toan tau* in Chinese. It was sold in that place for one franc per hundred kilograms. The natural coal was about half that price. A little distance from Ma-chang, in the mountains, there were other mining galleries which Mr. Thorel went to see. They were very widespread; the coal was of better quality and there was no seepage. We heard nothing about accidents with fire-damp.

The Christians of Ma-chang came to meet us on horseback and our numerous cavalcade came clattering into the long main street which formed the village. It had been partly burned down some time ago by a gang of thieves and it was not yet completely restored from its ruins. The combustible mineral that was used required the use of chimneys everywhere. It was the first time, for a long time, that we had seen roofs adorned with this charming excrescence.

The next day was market day. Natives from the neighboring mountains descended in crowds to sell their food stuffs and we were able to study new human types and costumes. This region was very rich in populations of mixed origins. First of all, the Pa-y, whose Laotian origins I have already indicated and who, together with the neighboring tribes, the Telou, the Terou, the Arrou, the Didjou and the Lou-tse were disseminated from Ya-long Kiang up to the valley of the Irrawaddy, appeared again. Other races, with a completely different origin and a different language, appeared closer to the real indigenous people: they were the I-kia, also called Pe-

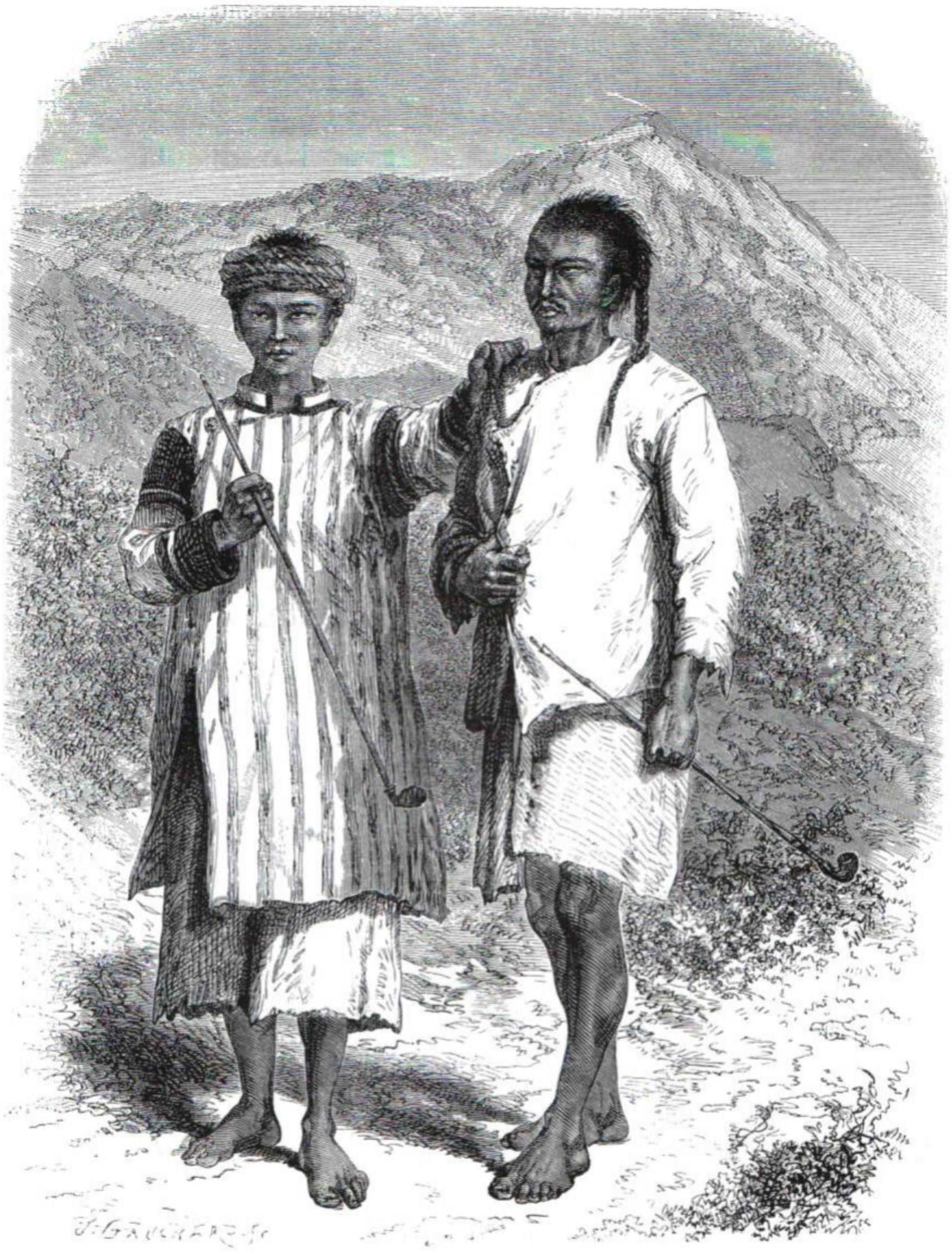


Plate 34 *An I-kia man and woman (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

lolo or White Lolo, who had a hair-plait like the Chinese and whose women had their hair divided into two plaits; the He-Lolo or Black Lolo who wore their hair long and believed they were superior to the former. Finally, there were the most ungovernable, those on whom the customs of Chinese civilization had exerted the least influence so far and who were known by the name of Lissou and Man-tse. Some of these tribes appeared to possess a vague relation to some races of the north of the Assam valley and perhaps also with the Kole of India and with the Mons of Pegu. The names which the Chinese gave to all these natives had only a vague meaning [10] and should not be used for a serious classification. The populations to which they were applied considered them extremely hurtful insults. The Lolo called themselves by the name of *tou-kia* (autochthonous, indigenous people) or *tchin-si* (forefathers). Mr. Delaporte had the greatest difficulty in drawing any I-kia. The natives believed that all persons whose features were reproduced would fall fatally ill.



Plate 35 *A Man-tse man and woman (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

The vicinity of Ma-chang was inhabited by wolves which became very daring during the winter and devastated the farmyards. Thus, flint guns or cartridge rifles were sought after in the country. They told us that the wolves had no fear of breech guns which were given away by their odor, the presence of which they immediately sense.

The news of the Muslim attack from Yong-pe still being confirmed, I followed through with my plan to go to Ta-Ly by the most direct road. The last letter from Father Leguilcher to Father Lu had the advantage of informing us of the presence of this fellow citizen in Tou-touy-tse. It had also removed all our doubts about the assumed arrival of Europeans in Ta-Ly, of which there had been talk earlier. These Europeans were in fact Malays who manufactured bombs, it was said, on behalf of the sultans.

Father Lu made it easy for us to find the porters we needed to undertake this journey. At the same time, he engaged a purveyor and major-domo, a former servant of Mgr. Chaveau, by the name of Tching-eul-ye, who was used to establishing official relations and who knew how to talk to mandarins. His devotion to our cause would be above any reproach, Father Lu told us, if we could reconcile his interests with the sympathy that he already felt for us. We gave him an advance of ten *taels*, promising him a monthly gratuity in accordance with his services.

I sent a letter to Mr. de Lagrée telling him of my final decision and the reasons which motivated it and, on 16 February we crossed the Blue River one more time. A long and difficult climb brought us to a height of thirteen hundred meters at which Ma-chang was situated and then to two thousand meters which was the average altitude of the line of summits of the highest plateau. We had some trouble in finding a shelter for the night in an isolated farmhouse, situated at the top of the heights which dominated the right bank of the river. seeing us, the inhabitants fled and left only an old woman behind to receive us. Tching-eul-ye easily convinced her of our intentions. She called the fugitives back. This first reaction was barely calmed down than Mr. de Carné, who was in charge of taking care of our horses, caused a new scandal. In Chinese houses we almost always found empty coffins, which were destined for the master of the house. They made it their business to acquire this last resting place early and you could not give anyone a greater sign of affection than by presenting this funeral gift. In the absence of troughs, Mr. de Carné wanted to make use of a coffin carelessly placed under a shed to feed his horses. While he was desperately pulling at the cover, which resisted all his efforts,



Plate 36 *Our major-domo, Tching-eul-ye (drawing by A. de Neuville based on a photograph)*

the mistress of the house, completely in tears, came to beg me to stop him from breaking it open: the proprietor of the coffin was already at rest in it.

The next day, at least for a while, we followed a crest which was covered with pine trees, the exploitation of which was undertaken energetically by the local wood-cutters. We passed a village of I-kia, whose houses, handicrafts and agriculture testified to their long contact with the Chinese race and we entered Muslim territory in the evening. The country was very sparsely populated, but its appearance became more picturesque and less devastated. The slopes were forested. Shrubs of flowering rose-bays and tufts of camellias hung over the edges of the torrents. Our journey was a succession of almost perpendicular climbs and descents; it would have been difficult to find three hundred meters of flat terrain. But our exertions found a comfortable asylum at night and our appetite a substantial meal. Our new major-domo did a marvelous job and transformed the timid inhabitants of the poor hamlets where we lodged into as many servants. He was surely a bishop's valet: his obsequiousness and his tender care did not leave him for one second. From the moment of our arrival at a stopover, all the benches and tables and cushions of the village were requisitioned to make our beds. Tching-eul-ye went to the kitchen which seemed the most commodious to him and immediately had tea made which he himself offered "to the great men".[11]

On 19 February, we rejoined the road which went from Hong-pou-so directly to Ta-Ly and which our visit to Ma-chang had caused us to leave. The traffic was very busy and after an isolation of a few days, we immediately found ourselves in a large group.

We traveled on the banks of the Pe-maho, a fairly big river which came from Vao-tcheou and the valley of which was densely inhabited. It was there that we saw the Muslim flag flying for the first time.

A customs post, established on the left bank of the river, made the convoys of merchandise going to Ta-Ly, pay dues: I noticed cases of guns, paper and silk cloth being opened in a kind of office in the open air, made of leaves. Umbrellas, tobacco and basket work, coming from Hong-pou-so, completed this commercial flow. Caravans of horses loaded with salt went in the opposite direction and came from the famous salt works of Pe-yen-tsin. The soldiers attached to the customs post saw us pass with curiosity, but they addressed not a single question to us. In the evening we arrived at the village of Nga-da-ti where a Muslim officer, decked

out in a double jacket covered with gaudy lace-work, presented himself to us, escorted by a few standard-bearers and the noise of numerous fire-crackers. He was polite but very cool and asked to see the letters which I was bearing. I asked him in my turn, through Tching-eul-ye, whether he possessed sufficient authority to guarantee my free circulation up to Ta-Ly, as long as the contents of my passports appeared satisfactory to him. He instructed me that in Pe-you-ti, our next halt and in the town of Pin-tchouen, where we must arrive in four days, there were more important officials than himself, to whose decision I must submit myself. "It is to them," I answered, "I will show my passports." He insisted on seeing them. I declared that I was too high placed a mandarin and he too low ranking an officer for me to agree to such a mark of deference. He threatened to delay my departure. I started to laugh and I amused myself by showing him our weapons, especially our revolvers. His astonishment was great and he told me that even in Ta-Ly they did not possess anything like them.

After a long meeting which lasted into the night and while all my companions were sleeping, he retired without decision, displeased because he was unable to force me to give in but also a little intimidated. The next morning, at 5 a.m., when we were preparing to leave, he came back with a few soldiers and renewed his demand. He told me that the chief in Pe-you-ti would receive advice from him to arrest me if I did not grant his request.

Tching-eul-ye joined in his pleas. I did not answer but gave the order to depart in a firm tone and he respectfully stepped aside as we passed.

I decide to proceed directly to Ta-Ly—A meeting with Father Leguilcher in Tou-touy-tse

The snow surprised us on the road. We had to leave the valley of the Pe-ma-ho to follow that of a small affluent which went up quickly amidst small chains of hills with rounded tops. At the cross-roads there sometimes rose high gallows, on which sadly a corpse was hanging, while facing it, a few human heads were impaled on bamboo sticks. Lissou people dressed in sheep's hides walked about here and there on the slopes, their bows in their hand, looking for the musk deer [*Moschus moschiferus*, Tran. note]. After a very long and difficult march we arrived in Pe-you-ti, a poor village built on the heights which bordered the valley. The low,

poorly built houses were covered with disjointed planks for tiles, kept in place with big stones, which allowed the melting snow drip into the interior. It was hard to find a dry place to sleep. As for the Muslim chief of whose presence I had been advised, he did not appear in person, he made do with sending us a goat and eggs. I sent two piasters, a knife and some needles in exchange.

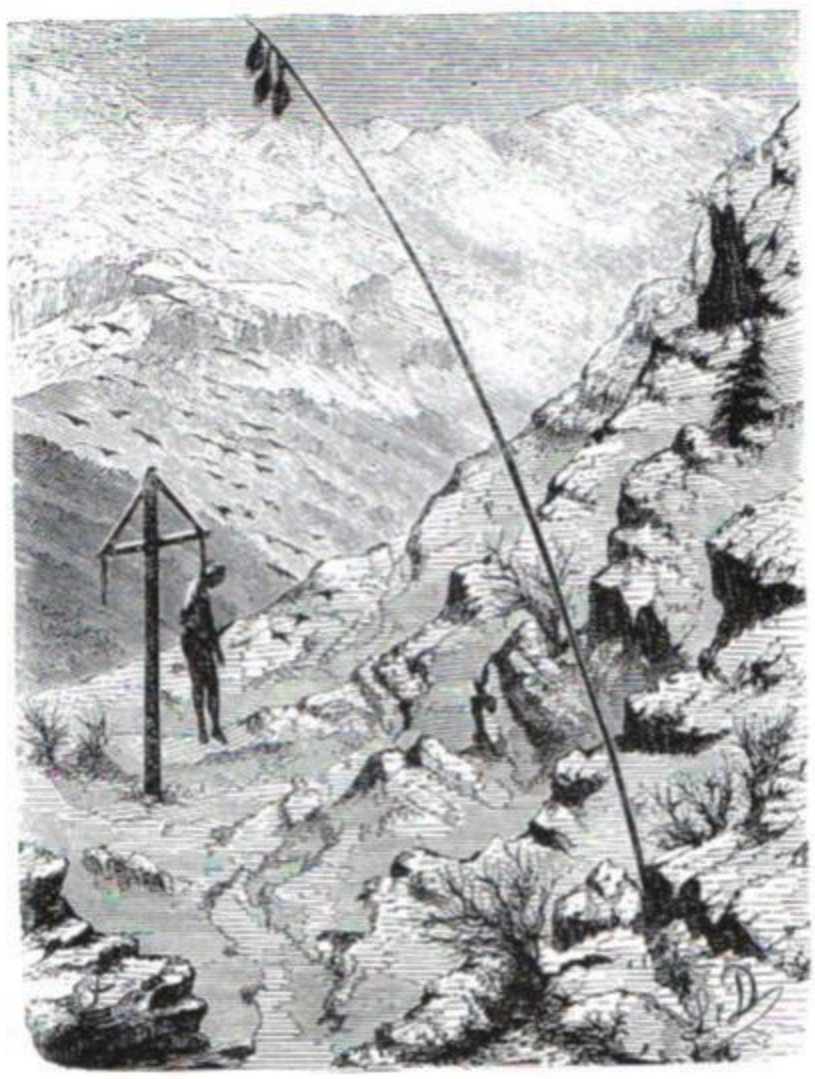


Plate 37 *A hanged man on the road to Ta-Ly (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

The next day we continued to ascend the valley, which became narrower and narrower. It was just a kind of hollow cradle on the flanks of the chain, at the summit of which we arrived. At the point where we traversed it, it was close to three thousand meters high. The opposite flank belonged to the basin of the Pe-yen-tsin river which we passed the next day. Its reddish waters were deep enough to allow easy navigation. Almost immediately we left this valley to take that of an affluent of the left bank, at the bottom of which ran a torrent with clear waters which stacked up its rapids as far as the eye reached to the south-west. We ascended

its course by a very picturesque road on the flanks and soon we reached the point where it split into an infinity of small brooks flowing in all directions. Pheasants, the quiet hosts of these solitary valleys, walked about gravely on the snow. Mr. Delaporte brought one down with a gun shot and we were delighted by its rich colors. Nobody among us was good enough a zoologist to recognize in this game, the beautiful bird that was called a Yunnan chicken or Lady Amherst's pheasant. We thought it a discovery and from then onwards we were thinking about how to take a living or stuffed specimen of this magnificent species back with us to France.

Some distance from there, we passed a new dividing line of the waters. A small post with soldiers was placed at the very top. We warmed ourselves for some time at their hearth before undertaking the fairly steep descent which would lead us into the plain of Pin-tchouen which opened at our feet. It offered the most distressing signs of devastation. At the foot of all the hills which marked its contours, there stood formerly large villages which displayed their white houses coquettishly in the rice-fields, in the center of the plain. These villages were now only heaps of ruins in which here and there some new carpentry work was beginning to rise up in scaffolding against blackened walls. Straw, hastily laid out, replaced the collapsed roofs and tiles. The road was strewn with debris. The inhabitants had barricaded themselves amidst the ruins of their houses and had built, around each hamlet, earthen walls defended by spikes made of sharpened young pine trees [stripped of their] branches.

The town of Pin-tchouen which was built at the end of this plain on the banks of the Ta-lan-ho, rose up no less devastated amidst beautiful crops. A recently repaired citadel, with high walls [containing] loopholes and surrounded by a moat filled with water, rose to the north of the town and offered well-thought-out defensive measures for a country in which the besieging armies usually had only crude muskets at their disposal. It was the first place in which we would find Muslim chiefs of a certain importance and in which we might meet serious obstacles to the continuation of our journey. Immediately after our installation in the most comfortable inn of the town, we received the visit from the commander of the citadel and some of his officers. I gave them the letter of the *Lao-papa*. It seemed to make them treat us with great esteem. A few gifts made their conquest and I was assured from then onwards of reaching Father Leguilcher without hindrance.

We left the basin of the river of Pin-tchouen as we had done with all those we traversed since Nga-da-ti, i.e., by the valley of a lateral affluent which we ascended

to the dividing line of the waters. From there we discovered a rather beautiful horizon: at our feet stretched the undulating irregular valley of the Pien-kio; above the irregular crowns with many ravines, which bounded it in the west, rose the faraway snowy tops of the mountains of Li-Kiang in the north and the chain which bordered the lake of Ta-Ly in the south. We were still far from Pien-kio, a big market town which had been the center of a rich and flourishing region before the war. But our impatience to meet a Chinese priest, Father Fang, made us quicken our daily marches.

In the evening we reached his home, after a march of ten hours. His was the only inhabitable house in the village, which had been horribly devastated. Very close by a big clean shed served as the chapel for the small Chinese parish. Father Fang was absent, but our major-domo, Tching-eul-ye, very soon informed him of the arrival of "the big Frenchmen". He arrived hastily. Having left the college in Poulo Pinang longer ago than Father Lu the Latin language had faded more from his memory and, in the beginning, he had some trouble in talking with us in this language. We were only a day's march from the residence of Father Leguilcher. I wrote a short letter to the latter to announce the arrival of the French Commission and Father Fang sent it the same evening by one of his Christians. He related in a few simple sad words the distress of this unfortunate country, exposed to the incursions of the Whites of Ta-Ly, the reds of Kieou-ya-pin and of Ma-chang and the natives of the mountain, who after having made common cause with the Muslims now made war against them. This was the fourth time, he added, that he had rebuilt his dwelling.

For rather a long time we had been more aware of Buddhist celebrations than of the solemnities of the Christian calendar. The next day we learned in the mass of Father Fang that Lent was beginning: we received the ashes in the company of some worshippers. [12] Once the mass was finished, we set off, not without leaving a few souvenirs of our passage, as we did in Ma-chang, in the small church.

We crossed the sizable river, which flowed through the Pien-kio plain from north to south, over a pretty stone bridge: half the rice-fields, formerly cultivated on its banks, were abandoned. Here and there bleached bones marked the place of a fight or an assassination. On the opposite slopes some sugar-cane fields were turning green, but we soon left them behind to enter the higher areas where we again met the cold. In the afternoon we passed over a new peak situated at a height of three thousand meters and we began the descent again. One of the porters

indicated to me, some hundreds of meters below us, a small plateau which hung about half way down on the flank of the mountain. A few regularly aligned trees and a group of houses, above which towered a cross, entirely covered it. This was the mission. I started to run at break-neck speed on the path zigzagging down and soon saw a man with a long beard, who was examining me attentively from the edge of the plateau.

A few minutes later, I was with him: "You are Father Leguilcher," I said to him." "Yes, Sir," he replied after some hesitation, "and you surely announce Lieutenant Garnier from whom I have just received a letter."

My clothes, my bearded face, my rifle and my revolver made me look like a looter in the eyes of the priest. Evidently it was not at all how he had imagined a naval officer.

"I am, Father, the writer of the letter," I replied, smiling, "and I see that you take me for my servant. But what do you expect? We came from afar and it has been a long time since we were able to put on new clothes. It is not you, is it, who reproaches us for our poor appearance?"

We exchanged an emotional handshake and I introduced him to the members of the Commission as they arrived.

We had been marching now for eleven days without interruption. Since our departure from Saigon, we had never accomplished such a long and tiring itinerary. Our porters were exhausted and Mr. Delaporte was afflicted by fever. In the house of Father Leguilcher we found relative comfort, and the tranquillity and rest which we needed so much. [13]

Chapter 10

We depart for Ta-Ly—The first reception by the sultan very cordial—A sudden change in his intentions towards us—We have to leave Ta-Ly in great haste—Incidents of our retreat—We reach Tou-touy without being attacked

With a few words Father Leguilcher brought us up to date on the situation: since the rebellion he had not set foot in Ta-Ly and he hid his presence in the country as much as possible. The atrocities and the exactions of the Muslims stirred a unanimous feeling of hatred everywhere. However, the terror that they inspired was too great for people simply to shake off. A few chiefs of Lolo tribes were still resisting in the mountains and it was with them that the priest and his Christians had sometimes to find refuge. I explained the objective of our journey to him. The letter of recommendation of the *Lao-papa* of Yunnan seemed to him a sufficient passport. With the help of the prestige of Europeans, the *Yuen-choai* or sultan of Ta-Ly would probably not see foreigners, whose scientific and commercial mission could not harm him, in a bad light. After due consideration, Father Leguilcher decided to accompany us to Ta-Ly and to run with us the chances of a favorable reception which certainly would have fortunate results for his parish and for himself.

At the foot of the mountain on which Father Leguilcher lived, there lay the small village of Kouang-tia-pin. A Muslim citadel defended it. Its commander let us know that it was the mandarin of Hiang-kouan, a fortified city thirty-two kilometers away from Ta-Ly on the banks of the lake, who would be in charge of transmitting our request for an audience to the sultan. I sent an express courier to take it to him and I also sent the letter of recommendation of the *Lao-papa*. After a rest of twenty-four hours in Tou-touy-tse, we set off again on the road.

On 29 February, from the heights of the peak which bounded the small valley of Kouang-tsa-pin, we discovered the lake of Ta-Ly, one of the most beautiful

landscapes given for us to admire during the journey. A high chain of mountains, covered with snow, formed the background of this painting. At their feet, the blue waters of the lake lay across the plain in a mass of low places covered by gardens and villages. A short descent brought us to the very edges of the lake, around which we circled by the north to reach the eastern bank. The numerous villages that we saw wore the cruelest traces of devastation. Only the crops seemed not to have suffered at all and they appeared to be flourishing. At 2 p.m., we presented ourselves at the gates of the fortress of Hiang-kouan which, built at the foot of the lake and at the foot of the mountain itself, completely blocked the way. The mandarin of the place told us that he declined to let us go any further before the arrival of a reply from the sultan.



Plate 38 *A Muslim mufti of Ta-Ly (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a photograph).*

While waiting we had to install ourselves in a small inn located outside the city. The curiosity of the crowd was more contained and less troublesome than it had been in the Chinese part of Yunnan which we had already traversed. The few Christians who had accompanied Father Leguilcher, trembling because of the dangers to which the latter happily exposed himself in our company, kept him informed about the remarks of the people and tried to deduce the reception that would be given to us. Thus singular rumors reached me continually and, since I was used to the ridiculous inventions for which we had often been the pretext or the object, I attached little importance to them. Again they repeated that a short while ago, sixteen Europeans and four Malays had come to Ta-Ly itself to take charge of the production of bombs for the sultan. Having not been able to keep their promise, the sixteen Europeans had been put to death and the four Malays had been detained in chains while waiting for a similar fate. They added, pointing to us: "Those there will surely be more capable." The work of the expedition's artist,[1] who placed himself on a protruding rock to sketch the panorama of the lake, gave rise to a hundred comments. "Why take the image of our country and of these mountains," they said, "if it is not to conquer it more easily?"

In order not to aggravate these suspicions, I had to hold my questions and take the greatest precautions to obtain the few geographical and political details that were indispensable to me.

The next day, at 4 p.m., the reply from Ta-Ly finally arrived: it was favorable. The mandarin of Hiang-kouan apologized, even as he handed it to us, for having kept us this long. This politeness seemed to be a good augury to us.

On 2 March in the morning we resumed our journey. We traversed Hiang-kouan, the walls of which bathed their feet in the waters of the lake on one side and, on the other side, scaled the mountain which rose straight up and made this narrow gorge extremely easy to defend. Beyond this, the bank of the lake stretched out again in a magnificent plain on which the city of Ta-Ly was situated. At the southern end of the lake, the mountain came down again to the edge of the water and produced a second pass, which was also defended by a fortress, i.e., that of Hia-kouan. Hia-kouan and Hiang-kouan, surrounded by crenelated and solid walls were two veritable gates to Ta-Ly. These two well-defended passes would be impregnable and they would leave no other route than the lake by which to reach the city.

A wide, paved road ran directly through the plain of Hiang-kouan to Ta-Ly. The mandarin of Hiang-kouan gave us an escort of ten soldiers, commanded by a young

officer with a gentle, pleasant face with whom my first relations were excellent. This escort went ahead of us because of the slow progress of our porters. During the march, unsettling rumors reached me again. All the priest's Christians deserted one after the other. Our porters did not seem too reassured themselves. I had to maintain the strictest watch on them.

At 3.30 p.m. we arrived at the town's north gate. We found our escort there and we immediately entered with them. In a matter of seconds a huge crowd amassed, following us down the great avenue which traversed Ta-Ly from north to south. In the center of the town and in front of the residence of the sultan, a crenelated building with a dark, forbidding appearance, we had to stop for a while to parley with two mandarins who were sent to meet us. During this stop, we were surrounded and pushed by the crowd and a soldier snatched the hat from one of us, [2] surely so that the sultan, who, they said, was watching us from the height of a balcony of his palace, could better see his face. This insolence, which was immediately punished by a punch which bloodied the face of the aggressor, resulted in indescribable turmoil and risked provoking a fight. The two mandarins standing in between [us and the crowd] and the determined posture of our Annamites, who had grouped around us and who had unsheathed their saber-bayonets, nevertheless stopped the hostile gestures of the crowd and we managed without further incident to reach the *yamen* which had been assigned to us as lodgings, located at the southern end of the city, outside the wall.

Immediately after our arrival a higher-ranking mandarin than all those we had seen so far presented himself as the official envoy of the sultan and requested on his behalf to know who we were, whence we came and what was the purpose of our visit.

I answered through the intermediary of Father Leguilcher that we were sent by the French government to explore the country watered by the Lan-tsang Kiang, and that, having arrived in Yunnan a few months ago, we had learned that a new kingdom was being formed in Ta-Ly and so we wanted to salute its chief in order to prepare, if he so desired, to set up commercial and friendly relations between France and himself. I gave some explanations about the scientific aims and absolutely peaceful character of our work. Finally, I apologized that I only had gifts of low value to offer the sultan and that I was unable to present the officers of the mission to him in dress uniform since we were forced by the length and the difficulties of our journey to shed almost all our luggage. I received the gracious

answer that I should fear nothing in this respect and that whoever we were we would be welcome. To avoid any surprises or misunderstandings, I asked to know the etiquette for the reception. They told me that it was the custom to make three deep bows to the sultan. Upon my objection that the French deplore this fashion of saluting, and that, even *vis-à-vis* a sovereign, the salute consisted of a simple bow, they agreed to allow our procedure but they exacted the promise that none of us would bear arms. I then complained about the insult which a soldier had offered to a member of the mission, insisting on our status as envoys and on the gravity of this outrage. They told me that the sultan had already severely punished this insolence and such an act would not happen again.

After exchanging a few more words, the sultan's envoy retreated, leaving us delighted with his cordiality and his finesse.

Soon he came back with a *ta-seu,* i.e., one of the eight high dignitaries who composed the supreme council of the sultan. Both demanded that I repeat the explanations which I had already given on the subject of our mission. I did this as clearly as possible: "Thus you have not expressly been sent to Ta-Ly by your sovereign?" I answered, "How would this be possible because when we left they were unaware in France that there was a king in this city?" They then begged me to entrust to them the Chinese letters of which I was the bearer for the king of Se-tchouen to show them to the sultan: I agreed. They retired and seemed as much satisfied as the first time.

We spent this first night in Ta-Ly rather quietly. It was my intention to allow my traveling companions a rest of several days in this city and to go alone with Father Leguilcher to the edges of the Lang-tsang Kiang, [3] from which we were only four days' march away. I would then have ascended this river to the border of Li-kiang fou where the rest of the mission, after having recovered from the hardship of the forced march that we had made since Tong-tchouen, would have joined me.

The next morning, by 9 a.m., just as I was trying to collect all the necessary information for this plan, they came looking for Father Leguilcher on behalf of the sultan. At the same time, they let me know that perhaps the latter would not receive me that day. The priest did not come back till noon; his face was deeply upset. The sultan refused to see us and advised us to leave the next day by the same road that we had come. He had said: "Tell these foreigners that they can lay hold on all the countries which border the Lan-tsang Kiang but that they must stop at the borders

of my kingdom. They can subject the eighteen provinces of China but the one that I govern, will give them more trouble than the rest of the kingdom." He had added: "Don't you know that barely a few days ago I had put to death three Malays? If I spare the lives of those that you accompany, it is out of respect for their quality as foreigners and for the letters of recommendation of which they were the bearers. These are returned to you. Even if they had been able to draw the mountains and measure the depth of my waters: they will not manage to conquer them. As for you," the sultan had ended, softening his tone, "I know your religion, I have read its books. Muslims and Christians are brothers. Go back home and I will make you a mandarin so that you can govern your people."

During the whole meeting the priest had remained standing, without being able to say anything, besieged by questions [from the crowd,] to which they did not even expect an answer, shouted at and hooted by the crowd. In vain, he requested that the bystanders be sent away so that he might speak more openly. It had been agreed not to listen to him at all. He energetically repudiated several times the label "Englishman" which he heard around him.

To what must such a sudden about-turn be attributed? Surely to the military entourage of the sultan, to whom a scientific and disinterested motive must be entirely unbelievable. A power that was born of rebellion, [with] the object of the repulsion of the masses whom it overloaded with taxes, living only by terror and crime, must be suspicious and cruel. Our official relations with the Chinese authorities placed us, in regard to them, in a delicate position which justified their defiance. Finally, despite all our assertions to the contrary, the assumption that we were Englishmen had played an important part in the decisions which had been made about us, since the Muslims of Yunnan were not at all willing to entertain relations with those from India, who deeply hated the foreigners dominating them.

This assertion seemed to contradict the excellent reception which the English mission of Major Sladen received a few months later from the Muslim authorities of Teng-yue tcheou. It was very well possible that this reception was entirely due to a desire to repair the bad impression Europeans must have gained from the reception of the French Commission in Ta-Ly. Distinguishing between Western nations in Yunnan was very difficult and they ascribed the greatest solidarity among them. Their prestige, I have often said, remained great. A letter from Father Leguilcher, dated Ma-chang, 24 March 1869, informed us that after our departure the sultan had seemed concerned about the consequences of his poor reception.

He had the walls of Hiang-kouan and those of Hia-kouan built up by three meters and made a study of erecting batteries on the banks of the lake. The monastery with the three towers, which was situated at the foot of the mountain north of Ta-Ly, having attracted the attention of Mr. Delaporte, who had drawn it, they had built two or three small forts on that side.

On the other hand, it seemed unlikely to me that the governor of Teng-yue, an official agent of the government of Ta-Ly and in frequent relations with it, had been ignorant of the presence of the French Commission in Ta-Ly in March, and that he had been sincere on 30 June in affirming several times to Major Sladen that this Commission had been attacked by hostile tribes in the surroundings of Xieng Hong and the majority of its members had died. [4] In this I can only see an intention to shift the blame for an attack which might have been planned by the Muslims, in case it was successful.

Finally, I must remark that all the attempts of Major Sladen to continue his itinerary to Ta-Ly were in vain and that, despite the courtesy of the reception which he received in Mo-mein [Moulmein], in the end, he has not been successful in going beyond that border town. [5]

The sudden change which had occurred in the sultan's intentions towards us might have become even more pronounced. Despite our small number, the firmness of our attitude, our weapons the powers of which they exaggerated and on account of which wonders were told and, finally, the prestige of the European name which had penetrated to Ta-Ly, stopped them from going to the last measure against us on that occasion. But passion might soon overcome prudence and from one moment to the next we might have everything to fear. Nevertheless I resolved, despite the contrary advice of Father Leguilcher, not to bring forward the moment set by the sultan for our departure.

The whole afternoon long a great number of Muslim officials came to look at us, motivated by curiosity or by the desire to watch our conduct closely. Out of prudence, we had to abstain from observing, from drawing or from writing. I transmitted to the sultan our regrets for the crude mistrust he entertained for us and I enclosed the gifts which I intended for him, despite the envy they might incite, especially a Lefaucheux revolver with all its accessories.

By 5 p.m., the sultan called the chief of our escort. Soon thereafter he came back and told me that he had received the order to take us back to Hiang-kouan the

next morning. He showed me a sealed letter which he had to give to the mandarin of that town at the same time. I enlisted this excellent young man for our cause by presenting him with some gifts and I agreed that early in the morning we would leave and avoid crossing the city. I feared that, the hostile attitude of the sultan being known, the crowd would only show itself to be hostile and that some overzealous soldiers would try to take advantage of this to satisfy the hidden desire of their chief, without compromising him.

That evening, I had the guns, which I capped myself, loaded with the greatest care. I indicated to my men what they must do in case of an alert. I assured myself of the loyalty of our luggage porters by promises.

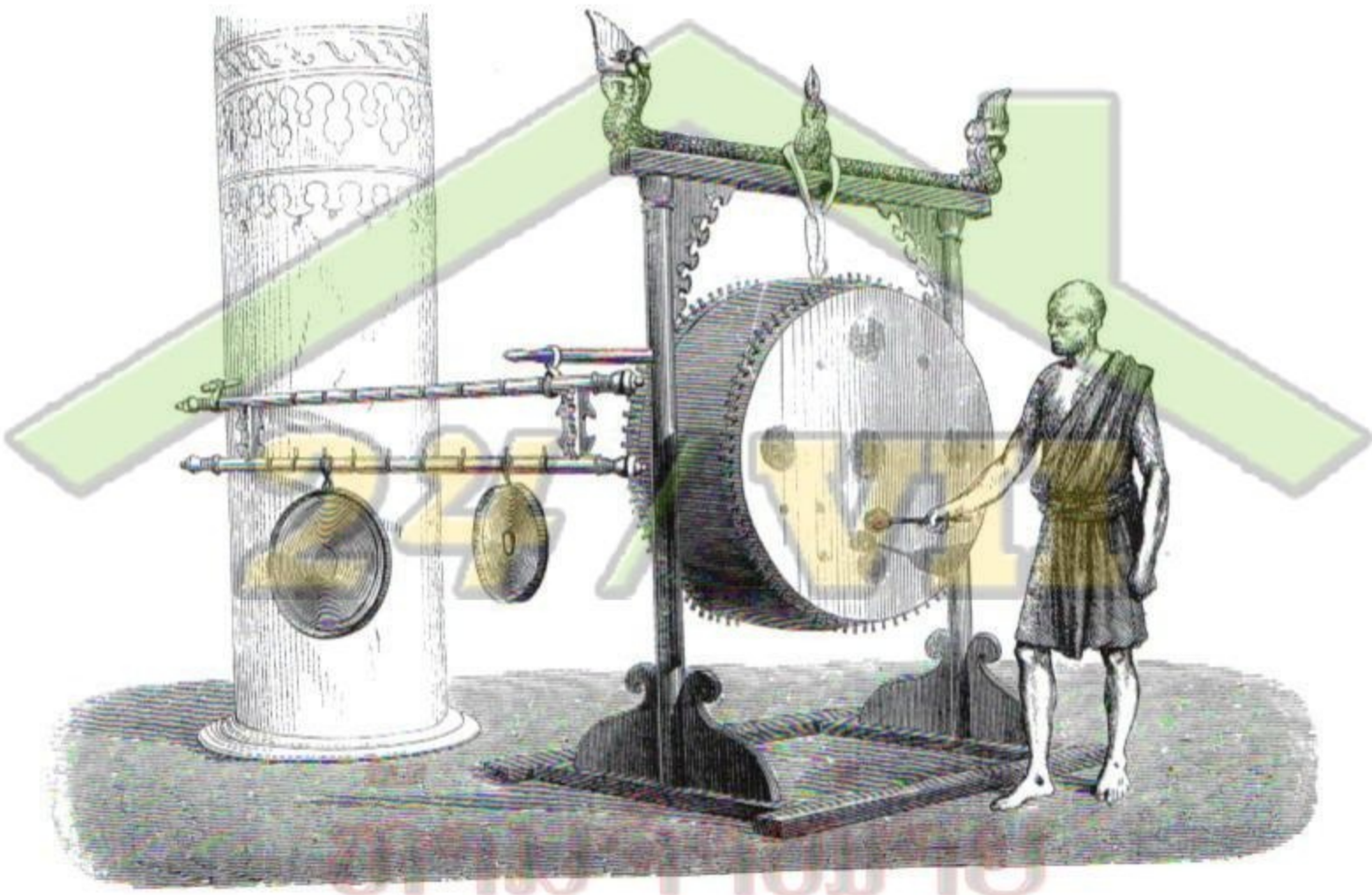


Plate 39 *A gong in a pagoda (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

The night passed in worrisome waiting. They had placed a guard at our door and we were followed when we went out. At any moment, I expected an order countermanding our departure and transforming our seclusion into final captivity. At 11 p.m. one of the high-ranking mandarins of the sultan was sent to ask us which route we intended taking to return. I replied simply that I did not know the answer. The night passed without other incident.

The next day, at 5 a.m., we set off, well armed and well grouped. We skirted the city of Ta-Ly to the south and east and marched almost without stopping the thirty-two kilometers which separated us from Hiang-kouan. I was in haste to get to the other side of this fortification which, as one may remember, completely barred the access to the plain. Just as we were about to pass the town's first gate, the captain of our escort stopped us and said that he had been ordered, until new orders from the sultan arrived, to lodge us inside this passage, in a small *yamen* which he pointed out to us.

I pretended that I took for an offer of courtesy what was surely a disguised imprisonment and answered that after the reception in Ta-Ly, it was impossible for me to accept the hospitality of the sultan. Nevertheless, not wishing this precipitous retreat to look like a flight, I added that, if the mandarin of Hiang-kouan had any communications for me, I would wait in the small inn where we had lodged when we came.

The Muslim officer protested the serious responsibility he assumed by allowing any modification of an order he had received, but I insisted, clearly resolved to force the passage, if need be, before he was able to alert the garrison of Hiang-kouan. While he galloped off to inform the governor of the town of the conflict which had arisen, I quickly pushed my small column through the gates of the fortress, which we traversed without new obstacles, and a few minutes later we found ourselves, as I had promised, camping in the designated inn, this time having open and free countryside before us.

We were barely there than the governor of Hiang-kouan had Father Leguilcher called. He wanted to offer a huge price for a revolver similar to the one I had given the sultan. He had also received an order to provide us with a new escort and two mandarins to accompany us to the border and to set the stages of our itinerary. We had to sleep in Hiang-kouan and wait for the next day till the arrival of the mandarins and their escort.

I answered that I might give arms as a present, but that I did not sell them and that, during my journey, I expected to keep my freedom of action and that I would take no account of the escort and the mandarins which they wanted to send with me. I gave a first proof by leaving that very evening to reach Ma-cha, a village situated at the northern end of the lake.

When leaving Ta-Ly, to reduce the serious consequences which might result from a desertion by our porters as a consequence of a scuffle with the crowd, I had shared the most precious or most indispensable objects of our luggage among the four Annamites of the escort. Mr. Delaporte had taken with him a gold ingot of fifteen hundred francs, which at that time was about half our fortune. [6] He lost it on the journey between Hiang-kouan and Ma-cha. When he realized this, we retraced our steps but all our searching was in vain. The road which followed the bank of the lake was very busy: our ingot had easily found a new proprietor.

On 5 March we continued our journey. The fatigue of our porters prevented us from doubling our march and arrive that evening at the presbytery of Tou-touy-tse, the isolated location of which could be easily defended with the help of Christians and which would shelter us from immediate pursuit and give us some time to breathe. We had to stop at nightfall at an inn of the market town Kouang-tia-pin. Our arrival was immediately communicated to the commander of the neighboring citadel, who had Father Leguilcher informed that he must come to him. The latter told me of his lively fears about the results of this interview. The commander of Kouang-tia-pin might have received orders to separate the small group of foreigners from their interpreter, so that they, left to themselves and not knowing the language or the customs of the country, might more easily fall into an ambush. On the other hand, we were obliged to pass under the walls of the citadel to regain the mountain and the road to Se-tchouen and it was imprudent to break openly with the person who commanded it. We simply let him know that the evening had progressed too far for a visit but that the next morning Father Leguilcher would accept his invitation. This reply did not satisfy him at all. Three soldiers came back soon thereafter and brutally ordered the priest to follow them. The poor missionary, in an agony of with fear, believed his last hour had come. He considered it as dangerous to resist as to obey. He had compromised himself for us: I had the duty to make a decision for him. I more forcefully repeated the reply which we had already sent to the messengers and I begged them to be satisfied with this. They insisted with all the astonishment and insolence inspired by a resistance to which they were not at all accustomed. Terrified by their threats, which he understood better than we did, Father Leguilcher wanted to follow them. I held him back while our Tagals and the Annamite sergeant pushed back the soldiers. The latter retired, cursing that they would come back in force and that our heads would soon be on stakes in the market. We were beginning to get so

used to this intemperance of language that it made little impression on us. However, we did not take the indispensable precautions less seriously: each man received a revolver in addition to his rifle and Father Leguilcher himself agreed to bear arms. I had all the streets to the inn guarded and we passed the night awake. There were only ten of us but each having a revolver and a rifle, we had seventy bullets to fire before we had to reload our arms. That was sufficient to hold a Muslim regiment at a respectable distance. Nobody showed up.

Early next day, after having made all our porters go ahead of us and having given them a rendezvous in Tou-touy-tse, we escorted Father Leguilcher on horseback to the gate of the citadel. I informed the commander of the fort that the priest had come to pay him the visit that he had requested, but that the interview should not last longer than ten minutes. If, after this time, the priest had not come back, we ourselves would go and search for him. Our assurance was indeed intended to upset people used to seeing everybody tremble in front of them and for whom this kind of language was a frightening novelty. The commander of the fort simply informed Father Leguilcher that he had received the order from Ta-Ly to escort us to the border. The priest gave him the answer that I had already given to the governor of Hiang-kouan and his negotiator did not insist on more. He even begged him to break off the meeting, fearing, he added "to go beyond the time fixed and to cause the *great men* to become impatient".[7] An hour later we arrived at the residence of the priest where we took two days' rest, made necessary by the hardships and upsets of the preceding days.

On 7 March a new messenger from the fort came to beg Father Leguilcher to come "alone" to arrange the stages of our route with the Muslim commander. We naturally considered this communication as never having arrived.

Despite the speed with which we had to make the journey from Ta-Ly, I had been able to collect some interesting information on the region, its inhabitants, its resources and its commerce.[8]

The lake of Ta-Ly, situated at an altitude of more than two thousand meters, measured about thirty-six kilometers from the north to the south, with an average width of nine to ten [kilometers]. Its depth was very considerable: in some places it was deeper than a hundred meters. There appeared to be some islands in the south-eastern part. The lake was at a higher level than the neighboring rivers and its infiltrations could feed those which belonged to the basin of the Blue River

from the north and the east. It ostensibly poured out its water at its southern end into a river which flowed into the Mekong.[9] The fortress of Hia-kouan, of which I have already spoken, was built at the mouth of this river. The latter was not navigable. Shortly after coming out of the lake, it split into two arms which soon joined again. During the rainy season, the waters rose five meters. During the dry season the chain of mountains of Tien Song, which bordered the western bank of the lake, produced successive violent gusts which made navigation on the lake difficult. This chain, the altitude of which I assessed at five thousand meters, was covered with snow for nine months of the year. On the opposite bank rose hills which belonged to a much lower chain. Between these mountains and the lake there were admirably cultivated plains which ran in gentle slopes to the blue waters. The depth of the waters and their limpidity made them suitable for the conservation and the reproduction of an infinite number of fish.

The most fruitful fishing method, also the most frequently used, was that of fishing with birds. The daring behavior of the fish and the birds had recommended this method to the people of the banks [of the lake]; it was far superior to that which we knew in Europe under the name of fishing with sea-ravens,. The fishermen left early in the morning and by making some noise they attracted the attention of the numerous flocks of birds which slept around the water. They threw themselves into flat boats equipped with a holding tank and they let themselves drift with the current. Then one of them, placed at the front, crumbled big balls of rice on to the surface of the water. The fish came in groups and the fishing birds, closely grouped in bands around the boat, dove and constantly came up with a fish in their beaks. Progressively, as their pockets filled up, the oarsmen emptied them into the interior of the boat, leaving hardly anything for each of these winged fishermen, so as not to sate their hunger. After half an hour, the boat was full and the oarsmen left to sell their fish in the market.

Formerly, the plain of Ta-Ly had more than one hundred and fifty villages, which the sultan had tried to repopulate almost exclusively with Muslims. The eastern bank was settled by Min-kia and Pen-ti people who were the descendants of the first Chinese settlers whom the Mongol dynasty sent to Yunnan after the conquest of this province by the generals of Khoubilai Khan. The Min-kia came from the vicinity of Nan-kin. Their women did not bind their feet and the young people of the two sexes wore a sort of unusually shaped bonnet, adorned with silver beads. Their dress and their language displayed a visible imprint of their

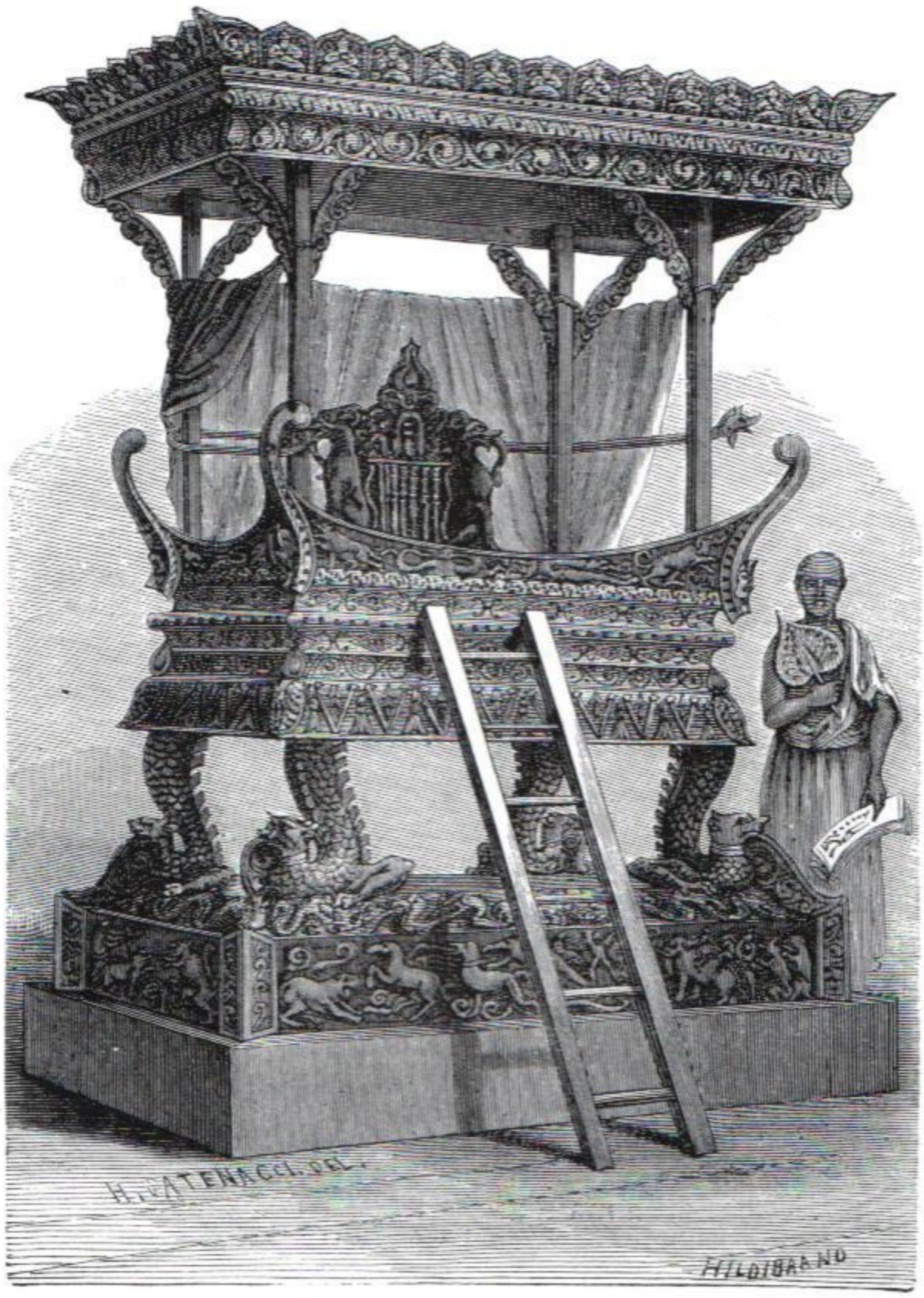


Plate 40 *A sculptured chair in a pagoda (drawing by H. Catenacci, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

mixing with the ancient populations of the country. These former Chinese immigrants were treated with contempt by the pure Chinese and an antagonism resulted from this; it had in no small measure contributed to the Min-kia staying neutral, at the beginning of the struggle between the Muslims and the Imperials. But, after some time, the despotism and the violence of the masters of Ta-Ly exasperated these peaceful people and led by an energetic chief, Tong, the Min-kia campaigned successfully against the Muslims for a long time. Tong was killed

in an encounter in 1866 and the victors pursued his family with a rage of which few examples were known. Today, these disorganized peoples in the immediate vicinity of Ta-Ly had no chief and with trepidation bore the domination of the sultan. The Pen-ti especially inhabited the plain of Tong-tchouen to the north of the lake and the district of Pe-yen-tsin. They had a completely different costume.

Under different names, the Lolo or the representatives of the original race inhabited the summits of the mountains and they did not accept any authority. Their depredations made the population of the plain tremble. Certain districts of the area around Pien-kio paid to one of their tribes, called the Tcha-su, an annual rent which was a sort of insurance against the rustling of animals. This rent however did not protect against all damage and the insured had only the right to half of the value if their animals were taken away.

The Tibetan element began to play a greater role in the ethnography of this region. It was certainly to this human offshoot that we must attach the Mosso tribes that inhabited the upper parts of the valleys of the Blue River, the Mekong and the Salween. Perhaps we can also see in them the remnants of the population of the kingdom of Tou-fan which existed in the ninth century on the borders of the kingdom of Na-tchao or Ta-Ly.

I will simply enumerate the principal mixed tribes of this part of Yunnan: the Tchong-kia, originally from Kouy-tcheou; the Pa-sou, inhabiting the vicinity of Li-kian; the Lama-jen, on the right bank of the Lan-tsang-Kiang, five days to the north of Ta-Ly [10] and the Si-fan who were disseminated on the frontiers of Se-tchouen and Yunnan. This last tribe still had, when we passed there, the dissolute morals which Marco Polo indicated in the thirteenth century.

The Tibetans maintained numerous relations with a country, part of which had formerly been dominated by them. They often went on a pilgrimage to some places in the vicinity of Ta-Ly. Among these we should mention the The-tong or the "stone cave", a magnificent cave of stalactites, situated four leagues to the south-east of Kouang-tia-pin. It was one of the most venerated places of the region. Its height was that of the nave of a cathedral; its length reached three kilometers. More than a hundred families found shelter in it during the war with the Muslims. They extracted sulphur from it.

The trade of the west of the province had two main outlets before the war: one towards Burma by Teng-yue tcheou and Bamo; the other by Tibet. To Burma, they

exported rhubarb, copper, flints for guns, musk and gold, in exchange for cotton. The caravans gathered at Hia-kouan, at the southern end of the lake of Ta-Ly. In two days they arrived in Yun-tchang; in six days in Tong-yue tcheou; in nine days in Mo-fou. At this point there was a Pa-y customs post, subject to China; seven days after Mo-fou one would arrive in Bamo. The Burmese customs levied a tithe on the imported products. It was payable to Ava, in money or in kind. The Chinese customs levied three-tenths of a *tael* per load of cotton in Mo-fou.

Despite the efforts of the Muslims to keep this trade route open, the uncertainty and the arbitrariness of their domination and the robberies of the Kakhyen tribes which inhabited the area between Bamo and the border of Yunnan, had more or less reduced the commercial traffic in this direction to nothing.[11] The cotton necessary for Chinese consumption had been imported from the central provinces of China and trials with the culture of this textile had been made in the hottest parts of Yunnan. As a result of this, a flow [of trade] from Ta-Ly to Se-tchouen and the north-east had been established. The greediness and the commercial perseverance of the Chinese had not been disheartened, either by the war, or by the state of the roads. While in Europe the halting of all trade between the belligerents was the unavoidable consequence of a state of war, in China the trade continued amid the battles and seemed to be an occasion for the mandarins to face up to the costs that they brought with them. The population did not at all follow the governments in political conflicts. They stayed out of them as much as possible and this manner of acting in no small measure contributed to extending the rebellions. The rebellion of Ta-Ly would have had no future if, as would have happened in a European country, all communications with the rest of the Empire had been prohibited. The Muslim government had realized that it must maintain commercial relations with Se-tchouen at any price, and it abandoned its habits of exactions and violence towards the merchants' caravans. Although, in order to stage an act of independence from Peking, it had ordered all its subjects to let their hair grow, and although it prohibited emigration, it had allowed the merchants and the Chinese porters, who came from outside, to preserve their hair plaits, which was the distinctive mark of their origins. The barbers in the village of Nioung-poung-tse, located close to the customs post established at the point of entry to the Muslim territory, had plenty of business cutting the hair of all those who entered the kingdom of Ta-Ly, or all those who managed to get out. The former were keen to keep the distinctive mark which would allow them to return home, the latter

were keen to repossess [the symbol of] their nationality and to act out of hatred for their oppressors. The mandarin of Pin-tchouen, on whom the customs post of Nioung-poung-tse depended, had the strictest orders to protect the caravans of the merchants. If these were robbed by the Lolo or by gangs of vagrant soldiers who wandered the countryside, the villages closest to the theater of the crime had to pay for the damage caused. It was unnecessary to add that the tax imposed was always higher than the loss suffered by the merchants and that the authorities thus gained a double advantage from the protection given to trade.

They exported tea from Pou-eul and salt from the salt works of the province to Se-tchouen by way of the road of Nioung-poung-tse. They imported cotton cloth, haberdashery, porcelain, crude earthenware, umbrellas, hats and other objects of basket-work and white cooperage.

The exchanges between Tibet and the kingdom of Ta-Ly consisted of *kouang-lien,* a bitter root which was very much used in Chinese medicine, woolen cloth, deer horn, furs (of bears and foxes), wax, resinous gum and the oil of nuts. These goods paid a due of one *tsien* per load in Oue-si, a Mosso town located on the border of Yunnan and Tibet. The products imported from Yunnan entered duty-free into Tibet. These were: tea, cotton cloth, rice wine, sugar, haberdashery and ironmongery.

The industrial production of the kingdom of Ta-Ly had diminished a great deal since the war. It was important from the metallurgical point of view. The copper mines of Long-pao, Ta-kong and Pe-iang were the most important of this region, in which there were also deposits of gold, silver, mercury, iron, lead and zinc. In Ho-kin they produced paper from bamboo. They formed bundles of equal length with the fibers from this plant which were crushed and macerated in lime. Then they were placed in an oven in contact with steam and they heated this for twenty days. Then they were exposed to a cold water stream and then they were again placed in layers, in a second oven. Each layer was covered up by a plaster made of lard and pea flour. After another boiling they obtained a paste which was spread out on a lattice work in excessively thin layers which were dried in the sun. Thus, sheets of a rather crude and uneven but very resistant paper were obtained.

In Ta-Ly, gold and silver were exchanged at a rate of one for twelve. The meat of donkeys was very much appreciated and considerable quantities were sold there. Hunting for musk deer [*Moschus moschiferus*, Tran. note] was one of the greatest

[sources of] revenue for the mountain people. Musk was sold in the place itself for its own weight in silver. In the valley of the Pien-kio, there were numerous sugar mills. In Ho-tchang, north of Rouang-tia-pin there were kettle and iron basin manufactures. They said there was also platinum in this area.

A little behind the presbytery of Tou-touy-tse, we observed a long vista of the Blue River, which opened to the north. On the left bank there was a market, to which the Kin-cha-Kiang had given its name and where the road which came from Yun-pe ended.



Plate 41 *Isidore Fang, a Christian novice (drawing by Gilbert, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Chapter 11

From Ta-Ly to Saigon—Return to Tong-tchouen

The failure of our journey to Ta-Ly had compromised the position of Father Leguilcher who could not stay in the country any longer without danger. Nine individuals, four of whom were Frenchmen, had appeared dangerous enough to threaten the sultan, menacing enough for him to fear disposing of them by force, but after their departure the missionary who had served as their interpreter and guide would be without protection from his swift vengeance. Father Leguilcher understood this and despite his reluctance to leave his parish, he agreed to join us in Se-tcheou fou, where we had agreed to meet Commander de Lagrée and near to which the vicar apostolic of Yunnan resided. We left together on 8 March. Despite our keeping his departure secret, the Christian families who were closest sensed it and were upset. The priest bade them farewell in touching words which made them weep.

Father Leguilcher took with him only a young orphan whom he had adopted when he was very young and who had not left him since that time. This young novice, by the name of Isidore Fang, rendered us many services subsequently by his intelligence and devotion.

On 15 March after a rapid march without serious incident, we were back in the territory of the Imperials. Passing the customs post of Nioung-poung-tse, Father Leguilcher was recognized and pointed out by a soldier. Residing in the country for many years and not being a trader, he did not have the right to leave Muslim territory without authorization.

Fortunately, our Annamites were near the priest and the treatment they inflicted on the informer dissuaded his companions from opposing our passage: they respectfully saluted us on our way.



Plate 42 *Elderly native women in Tchang-sin (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

The next day, we left the road we had followed from Ma-chang and went directly to Hong-pou-so. We did not leave until we had written to Father Lu to tell him of the arrival of Father Leguilcher and to arrange a meeting in the latter village. We arrived early in Tchang-sin, a small market town which was very busy. We received a good reception there and the authorities congratulated us on getting out of Ta-Ly safe and sound.

Tchang-sin was situated to the west, and close to the line of summits of the great chain which radiated from the center of Yunnan to die out at the confluence of the Kin-chang-Kiang and the Pe-chouy-Kiang. Some kind of fair was going on in the village and it had attracted all the hill tribe people from the surrounding area.

From them you could have composed the most varied and strangest gamut of human types, from the Chinese juggler with an intelligent look and a capable casualness who amused a large circle of spectators around him with his jests and clever tricks, to the old native women, crowned with leaves and steeped in wine liquor who had come to sell their hemp cloth in the market. The next day we saw the same spectacle in Can-tchou-tse, a village on the opposite flank of the chain, at a height of two thousand five hundred meters. Women from Si-fan, with their original berets with silver chains and tassels at the sides, looked quite well next to Chinese and Min-kia from this area. From Can-tchou-tse onwards, we descended to a low valley, warm and well cultivated, where the town of Sen-o-kay was located. The chief of the area of Che-lou-li resided there—the name given to the region of which Ta-yao-hien was the center and on which the saline works of Pe-yen-tsin depended. Che-lou-li meant "the sixteen families" or "the sixteen tribes" and it alluded to the specific organization of the region. At the time of the Muslims' revolt, the indigenous chief of Ta-yao, called Pen-tse-yang, assembled the headmen of the area and incited them to resistance, raised militias and fought step by step against the invasion. Overrun by numbers, he yielded twice to the storm and sought refuge in Se-tchouen. But he rebounded with new energy, and reoccupied Ta-yao, Pe-yen-tsin, Yuen-ma and Tou-ouen-sieou. The sultan of Ta-Ly had to treat with this weak adversary. Some sort of tacit truce was agreed: the Che-lou-li were respected by the Muslims and Pen-tse-yang placed no obstacles in the way of trade between Ta-Ly and Se-tchouen. Thanks to the energy of one man, the valley of the Pe-ma-ho was thus preserved from the devastation and looting which ruined the neighboring areas for several years and Sen-o-kay, which Pen-tse-yang had chosen as a residence and where he had a citadel built, looked most lively and prosperous when we passed it. A play was being performed in the open air and had attracted a crowd. After our installation in the principal pagoda, Pen-tse-yang paid me a visit. Our journey to Ta-Ly had given them a high opinion of our courage. Our passport from Peking appeared to testify to a high-ranking official position. Proud of the victory they had won, although completely abandoned by the central authorities, the dignitaries of the region felt that the emperor owed them gratitude. They imagined that "the great Frenchmen" were his friends and they submitted a petition to me demanding that Pen-tse-yang reward them for what they had achieved.

The Christians of the place also came to ask my protection: the authorities wanted to force them to donate money for the maintenance of pagodas and for the theater.

I had no problem in having them exempted from all contributions for such purposes. Pen-tse-yang begged me to stay some time in Sen-o-kay to assure myself of the flourishing state and the good administration of the region and he in turn handed me some demands for rewards for the chiefs who were under his orders.



Plate 43 *A Chinese juggler in Tchang-sin (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Chapter 11

Return to Tong-tchouen—The demise of Commander de Lagrée—The mission of Long-ki—Siu-tcheou fou—We embark on the Blue River

Despite the objections of Pen-tse-yang, we left Sen-o-kay the next day, to the sound of numerous salvos of muskets. From the top of the hills against which the town reposed, we discovered the valley of the Blue River again. Numerous rice-fields descended in progressively widening steps to the edge of the water. We crossed the river in a ferryboat and the same day arrived in Hong-pou-so. There was a great movement of troops on the road. The Reds, they told us, had everywhere gone on the offensive again. They had won some successes in the center of the province. The town of Tchou-hiong had fallen into their hands again. . . . Their victories were due to the presence of seventy well-armed Europeans in their ranks, they added. Our arrival was, surely, the only serious foundation for the latter rumor.

In Hong-pou-so we found the diligent Father Lu who, in the light of the prestige with which we were now regarded, no longer feared to admit to us the bad treatment that the *tsong-ye* of the village had made him undergo and of which he had hidden part when we first passed. Thanks to the support of Father Leguilcher, I was able to address a detailed complaint to the mandarin of Houey-li tcheou. The latter promised me correct and swift justice and he hastened to post the edict of the emperor in favor of the Christian religion in the village. Mr. Thorel paid a visit to the copper deposits of Tsin-chouy ho, exploited some distance to the north of Houey-li tcheou. This mine was one of those that produced the particular quality of copper known as *pe tong* or "white copper". I have already said, I believe, that in Houey-li tcheou copper utensils were manufactured. They were sold by weight, at the rate of about two francs per kilogram. The labor cost doubled the price of the primary resource.

A great number of soldiers were passing through Houey-li tcheou, coming from Tong-tchouen. We tried to obtain some information about the part of the Commission we had left in the latter city. The information they gave us, confused and contradictory, aroused in us the most cruel uncertainty. According to one of them Mr. de Lagrée had already set out for Siu-tcheou fou; according to others he was still unwell at Tong-tchouen on 9 March.



Plate 44 *Si-fan types from Can-tsou-tse (Yunnan) (drawing by Janet-Lange, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

On 25 March they advised me of his demise. This was denied the next day.

I speeded up our march and on 31 March we arrived at Mong-kou. The fatal news appeared to be confirmed. They even told me that Dr. Joubert had left Tong-tchouen for Siu-tcheou. I immediately sent two couriers, one to Tong-tchouen to find out the truth, the other on the road to Siu-tcheou to join Dr. Joubert, if needed, and to tell him of our return.

I used my time in Mong-kou to try to make a reconnaissance of the course of the Kin-cha Kiang, [1] down river from this point, and to confirm details of the difficulties of navigation they had told me of. They were true. Passing the rapids called Chouang-long, which was about six miles from Mong-kou, my boat half filled and I noted that the waves of the river reached two meters in height. These rapids, as well as almost all the others we met as far as Siu-tcheou, were caused by the collapse of the rocky cliffs which enclosed the river, in turn caused by torrents which formed during the rainy season.

The Chinese government had formerly used quite large sums of money to clear away these rapids. [2]

On 2 April, the messenger I had dispatched to Tong-tchouen returned to Mong-kou, with a letter from Dr. Joubert. The doctor informed me that Mr. de Lagrée had succumbed on 12 March to the chronic liver affliction from which he had suffered for a long time. Dr. Joubert had erected a small monument in the garden of a pagoda situated outside and south-east of the town. [3]

Mr. de Lagrée had received the last information I had sent from Hong-pou-so, when I turned towards Ta-Ly and he had asked the doctor to write to tell me that he approved of my decision. This letter had never reached me.

On 3 April I left together with Father Leguilcher and that very evening arrived in Tong-tchouen. The remainder of the expedition joined us the next day. We were together again, but, alas! there was a coffin with us.

If the death of a respected chief always causes pain, how can I describe the regret we felt [at the passing of] this chief who had shared with us two years of danger and suffering, easing the latter and braving the former. Moreover in this hourly intimacy, affection had accompanied the respect that he inspired! To pass away after overcoming so many difficulties, to reach the goal, after the privations and struggles were replaced by the joy and triumphs of the return, seemed unjust and a cruel decision of fate. We reflected with a deep feeling of bitterness, how heavy this bereavement was, and how it compromised the fruitful and glorious results of our common work. We realized how much we would miss the moral and intellectual qualities of Commander de Lagrée. [4] Among the men of the escort, the feeling of our immense loss was acute and unanimous. Nobody had appreciated more than they the high spirits and morale of their chief, his good will, kindness and the gentleness of his character. They remembered how patiently Mr. de Lagrée had worked, during the whole journey, to meet their needs and relieve their hardship. Also, as soon as I expressed the intention of carrying with us the body of their late chief, they offered to carry it themselves, despite their obvious weariness.

The precarious situation of the country, the absence of all missionaries, of all Christians who might undertake to guard the tomb or protect it from profanation, made me sure that in a few years there would be no vestiges left of it. Tong-tchouen might fall into Muslim hands and this change in religious authority might remove such weak guarantees as the good will of the Chinese authorities offered us.

I did not want to risk a desecration of the tomb, so insulting to our flag and so painful to his cherished memory. I resolved to exhume the body and to have it

transported to Siu-tcheou fou. This itinerary would be extremely difficult and painful because of the substantial weight of Chinese coffins, the state of the roads and the mountainous nature of the region. But from Siu-tcheou fou on, conversely, the transportation of the coffin to some French territory was without obstacle since the journey could be made entirely by water.

It appeared to me that the colony of Cochinchina would be happy to welcome the remains of the man who had opened a new and fruitful trade route for it; that it would want to honor the memory of his many achievements and noble endurance.

Yang ta-jen had left Tong-tchouen a few days before to take command of his troops. Up to the last he had shown the most sympathetic deference and had facilitated by all means in his power the difficult task Dr. Joubert had to fulfill after the demise of the expedition's leader. I sent Yang ta-jen a small Lefaucheux rifle which I had carried throughout the journey and which he had very much admired at our first meeting and in a letter I expressed our deep gratitude to him. Kong ta-lao-ye, who replaced him in Tong-tchouen, helped me to obtain at low cost the transport of the Mr. de Lagrée's coffin to Siu-tcheou fou. This transportation should be completed in thirty days maximum for the sum of one hundred and twenty *taels*, payable upon arrival.

On 5 April, the small expedition attended the exhumation of the body of their chief in full arms. The tomb erected by Dr. Joubert was transformed into a cenotaph and an inscription in French mentioned the sad event which this monument commemorated.

On 7 April we left Tong-tchouen to return at last. We were all at the end of our strength. The health of our escort especially was deeply compromised: of the fourteen people who now composed the expedition, half were often ill with fever. Sometimes I had the Annamites transported in chairs by porters to avoid any slow down in our marching. The rains were coming; we had to get out of this mountainous region soon.[5]

The populations of the town and of the plain formed separate races, which were distinguished from the Chinese in the strict sense by their hairdos and by their pronunciation. We have mentioned, in the chapter on the history of Yunnan, that the Tong-tchouen jen had maintained their independence for a long time. The environs of Tong-tchouen were inhabited by Y-kia. The road we followed traversed a plateau less deserted in appearance than the region separating Yunnan from Tong-

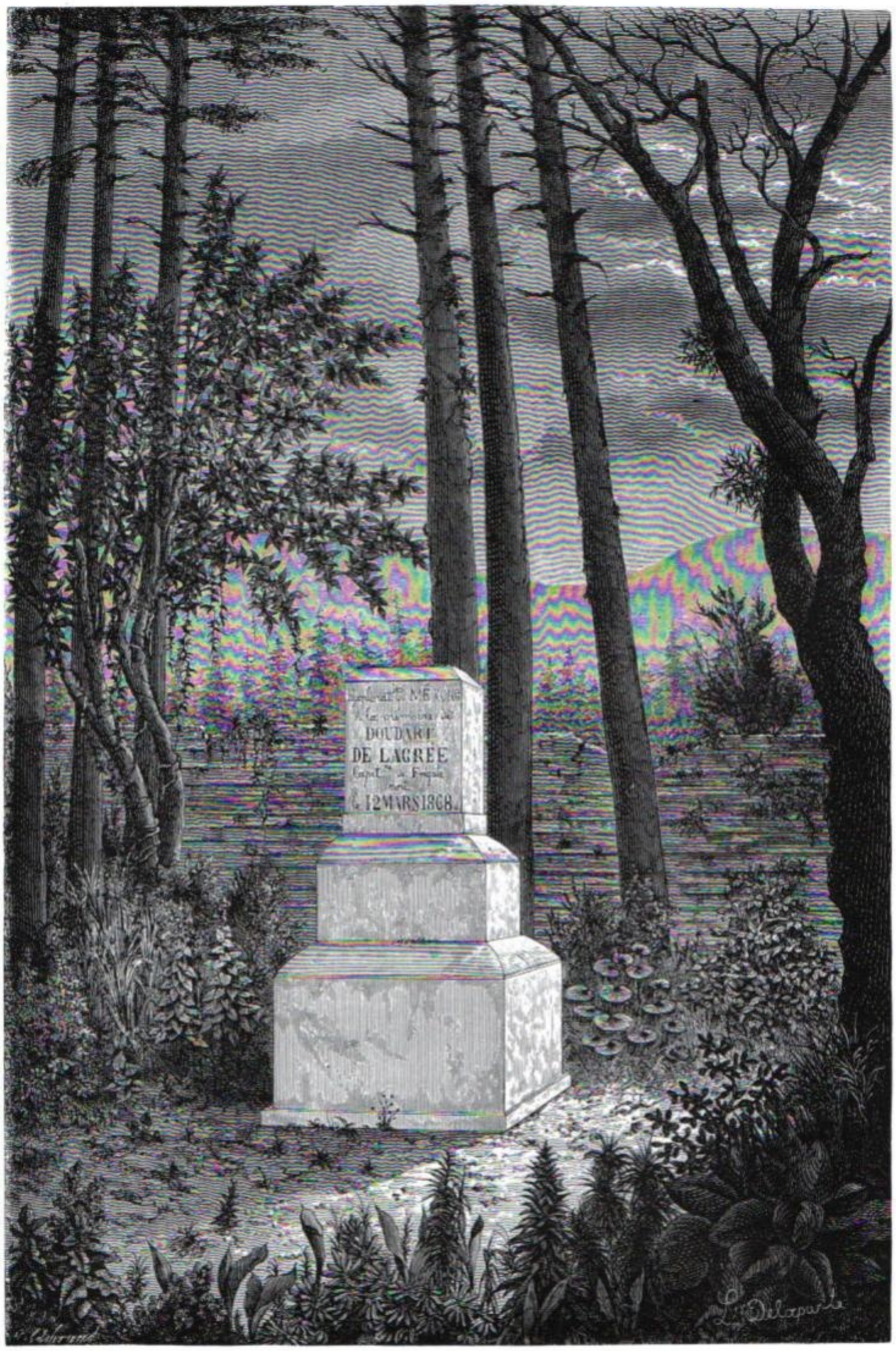


Plate 45 *The funeral monument of Commander de Lagrée in Tong-tchouen (drawing by L. Delaporte from nature).*

tchouen, which was interspersed by a few stony, shallow ravines. We met a caravan of merchants from Kiang-si. They were looking for a lead salt, whose Chinese name is *ouan-oua* and which is used in the production of porcelain in the south of Yunnan. The people from Kiang-si were the most prodigious migrants of China and the majority of the great inns that we met with in the cities or on the roads were managed by them.

According to the orders of the authorities of Tong-tchouen, all the mandarins ruling the market towns on our route had to honor us as guests of the emperor and envoys of a friendly nation. Unfortunately, I was unable to bring myself to adopt a manner appropriate to my situation as chief of the French mission, which I now was in the eyes of the Chinese. I continued as in the past to walk on foot, most often apart from our small caravan. The need to maintain a regular pace so as to be able to estimate the distance covered, and to isolate myself to avoid chatting and distractions, often put me far ahead. Thus I passed through the villages incognito, more concerned with consulting my sea compass and my watch than with the curious gestures of the farmers. My horse, which I rode on important occasions, served for the tired men of the escort on the road.[6] This lack of show sometimes brought about amusing accidents. On 8 April the mandarin of Ye-tche-sin, an official with blue insignia, believed he had to wait for me at a great distance from this small village. Surrounded by a numerous escort, he installed himself at the edge of the road, ready to come and salute the chief of the French mission as soon as he appeared. But, as usual, I was very far ahead of the column and delighted to escape under his nose from all the honors that he counted on presenting to me. Seeing me, his whole entourage started to laugh. Very far from assuming that I was the "big man" that they had to wait for, they took me for the purser who was going [ahead] to prepare the lodgings. My half-Chinese, half-European garb, my strange, bearded appearance, very much enlivened the spirits of the blue button and his followers. If I did not understand them, at least I guessed without difficulty [the sense of] the jokes they were making about me. I quietly walked on and soon got lost in the streets of the town, while the mandarin still waited on the road and in vain asked my porters and the other people of our caravan who successively marched past where Ngan ta-jen was.[7] Finally, Father Leguilcher arrived to put an end to his waiting, but he flummoxed him even more by telling him the truth. The poor official thought that I must be cruelly offended. He came back in great haste to apologize and calm down my irritation with gifts.

I laughed heartily at his discomfiture and the next day, when we left the town, he saluted my departure with musket salvos at the right time.

In Kiang-ti, on 9 April, we passed the Ngieou-nan, a river with deep fast waters which flowed into the Kin-cha Kiang twelve leagues from this point and drained the whole part of the plateau of Yunnan between Siun-tien and Ouei-ning. A ferryboat was installed on a cable which was thrown between the two banks in Kiang-ti. On the second day, we entered the great plain of Tchao-tong, after having seen deposits of peat and anthracite in Ma-tsao-cou. This plain was very well cultivated. Opium poppies occupied large tracts of land. But the small brooks which flowed here did not always furnish sufficient water for their agricultural needs.

On the tenth, after climbing the heights which surrounded the course of the Ngieou-nan Kiang, we entered a great plain which was interrupted by several irregular chains of small hills. In the evening, in the small village of Tao-guen, where we were to pass the night, we found a low-ranking mandarin sent to meet us by the authorities of Tchao-tong. This city was the political capital of one of the three sub-divisions or *tao* of the province of Yunnan, the *tong-tao* (*tao* of the east). The *tao-tai* (deputy-governor of the province) and the *fou* (prefect of the district) were absent because they were in mourning when we passed. [8]

On 11 April we entered Tchao-tong, where the *hien* received us very cordially, in the absence of the mandarins representing the province and the district.

We installed ourselves in the presbytery of an indigenous priest who was in charge of the small parish of the city. The crowd, as usual, displayed great curiosity and intrusiveness. We had to request guards from the interim *fou* and the posting of a bill sequestering the grounds of our residence. The *tche-hien*, the administrator of the specific district of Tchao-tong, paid us a visit as soon as we arrived and invited us for dinner the next evening. The meal had at least fourteen courses, without counting the cucumber seeds, the tangerines and the litchis which served as entrées. All the same, there was nothing new to [mention] to gourmets or amateurs of the eccentric [cuisine], except for pigeon eggs which I found exquisite and a special type of fish, caught in a nearby lake, which had a very special taste. During the meal, the women of our host attentively watched the faces of the foreigners through a screen. They couldn't help laughing more than once at our clumsiness in using the chopsticks and they must probably have wondered at people who, as

witnessed by their beards, were of an advanced age, undertaking such a long and dangerous journey.

Tchao-tong, like all other cities of this size in China, was surrounded by a fortified wall, rectangular in shape and about three kilometers in length. Considerable quarters lay lengthened the streets which ended at the gates of the city to the north, the east and the west. The city had never been taken by the Muslims and its population was consumed by a fierce hatred for the rebels of Ta-Ly. A military commander, sent some time ago by Ma ta-jen and like him a votary of the Koran, had been shown the door by the inhabitants of Tchao-tong, despite his protests of loyalty to the emperor. All of these cities of Yunnan kept their independent customs due to the intimate mixture which had occurred between the first Chinese settlers and the vigorous indigenous populations. The annals of the Mongol dynasty mentioned the people of Tchao-tong, of Tong-tchouen and of Ou-ting as forming, until the end of the thirteenth century, principalities which administered themselves and which shook off the weak authority of the viceroys of Yunnan at every favorable moment. In the vicinity of Tchao-tong lived native tribes which were called Houan Miao and which belonged to the same type as the Miao-tse.

The plain of Tchao-tong was one of the largest we traversed in Yunnan. It was very well cultivated. The fields of poppies sown to produce opium were widespread. The people complained of a lack of water. The plain was only watered, indeed, by very small brooks, almost dry at certain times of the year. It was rich with deposits of peat and anthracite.

A small pond very rich in fish lay to the south-west. We did not have a chance to taste its products.

Tchao-tong was one of the most important stages in the trade which was done between China and Yunnan. Large convoys of raw cotton, English or indigenous cotton cloth and salt from Se-tchouen met there with the metals, especially tin and zinc, which were mined in the vicinity of Tong-tchouen, the medicinal products that were collected in the west of Yunnan and the north of Tibet and the nests of an insect (*Coccus sinensis*) which provided the *pe-la* wax. It is known that this insect was reared on some kind of privet which grew in the mountainous parts of Yunnan and Se-tchouen, then it was moved to other trees, favorable to the production of wax, which were located in warmer regions. The nests must make the journey as quickly as possible to prevent the freshly hatched insects from dying before they

arrived at their new location. They were placed in big baskets sub-divided into several compartments and those who transported them often covered thirty or forty leagues at the double to preserve the fruit of their labors.

In Tchao-tong, we received a letter from Yang ta-jen, the military commander of Tong-tao who had received us in Tong-tchouen. He informed me of the receipt of the rifle I sent to him in recognition of the services he had rendered to Mr. de Lagrée during his illness and the help he had provided to Dr Joubert, under the difficult and painful circumstances in which the latter had found himself. Perhaps this note would be interesting to read. I give it as a sample of the style of writing in China:

To the very just brothers Ngan, Jou and Lo, [9]

I have learned by the letters of the mandarins Kong-yu-hong and Tao-tsin-tsin, [10] [of] your fortunate arrival in Tong-tchouen. I thank Ngan ta-jen for the rifle which he sent me. It is impossible for me to say to which point this gift has pleased me. I would have had the greatest pleasure in visiting His Excellency to express to him in a loud voice my gratitude: unfortunately, the necessity of opposing myself to the enterprises of the rebels imperiously retain me among my soldiers.

Allow me to express to you what a heartfelt and deep pain I felt at the death of His Excellency the French envoy La! [11] He did not fear to sacrifice his life for the good of his country. His memory must remain among the most illustrious. Thus I have learned without surprise that Ngan ta-jen had not wanted that the remains of La would remain in a foreign soil and that he desired to take them to his homeland. Therefore, I have given formal orders to Tao-tsin-tsin for him to place himself and all the soldiers and the necessary porters at your disposal. I have joined an officer to you to guard over you for the rest of your journey: he must see to your every desire.

Finishing, I renew all my regrets at not being able, because of my absence, to offer you myself when you return to Tong-tchouen an hospitality which is worthy of you. I hope that you will accept my apologies and not believe in ill will on my part. I address the most sincere wishes for your health and for your happiness to you. I respectfully salute you. I am, with the most grateful heart, your very humble brother,

Yang-chen-tsang.

This letter was accompanied by a beautiful black horse from the stables of Yang ta-jen, which he sent to me in exchange for the rifle. The animal had been led by hand from Tong-tchouen to Tchao-tong and arrived at the same time as the letter of his master. This letter and the gift testified to delicate feelings which their sender had not always practiced. I have already mentioned, I believe, the rumors in the country about his venality. With money, the Muslims easily reduced the military commander of Long-tao to inactivity. These rumors were accepted and believed in Peking, because a few months after our passage Yang ta-jen was relieved of his functions.

We got out of the plain of Tchao-tong by passing over a small chain of hills the relief of which was low in the south and much more pronounced in the north. At the foot of the northern flank, we entered a narrow and winding valley dominated on all sides by calcareous hills, the sides of which often rose straight up. Numerous villages were spread out in all the bends of this valley, which was watered by a small river. Others crowned the heights of their jagged walls. The whole region had successively been looted by the Man-tse, the Muslims, the Mino-tse, the Tchang-mao, [12] the Ho-liou, [13] never mind the pillaging done by imperial soldiers sent for its defense. The houses along the road were poor and dilapidated. Here and there, heads were stuck up on poles. The criminally executed were for the greater part unfortunate people who tried to escape the orders of the Chinese authorities and shirk military service. Despite the ruins everywhere, the population appeared to be large in number and traffic was busy. The valley took on a more and more picturesque appearance: the calcareous rocks rose in white spires or crowned all the horizons of the landscape with original shapes. Here and there, white cascades decked the rock walls with greenery. If the vegetation had been more vigorous, you would have thought it a valley in Tahiti. [14] But the flora had a more and more European character: we encountered cherry and apple trees.

Suddenly the brook, whose banks we were following, disappeared. The valley came to an end, the horizon widened: six hundred meters below us a wide forested valley opened up. We reached it by descending the zigzagging ramps of an excessively rapidly descending slope, cut into the rocky flanks of the plateau at the extremity of which we had arrived. At the foot of this sudden descent, a boiling torrent escaped from a deep cave and flowed into a big river coming from the west. We left the plateau of Yunnan to enter the low and warm regions of the valley of the Blue River.



Plate 46 *Miao-tse of Ta-kouan (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Ta-kouan hien, where we arrived the same evening, was a small valley picturesquely located on the right flank of heights which bordered the river that we joined, a river to which it had given its name.

The houses were ranged in the form of an amphitheater, above and below the long street which formed the principal artery and on which great animation reigned. The pagoda where we were put up was in the high sector of the town. From the top of the great staircase which led to the sanctuary, we discovered quite an extensive panorama. A fully prepared meal was waiting there for us and the mandarin of the place came the next day to pay us a visit, clothed in festive dress. This official, although belonging to the civil government, wore a military hat as a mark of the valor which he had displayed against the Ho-liou.

Ta-kouan had been occupied by the Muslims in 1862. After their expulsion, the remnants of their gangs joined the Lolo of the mountains and they fortified themselves in Oche-oua, some ten leagues to the south-west. From there, they ravaged and pillaged the surrounding country. Energetic measures appear to have been taken to assemble a military force capable of stopping these robberies: the numerous heads which we had seen exposed on bamboo sticks along our route were, they told us, those of deserters or rebellious recruits of the Chinese army, in the ranks of which they had attempted to re-establish discipline.

On 17 April we set off again. Some distance north of Ta-kouan, near the village of Kouang-ho-ki, the road crossed the river over a suspension bridge. This was the first of this kind that we had met in China: large iron chains were fitted into the abutments and tightened between pillars placed in a corresponding manner on both sides of the river. Iron bands attached the flooring to it. Thanks to the low elevation of the supporting points, these bridges displayed a curvature which bent in the opposite direction to that of European suspended bridges and they swayed a good deal. But their solidity, which depended in particular on the firm establishment of the abutments of the bridge, was in general satisfactory.

Miao-tse people inhabited the heights which dominated Ta-kouan ho on all sides. At a great elevation above the road, at the top of the overhanging rocks, we discovered admirably cultivated fields: we could not guess how they raised plows up to these small plateaus which were perched on top of perpendicular walls.

A considerable river, which appeared to be the principal watercourse of this whole basin, came to rejoin the Kouang-ho-ki: it was the river Co-kouy. It passed

through a region very rich in metals. The silver-carrying lead mines of Sin-cai-tse were famous all over China. Before the war, the drainage pumps alone provided work for more than twelve hundred workers. The hydrographic regime of this zone, eagerly exploited by the Chinese since the reign of Kien-long, had been completely transformed by deforestation. The elders confirmed that eighty years ago, they crossed the Co-kouy ho in Sin-cai-tse with dry feet, from stone to stone. Today this river was not fordable. Much lower, in Tong-co-kay, the men of fifty years of age recalled having heard from their grand-parents that they forded the river and that the trees formed arches over the river. It was now seven to eight meters deep. On the banks of the To-kouan ho, we found coal mining. In Kiao-tse-pa, situated a little distance to the west, were iron mines and forges producing cooking pots and basins, which were exported to Se-tchou fou.

On 20 April we arrived in La-oua-tan, a big, very active market town where navigation on the river began: a suspension bridge with a huge span connected one bank to the other. Lao-oua-tan was an important depot and it was the point where the metals from Yunnan were embarked. Light merchandise followed the overland route to Siu-tcheou fou. The river route required two or three transshipments. It was faster and perhaps more expensive.

We embarked in Lao-oua-tan on a big boat with a displacement of thirty to forty tons and we admired the skill with which the Chinese directed these heavy vessels in the passage of the rapids. By way of a rudder, they used huge paddles fixed in front, which they maneuvered together to double the effect of the rod and to turn the boat rapidly on a pivot in difficult moments. In two hours we reached Pou-eul-tou, a small port on the left bank of the river, which had changed its name and was now called the Houang Kiang.

While our boats and part of our escort continued their journey in a boat, we went overland and entered the small valley which led to the residence of the vicar apostolic of Yunnan. On this short stretch we admired the most varied and most picturesque landscapes: numerous springs spouted from the calcareous walls of the valley and, from fall to fall, they were absorbed by a silvery mud and did not reach the plain. The plateaus were stacked up in several stages, and were occupied by rich crops and pretty dwellings. The valley ended abruptly in a waterfall some hundred meters high.

We climbed a zigzag road cut in the valley's left flank and it was not without emotion that we saw the French flag, displayed in our honor, on the flag staff of

Mgr. Ponsot's house. Several gun-salutes greeted our arrival and made our horses rear. A few moments later we had the honor of shaking hands with the venerable prelate who had left France in the reign of Charles X.



Plate 47 *A Karen man (drawing by A. de Neuville, based on a photograph).*

The Catholic settlement of Long-ki was well situated and perfectly set up from the double point of view of security and communications. Placed on a height and surrounded by strong palisades, it was untouched as yet by all the gangs of



Plate 48 *A Karen woman (drawing by A. de Neuville, based on a photograph).*

freebooters which had devastated the country. The vigor of those who inhabited it and the European arms they deployed were, to tell the truth, the most solid defenses it possessed. Bear and leopard were quite numerous in the mountains of this part of Yunnan. A short distance to the east-north-east, on the flank of a hill which overlooked the Houang Kiang and which was called Tchen-fong-chan, stood the mission's seminary and school. They were attended by a reasonably large number of pupils. The young priests who were sent from France to augment the staff of the mission, came here to exercise the difficult gymnastics of the Chinese language for some time. In this unfortunate and troubled country, this small nucleus of educated, courageous men exercised a wholesome influence.

With a little effort and some more encouragement, they would be able to provide services to science that were as important as those they rendered to civilization. One of the missionaries of Long-ki, Mr. de Chataignon, had tried to establish an observatory and he had determined the latitude of the seminary using the length of the shadow, for want of more precise means. I have often regretted that books and instruments were not freely provided to these workers of good will, for whom the work was a real consolation for the deep isolation in which they lived. Thus the reader must not be surprised at how little geographic knowledge we possess of regions in which European missionaries have been living for more than two centuries.[15]

In Long-ki I was given a letter from Mr. Dabry, the French consul in Han-kéou, addressed to Mr. de Lagrée. Mr. Dabry had learned about our arrival in China and he had hastened to send his congratulations to the chief of the French mission.

In Tchen-fong-chan the missionaries gave us a small bear cub which was only a few weeks old when it had been caught by a hunt in the paternal den. The surrounding mountains were inhabited by three species of bear which the Chinese designated by the names of *Khenou hiong*, *Lao hiong* and *Ten hiong*. The last species, whose name meant "the man bear" was the most feared and gave rise to the most fantastic stories. The *Ten hiong* knew, they said, how to imitate the gait and voice of man and in this way managed to lure into their dens travelers who were naive enough to believe in these friendly demonstrations. There were also leopard whose spotted skin often served as carpets in the *yamen*.

The bear cub of Tchen-fong-chan was happily welcomed by our Annamites and immediately overwhelmed with attention. Its agility and intelligence entertained us for the rest of the journey. In Shanghai, Father David, a scientist working in the

hospital, whose name was well known in the natural history world, [16] told me that it belonged to a species by the name of *Ursus tibetanus*. Unfortunately, this poor animal that I intended donating to the Paris zoo, died on arrival at Suez from the heat of the voyage up the Red Sea.

We left our hosts on 25 April. Father Leguilcher obtained from Mgr. Ponsot permission to accompany us to Siu-tcheou. We joined our boat and our escort who were waiting a short distance from Tchen-fong-chan. After an hour and a half of navigation, we reached Sin-tan where we had to carry out our first short transshipment and where a porter and a population of oarsmen lived. These rapids marked the limits of the provinces of Se-tchouen and Yunnan on the left bank of the Houang Kiang. On the right bank, the border was higher, at the village of Tong-co-kay. Half an hour in a boat from Sin-tan, there was a second rapids, called Kieou-long-tan or "rapids of the nine Dragons", which was more than half a league in length. These rapids were caused either by a sudden increase in the slope of the terrain or by a seam of rocks which happened to pass through the bed of the river. In the village of Kieou-long-tan, we chose the boat which had to take us at last to Siu-tcheou-fou. It was ready at 5 p.m. An hour later we reached Houang kiang, a small town, where we stayed the night and where the curiosity of the crowd and the insolence of the boys obliged us to seek recourse to the mandarin of the place.

Early in the morning of the next day, we continued our navigation on the Houang kiang, to near its confluence with the Blue River. Rocky outcrops made the waters boil and the current race. Our boats had to make vigorous efforts to achieve this dangerous passage without mishap; the smallest erroneous movement of the tiller would lose the vessel. These were the last difficulties: immediately thereafter we entered the calm waters of the Kin-cha Kiang. Opposite the mouth of the Houang Kiang there was a big village on the left bank, Ngan-pien, built in the place where Ma-hou fou, the old district capital, had been.

After three and a half hours sailing on the Blue River, we arrived in Siu-tcheou fou. This city, which was the most populous of all those we found and which might have about one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, was built at the confluence with the Ming Kiang, a river flowing from Tchen-tou, the capital of Se-tchouen.

Consequently, from the commercial point of view, it was in easy relationship to the center of this rich province, while on the other side, the Houang Kiang and the Yunnan ho brought here the produce of Yunnan. In Siu-tcheou fou, we saw the

milling around that is so characteristic of Chinese crowds in all their activity, whereas elsewhere we had found them enfeebled by the disasters of the war. It was not that the trade in this city was unaffected by it. The interruption to the metallic ore mining in Yunnan had removed one of its prime resources. Copper which, before the Muslim rebellion, was sold in Siu-tcheou for eight to nine *taels* for one hundred Chinese pounds, cost eighteen when we passed through. Opium from Yunnan, which was more or less all that was consumed in this part of Se-tchouen, reached a price of four *taels* per kilogram. The increase in the price of rice, to which the growing of opium poppies had contributed a great deal, was also very considerable.

There was one specific reason contributing greatly to the liveliness of the city when we arrived in Siu-tcheou fou.

The candidates for the military baccalaureate, gathered in Siu-tcheou four, would not allow such a rare event as the presence of European barbarians within the walls of the city to pass without making a profit out of it. These foreigners, who had been able to traverse a region as troubled as Yunnan without incident, and whose weapons and bearing had been sufficient, despite their small number, to make the redoubtable sultan of Ta-Ly respect them, these same foreigners should not expect the same immunity from the young martial elite of Se-tchouen, gathered to bid for [contest entry to] the first class of the Chinese military guard. They would like to see these terrible Europeans against whom they might one day have to fight, face to face and from close up.

At the gate of the pagoda which the authorities of the city had given us as lodgings, I organized a strict watch to avoid the importunities of the crowd. The crowd's curiosity—for the cadets this was a new game—led them to see who could get past the guard and reach us. One of them managed this under some pretext or other; he got into our sitting and dining room. I was alone or almost alone at work there. The cadet started to follow all my movements, not losing any opportunity to break all the rules of etiquette for the benefit of the servants and Chinese soldiers who had come to show their deep scorn for the barbarians. I first asked him to leave: he laughed in my face. I pushed him to the door. He threw himself on me. But two Annamites, who had come to my call, grabbed him and held him down. The poor cadet was fuming with rage: and yelling angrily but nevertheless begged pardon and asked to be let go. But the insult was too great to let pass, especially in front of the Chinese public. I had a few witnesses enter so

that the punishment of the guilty man would be seen to be done and I had him given ten cuts of the cane on his bare back, which drew blood. Then I forgave him and sent him out, both furious and scarred. The relatively gentle rebuke I had given to his insults made a great stir in the city. Wise people thought that I had reacted too mildly to this brainless young man who had broken all the rules of Chinese hospitality with no provocation. The cadets swore to avenge the loss of face I had inflicted on their friend. The walls were covered with posters threatening us foreigners. They invited everyone with spirit to combine in dealing out justice to this band of adventurers. It was important for the honor of the Chinese that no foreign devils should leave Siu-tcheou alive.

I informed the prefect of the city of these threats. But I relied much more on the decision and vigilance of our Tagals and Annamites than on the Chinese authorities.



Plate 49 *A native woman from Ban-kon-han, the southern border of Yunnan (drawing by Gilbert, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

On 5 May we gathered for a dinner to bid farewell to the French priests in Siu-tcheou who constituted almost the entire staff of the missions of Yunnan and western Se-tchouen. The soup was barely served when the guards told me that a large group was at the door of the pagoda demanding to speak to Ngan ta-jen. I went into the hall and had the impatient people, whose cries I heard, interrogated. They told me that a messenger had come with news from Yunnan which I would be very interested to know. I opened one of the doors and stepped outside, saying that the messenger was welcome and that he had only to come and speak to me. A great silence fell, then suddenly four or five individuals stepped from the crowd and towards me with lances, sticks and even planks and benches from the neighboring houses. But at the same time, behind me, four or five saber-bayonets appeared, which immediately made the aggressors turn tail. This happened very quickly, and before I had even had time to draw my sword, the Annamites quickly charged in front of me and the scared crowd started fleeing in all directions.

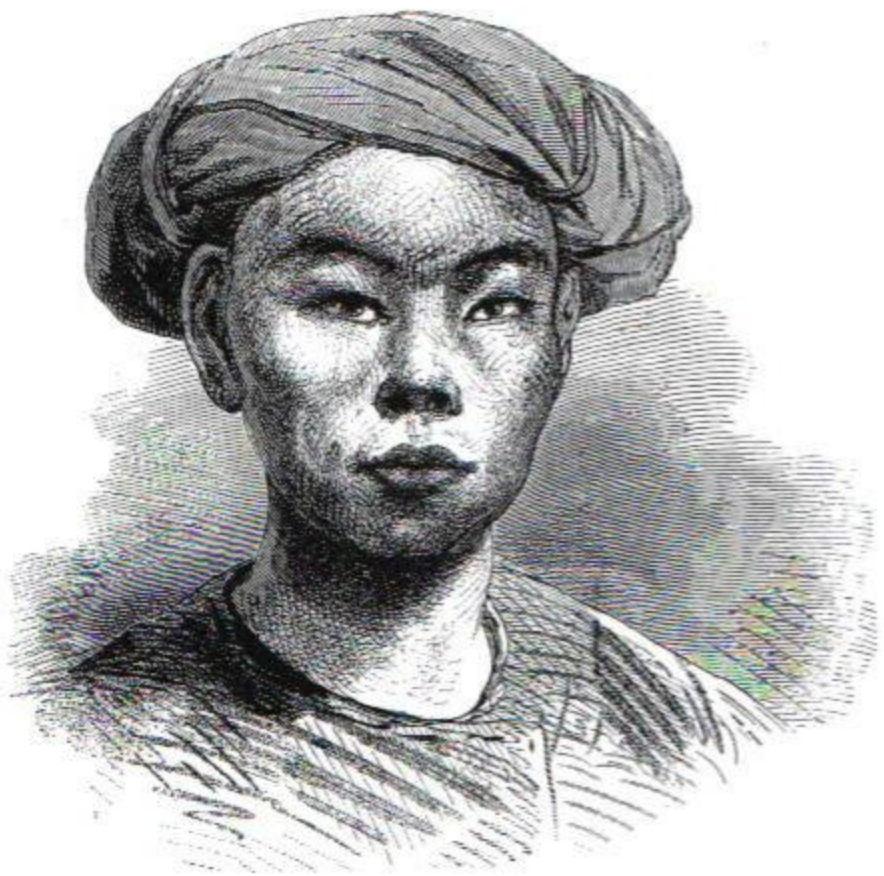


Plate 50 *A Chinese of Yunnan (drawing by A.. de Neuville, based on L. Delaporte).*

All our companions had come running on hearing the noise, more frightened than we were, and begged us to call off our men who were at risk of falling into some ambush by pursuing the people. But the guards were so enraged at these people who were enjoying themselves by tormenting them day and night, that they would not listen. They came back to the lodgings only when they had completely cleared the street and the terror they inspired was such that all the houses stayed shut for the rest of the evening and night, the whole town so quiet that we might have been in the desert.

Thus we did not find among the authorities of Siu-tcheou fou the same cordiality and concern as we had met in Yunnan. The population showed a more intrusive and relentless curiosity. These new conditions became worse and worse as we came closer to the coast.

In Siu-tcheou I rented two junks for our return, one for the escort, the other for the officers. They were to take us only as far as Tchong-kin fou, the commercial center of Se-tchouen. On 8 May, Mr. de Lagrée's coffin arrived in Siu-tcheou fou and was immediately put on one of the junks. The next day, we bade farewell to the worthy missionaries of Siu-tcheou fou. Father Leguilcher, who had shared our hardships for more than two months, was the last to shake hands with the Commission. We said farewell—perhaps good-bye—our eyes filled with tears.

These farewells luckily were not my last dealings with Father Leguilcher and even today I still hope one day to see this good priest again, to whom we had jokingly given the title of expedition chaplain. He was sent me news several times since my return to France.

The reader will perhaps not be unhappy to read here a few extracts from these letters which confirm the good impression that the French Commission left wherever it passed. The reader will also find some interesting details of the political situation of Yunnan in them which complete the story of the journey:

> I stayed a long time in Long-ki after you left, my dear commander, but the boring quiet did not go down well with me. I regained my natural vigor only when I returned to my old style of living. So I set off, crossing torrents at great risk, climbing the steepest slopes, descending precipitous ravines, following Co-kouy roads that were perhaps even more bumpy than those we traveled together of which you surely must have kept a bad memory. I have seen a formidable flood taking the hanging bridge and a great number of houses of Lao-oua tan. My horse was carried away by the current when it swam across a ravine and it had a terrible fall over a precipice. In short, if I have not left any blood on the bushes of the road, I have larded all my paths with an abundance of sweat.
>
> There I was then back in my beloved Si-tao,[17] quite exhausted, it is true, but, thank God, full of life and courage. The conclusion which seems

appropriate to draw from this new peregrination will no doubt give you pleasure. You remember, do you not, the anxious warnings of certain persons and the fears that they tried to inspire me with. You will pay dearly, they told me, coming back alone, for the triumphant progress you made with the French mission across the territory of the Chinese mandarins. Well, these predictions have luckily proved false: everywhere I was recognized as the interpreter of the expedition, I have received, from both high and low only expressions of good will and sympathy.

You remember, dear Mr. Garnier, that I hoped for the best. You will be happy to know what happened. I will give you an example. You have not forgotten the village of Kiang-ti. [18] When I returned there, the floods had broken the painter of the ferryboat and set it adrift. The river had become a real torrent. A daring, but greedy oarsman held the travelers to ransom. For his part, the Tsong-ye fined him. [19] Their quarrel went on and on and threatened to hold us up. More than a hundred people were waiting and cursing at the foot of this steeply rising flank which we climbed together by wading through slop to our waists. The boatman refused to take them across, under the pretext of the mandarin's orders. "Take me over alone," I told him, "and I will go to the mandarin to settle this matter." He quickly did this: my card and two capons did the trick. The mandarin who remembered that I had accompanied you, granted all that I asked him with perfect charm and all the merchants, who were finally able to cross the river, came to thank me effusively . . . .

In Ta-Ly [Father Leguilcher continued], our brief appearance had caused great agitation. Immediately after our departure the Muslims implemented gigantic defense works. They had perfectly observed all the sketches that Mr. Delaporte had drawn and as they especially remarked Hiang kouan in his drawings, they had begun to raise the walls of this place three meters and also those of Hia kouan, of which they were convinced you also took the ground plan using binoculars. On the mountainside, they have built two new formidable fortresses because the monastery with the three towers attracted your attention so much.

Finally, because the French are to be feared as much by sea as on land, they have made plans to construct all along the edge of the lake, from Hiang houan to Hia houan, one hundred coastal batteries. These works are urgent, they said, because Ngan ta-jen will soon come back at the head of

an army. A coincidence which might validate this rumor is the coming to Yunnan with his weapons of a man called Dupuis. [20] . . . You understand that with such dispositions and the suspicious nature of the Muslims, I cannot return to my old parish. Moreover, the English expedition last year has been for me a new and troublesome complication. These gentlemen were carrying a letter for me and the sultan got to know it . . . . Perhaps you will not be troubled by having some details on the movements of the English travelers. The expedition conducted by Captain Sladen has arrived, after many difficulties and hold-ups, at the first border town of Yunnan which the Chinese call Teng-ye tcheou and the Burmese Mo-mein. It has been received well by the Muslim chief of this town. The English have made arrangements with him to assure the free passage of merchant caravans and Sladen has agreed in the name of his sovereign to send a mission to Rangoon to ratify and complete a convention outlined in Mo-mein. But in Ta-Ly they say clearly that the sultan has forbidden Mr. Sladen to continue his journey and that he has ordered him to leave . . . .

To sum up the news that I received several months ago, I conclude that the Muslims are losing ground everywhere. The plain of Yong-tchang itself belongs to the Reds and the Whites remained besieged in the city . . . .[21]

Tchong-kin fou—Han-kéou—Shanghai—Saigon

The most recent news proclaimed the success of the Imperial troops in Yunnan and confirmed Father Leguilcher's letter. It was mostly thanks to the European arms and artillery which the viceroy of this province had bought and to the help of a few Frenchmen brought by Mr. Dupuis. As I write these lines, only the cities of Teng-yue tcheou and Ta-Ly still belong to the rebels. [22] The latter had sent a mission to England to win the British government to their cause. If they got the help they requested, it would be a disaster for civilization and commerce in these interesting regions.

I will now briefly relate our journey from Siu-tcheou fou to Han-kéou. We entered a region which had already been visited by European travelers and on



Plate 51 *A native of Ban-kon-han (drawing by Gilbert, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

which records were already available.[23] From Siu-tcheou on, the river slowed down, and at this season, shallow waters flowed in long meanders. A few islands and banks interrupted its course. The towns were busy and crowded. Villages, market towns and cities succeeded each other continuously. Navigation was busy and on both banks of the river numerous singing boatmen pulled junks which were

ascending the river. Between Siu-tcheou and Kiang-ngan, we saw many calcareous caves on the heights which dominated the river. Formerly they served as tombs for the Man-tse populations to whom this region belonged. The Tche-choui ho which flowed into the Great River[24] in Na-ki, brought big quantities of wood for the construction yards of Lou-tcheou, from the mountains of Kouy-tcheou. The latter city, where we arrived on 10 May, was the residence of a *tao-yai* or deputy-governor of the province. It stood at the confluence with the Tsong-Kiang, a great river which traversed the plain of Tchen-tou, the capital of Se-tchouen. It was the center of a considerable trade involving salt from the mines at Tse-liou. This place was famous all over China for its saline water wells and its oil wells. The latter were sources of petroleum which supplied the fuel for the evaporation of the salty waters. The extraction methods of the Chinese and the way they drill the wells, the depth of which equalled that of our artesian wells, has already been described long ago. I need not report this here. I am happy to add that the gangs of Tchang-mao, who around 1862 invaded Se-tchouen, set these petroleum sources alight. The fire spread several leagues around and lasted several months. They managed to extinguish the flames and resume the interrupted exploitation of the saline works only by bribing a large number of unfortunates a lot of money to brave the burning soil and air filled with smoke and flames, in order to throw wet blankets over the openings from which the petroleum spouted; and thus they extinguished the fire. More than a hundred people died in these attempts.

I cannot think that in the whole of Europe we could find ten people whom we might persuade for money to face certain death in this way. But no other race pushes contempt for life as far as the Chinese do. Let somebody assure the future of a poor man's wife and children and he will agree at once, even without sadness, to a most appalling death.

Nevertheless the same Chinese, capable of true heroism in their public life, hardy in times of suffering, with no fear of death, had always held the profession of arms in the utmost contempt. Soldiers could only be recruited from the dregs of the population and they lived in conquered country off the land that it was their duty to defend; and they often ran away in battle. The list of educated people who have braved death for telling their tyrants the truth runs long throughout the history of China. But war heroes are absent from this list. It could not be otherwise if one considers the very great superiority which this nation had over all the others around. The enormous respect arising from this and the deeply ingrained feeling that it

was by far the superior race, around which all others were content to orbit as satellites, had assuaged those touchy sensitivities which are maintained elsewhere by more closely balanced levels of attainment. The Mongol Manchu conquests had never seriously threatened the true autonomy of the culture. The sentiment of patriotism is born from the consciousness of danger and, historically, the Chinese had never needed to fear for their independence. From there derived this complete absence of military qualities, this moral slide which relegated the most noble sides of the soul to the second rank: self-denial, disinterestedness and devotion are outweighed by egotism and cupidity. [25]

Lou tcheou gave its name to the river which was indiscriminately called from this point Ta Kiang, "the Great River", or Lou Kiang, "the Blue River". From Lou tcheou we found many seams of coal on the banks of the river, many of which are mined.

On 13 May we disembarked in Tchong-kin fou. This city, the commercial center of Se-tchouen, was built in the form of an amphitheater at the confluence of the great river and an important tributary which came from Pao-king. Its population could be estimated at three hundred thousand souls. We had to repel hostile demonstrations of the crowd which threw stones at the junk carrying Mr. de Lagrée's coffin. Our Annamites arrested one of the hooligans and aided by two members of the Commission, revolvers at the ready, I took the reprobate through the crowd to the Chinese authorities, asking them for exemplary punishment. We stayed at the vast and comfortable residence of Mgr. Desflèches, the vicar apostolic of eastern Se-tchouen. His bishop's palace, destroyed in a riot, had been rebuilt by the Chinese government which had spared no expense to make it safe and convenient. High walls protected it from the rest of the city and we relaxed, in the shelter of the great courtyards which brought air and light inside, in security and tranquillity which our preceding terrors made us appreciate deeply. While the Christians of Tchong-kin busied themselves with finding us a large junk which would replace those that had brought us, and carry us to Han-kéou, I sent a report for the governor of Cochinchina to Shanghai, telling him of Mr. de Lagrée's death, the main incidents which had marked our journey to Ta-Ly and of our coming return.

Tchong-kin fou was the biggest Chinese city that we had ever seen. Although it had received visits from a few Europeans, the curiosity of the crowd was far from satisfied and we saw a renewal of the scenes which, so far, had marked our passage in every populous center in China. They almost took a turn as troublesome as in

Lin-ngan, where I was subjected, the reader may remember, to a virtual stoning. The boats chartered in Siu-tcheou left us in Tchong-kiu, where we could easily find a big junk which would take us down the river without a new transshipment as far as Han-kéou, where European steam navigation begins. While waiting for this big junk to be put at our disposal, whether by the local authorities, or the missionaries, we stayed at a city inn. I placed three Annamites on guard over the coffin of Commander de Lagrée, which was embarked on the smallest of our vessels.

We had been barely a quarter of an hour at the inn when I was told that a brawl had broken out between the Annamites guarding the junks and the populace. They had thrown stones at the coffin. Our men, having caught one of the hooligans, had tied him up and were holding him in the brig. However, a menacing crowd was gathering on the bank and seemed likely to set the prisoner free. Accompanied by Messrs. Delaporte, de Carné and two men of the escort, I went to the place. We had some problems in jostling through the crowds that filled the narrow city streets we traversed. An ocean of bobbing heads seethed on the sloping beach between the walls and the bank of the river. Broken shouts, clamor and menacing cries arose from it. From time to time a few stones splashed around our junks. The latter were some distance from the bank and on their bows we saw our Annamites, standing upright, their weapons at rest, impassive.

When we arrived, the crowd broke ranks and silence fell. We went straight to the junks: I congratulated the Annamites on their resolution and I had the prisoner disembark. I gave him to understand that the least cry for help or attempt to escape would get him a bullet in the head and we took him back to the inn with us. The startled crowd, still silent, let us pass without daring to close in on these five foreigners who braved their fury with so much audacity. The crowd followed us to the door of our residence which shut in their faces, without stopping us. I informed the local authorities of the insult which had been offered to a French officer's coffin. An insult even more serious because of the reverence for the memory of the dead in China. I was ready to deliver the guilty man into the hands of his native judges if they could assure me that he would later get the punishment he deserved. The *Tchi-hien* of the city gave me an evasive answer: his dislike of Europeans, they told us, was notorious and we could not expect much from him. The crowd in front of the inn grew ever more menacing. Traffic could no longer pass. They worked each other up against this handful of foreigners who dared arrest a citizen of Tchong-kin. The few Chinese Christians who had come on behalf of the

missionaries to offer their services, begged me to submit. We had to yield for fear of remaining prisoners, in our turn. So I released my prisoner to the *Tchi-hien*'s soldiers. It is more than probable that they deliberately let him escape into the crowd. The atmosphere calmed down little by little. When night fell, we went in closed chairs to the Catholic mission. It was situated on top of one of the hills, on the slopes of which huddled the city's houses, in the form of an amphitheater, displaying the crenelated line of its battlements. In this calm, vast residence we again found the solitude and tranquillity that the lunacy and madness of the crowds made so precious, ever since we had arrived in China. Mgr. Desflèches, the vicar apostolic of eastern Se-tchouen, was on an episcopal journey. He returned two days later and offered the amenities of his residence with cordial warmth, which is gratefully remembered. Thanks to his ability and energy, the mission of Tchong-kin prospered mightily.

The highest authorities of the province held the vicar in esteem and deference. Mgr. Desflèches knew how to deflect prejudices, instead of attacking them head on. His assessment of men and things in China bespoke an open mind, devoid of passion. The influence which such men deployed around themselves was eminently beneficent and could contribute to a lowering of the barriers which exist between China and Europe. We deplored, for both civilization and religion itself, that there were not more of them.[26] The missionaries had shown [us in] Sou-tcheou a Chinese pamphlet that was most insulting to Europeans. All the missionary acts of Christians were interpreted there as quite loathsome. Each mission on principle maintained a catechist, a local medical doctor who traveled the countryside to peddle remedies while baptizing any children he believed to be in mortal danger, if the opportunity presented itself. According to the Catholic faith, these were so many little beings saved from limbo and sent to paradise. It was not surprising that this practice had appeared to be fatal to the health of the children. Thus, the pamphlet of which I spoke vilified the Christian baptizers as agents paid by Europeans to collect the brains, eyes and hearts of dead children. The author alleged that they made medicines from these substances. "He himself has been witness of these satanic preparations and can testify to the crudeness of the customs and the unthinkable depravity of the Western barbarians. He has lived in concubinage with the Queen of England herself, who naturally, was very flattered to attract the attentions of a son of the Celestial Empire."[27]

In contrast to this absurd filth, intended only to discredit Europe in the eyes of the Chinese public who read it, Mgr. Desflèches showed us a pamphlet written in

a completely opposite vein, in which the author countered anti-European prejudices with infinite good sense and high spirits and stressed the benefits of all kinds which would grow from friendly relations with us, finally clearly confirming the superiority of us foreigners in all industrial crafts and warfare.

When European commerce, which so far has been limited to the Chinese of the coastal provinces, has opened up direct access to the interior, the benefits which the Chinese will derive from it are the best argument against xenophobia presented in the Tchong-kin [Sou-tcheou, Tran. note] pamphlet. This city was the trade center of Se-tchouen province. Its population, which was about 300 000 souls, and its wealth were proverbial, and are sure to increase tenfold, when the physical and political obstacles still opposing the development of steam navigation on the Blue River disappear. Indeed, the river has rapids and gorges below Tchong-kin which impede, without rendering impossible, the opening up of rapid communication between the coast and the very borders of Tibet by way of this magnificent river artery.

Mgr. Desflèches, who had been on a pastoral journey, did not arrive in Tchong-kin until the seventeenth of May. He was willing to repay the sum which the Ma ta-jen had loaned us in Yunnan and which I was to transfer, on my arrival in Shanghai, to the account of the Missions Etrangères.

With all the unsettled affairs of the Commission thus finally taken care of, we left on 18 May for Han-kéou. We spent the next night at Fou-tcheou, a considerable city at the mouth of the Kian Kiang, a river flowing from Koui-yang, the capital of Koui-tcheou.

On 20 and 21 May, we stopped in Tchoung-tcheou and in Ouan hien. In Tchoung-tcheou, an important city on the left bank of the river, between Tchong-kin and Koui-tcheou, I met the Chinese Thomas Kô, who was to remain attached for two years, in his capacity as a well-read man, to the scientific mission over which I presided. It was already pitch dark when our junk tied up at the quay of the city. A Chinese who spoke Latin fluently asked to speak to me: he told me that since the priest who managed Tchoung-tcheou parish was away, he felt, as catechist, it was his duty to offer us hospitality and put himself entirely at our disposal. Our rooms were ready in the presbytery and sedan chairs awaited us on the quay. I was touched by the open manner and intelligent air of this young Christian. While declining his kind offers, I detained him for a while to talk. He had the greatest desire to go to Europe and France. His imagination presented these Western regions where his

religious masters had originated in the brightest colors. For my part, I felt acutely the need to have a well-read Chinese at my side to help translate the written documents which I had brought back from our journey through the Celestial Empire. and to inject local color and true impressions about people and things into the story. The most accurate memories easily become indistinct when, back in one's homeland, one must fight so-to-speak against the familiar, to describe clearly and impartially countries that are so different from one's own. Only the contrasting opinions of a foreigner allow one to re-establish balance and to appreciate impartially what one has seen. Thus I proposed to Thomas Kô, my new-found partner, that he come with us to Saigon. I had no doubt that the governor of Cochinchina would agree to pay him to help me with the preparation of the report of our expedition.[28] Thomas accepted eagerly and asked for a few days to put his affairs in order. We were able to continue our journey without him: he arranged to meet me in Han-kéou.

Shortly after our departure from Tchoung-tcheou, we met four priests from the Missions Etrangères who were going up river in a small boat, headed for Se-tchouen and Kong-tcheou. These young evangelists, very fresh from the Saint-Sulpice, had already adopted Chinese dress. They had been placed in the care of a local catechist assigned to answer for them everywhere and to redress their ignorance of the language and customs. Chinese Christians undertake the formerly very dangerous task of escorting European priests to the interior at their own expense and with great devotion. We heartily welcomed our compatriots and wished them good luck. That same evening, in Ouan hien, we passed the large, comfortable junk of the Anglican missionaries who, we were told, were going to Tchen-tou, the capital of Se-tchouen. These gentlemen were happy, instead of preaching the Gospel, to sell Chinese bibles at very low cost everywhere they went along their route. I would nevertheless be very surprised if the bibles that had been spread around in this manner made a single Christian convert. The Protestant missionaries relied too much on providence to enlighten the minds of their readers. In any case, this method of proselytising was easier and entailed fewer complications for diplomacy than that to which the Catholic priests lend themselves.

On the other hand, there are no people more fond of reading than the Chinese and it was for this reason that the Holy Scriptures of Europe excited both their curiosity and their interest.



Plate 52 *Thomas Kô, the Chinese interpreter of the commission (drawing by E. Bayard, based on a photograph).*

This passion for reading explained the influence exerted by the literate classes in China. But this institution, entrusted with every political and administrative function, and to which people were recruited by examination, had sadly decayed from the idea that people had gained of it formerly. Over-respectful guardians of tradition, resentful of any innovation, the educated class had greatly connived at the disastrous isolation in which [condition] all the living forces of the country had decayed. The highest principles are corrupted in application, if they are never

put to the test and without novelty in any debate. Constant harking back to the past discourages innovation by condemning all progress as "building castles in Spain". No new ideas, no progress can come from the exclusive, repetitive study of classical books and ancient tradition. From this soil, which was initially rich but in time exhausted, a civilization had sprung up that withered on the vine. After rejecting anything from outside with scorn, educated Chinese today resisted the introduction of European ideas from fear. Their instinct told them that the vain superiority that they had displayed before the masses and their prestige, built up over so many centuries, would soon wither if exposed to the glare of modern science and so, fearing adjustments would be needed to preserve their position, they preferred to delay [these] by all possible means.

There was nothing so absorbing or useless as the labor undertaken by a Chinese to reach the high position which the title *han-lin* or doctor conferred in China. After long years of study, what has he learned? History, medicine, science? Nothing at all useful, and he does not care about that: he is just learning to read and now he will have the key to all treasures in his hands. But hardly does he possess it completely than he dies at the task, leaving behind a reputation for great erudition.

It is surely true that the ideographic writing of Chinese is one of the most powerful reasons for the miscarriage of their civilization. This hieroglyphic mode of rendering thought which seems at first more natural than the breaking down into sounds permitting, with the help of some thirty signs, the inscription of all the emissions of the voice, has drawn them into a system of amazing complexity, in which their ingenuity seems to revel but whose study becomes more difficult by the day. The ideas that you can absorb from the peculiar significance of a single ideogram are always rather limited and absolute abstraction is only possible with added conventions which are slow to develop and always have a confused scope. In any case, how many blankets would smother a willingness to think if it must file and retain more than thirty thousand different signs before manifesting itself to the outside world! Moreover, to read the works of the ancients easily, he must know a considerably larger number still! It is very hard to express any new idea or scientific fact clearly, if it can be done at all. Metaphysical speculation, which is not a Chinese talent, and exact science, for which they have, by contrast, a marked ability, achieve only foggy interpretation, or at least remain arbitrary with such a mode of writing.

Education, which was widespread in China where the smallest village had a school and where totally illiterate people were much rarer than in Europe, was

thus reduced to learning to read. There were many gradations in mastering this first of sciences and the respectful admiration of the public was reserved for those who, reaching the top of the science, could hesitantly read or stumble through the old books, sometimes even without a dictionary. The mandarins could do this and so they were held in public esteem. However, nothing was more just, because only they could explain the laws, read the emperor's orders, send letters, in brief handle the fine brush which so laboriously puts thought on paper without risk of the troublesome ambiguities which an ignorant person would commit.

Suppose for a moment that the Latin alphabet were universally admitted in China and that the principal Chinese and European books were written in this manner in the language of the mandarins. In fifteen days a child could learn to read—the experiment has already been done. A whole world of ideas and new feelings would enlighten this people who are so fond of reading, who today pass their lives spelling out words. It would be like a trail of fire traversing the whole Empire and the invincible prejudices which are today maintained so carefully by certain literate people, the grudges, hatred and contempt built up over long ages *vis-à-vis* foreigners, all those barriers which make China a world hermetically closed to external influence, would fall as if by magic. The only event comparable to so great a social revolution would be the invention of printing in Europe.

We believe this is the prime remedy that must be prescribed for this sick civilization, the only one that can rouse it from its lethargy and immobility and put it in touch with the outside world. The day this antidote is applied on a large scale, the great aristocrats of literacy, who today personify resistance to progress and whose decadence increases daily, will lose all prestige.

When the Chinese are better informed about the West, they will understand its superior power. When relations, by now more frequent, at the same time have taught them what immense profits they can expect, their feeling as a unique nation will probably be reborn. Their intelligence and practical sense will soon show them the need to tighten those bonds which formerly held the *one hundred families* together, as much to pursue the commercial and industrial struggle to everyone's gain, as for resisting military assaults and maintaining the right to survive as an independent race. Today, the immense resources of their vast Empire are spent aimlessly and despoiled by corrupt officials. Wisely used, they would suffice to place China immediately on a level with the most powerful European nations. Given the spirit of initiative and enterprise its population possesses, this country

only needs able administrators to see its wounds heal themselves. It has already made an appeal to European traders to fight the leprosy of bribery which gnaws away at it and this first trial has been crowned with success. Such is the way in which it must persevere with the support of Europe, to re-establish stability and peace in its provinces. In European schools Chinese who will break with the traditions of the past will soon be educated, and will feel that the best remedy for the misery of over-population and the sudden changes in economic balance which translate in the interior to frightful human upheavals, is to throw open wide the gates of the Empire to industry and foreign trade, to encourage emigration which would later bring back to the native turf a wealth of new ideas and fruitful crafts. [29]

But it is time to end this digression to take up the story of our journey which in any case is nearing its end.

From Ouan hien, the river narrowed between two walls of rocks. A violent wind opposed our progress. We arrived in Loui-tcheou fou on the twenty-second, at 9 p.m. This city, built on a narrow plateau thirty to forty meters above the river, was encircled on all sides by high mountains. Its surroundings were rich, we were told, in metal ores. There was a customs post here. In 1866 it charged an excise duty of six percent on the value of goods imported into Se-tchouen and a little less for goods exported. The most important product of the province was raw silk. At that time, it amounted to sixty or seventy thousand kilos and this seemed small compared to the province's total production. The customs post of Koui-tcheou then yielded from ten to twelve millions per year.

In Koui-tcheou fou we passed a few pleasant hours with Father Vainçot, a missionary apostle. He pointed out to our geologist the interesting paleontological remains which were contained in the caves of the vicinity.

We left Koui-tcheou in the afternoon of 23 May. Very soon, down river from the city, the river was more and more enclosed. High rocks rose up vertically on its banks. Its width shrank to less than one hundred meters; its depth was very great and the current very weak. The towpaths, which till then had run along the banks, now disappeared. Almost continuous easterly winds favored the ascent of boats, which substituted sails for the towrope during this season. Other travelers have already described the awe-inspiring appearance of the Blue River in the region of the rapids. High walls of granite or of lava hemmed in its waters, the width of which narrowed to one or two hundred meters, while its depth was great. Sometimes

the still waters presented a polished surface which reflected the metallic color of the neighboring rocks; sometimes it foamed and broke on the rocks which rose suddenly above the surface. Sometimes [we saw] gracious bell-towers ending in calcareous spires, which overhung the bed of the river, and pagodas, built in the shadows of big trees at the entrances to caves, appeared here and there on the flanks of the mountains, softening and enlivening this rough, solitary landscape. Powerful waterfalls tumbled from the heights of the rocks and sometimes forced our junk to keep close in to bank. The current was too weak to counteract the wind that blew head-on but this helped many boats to ascend the river to Se-tchouen.

On 25 May, at 9 p.m., we emerged from this mountainous zone: the river widened suddenly into the vast plain of I-tchang, the district capital of Hou-pe province. It was pleasant for us after traveling a whole year in the mountains, to see these low, green banks, with many boats and white pagodas. We spent all the next morning rigging up our junk: we could no longer depend on the current, which was now too weak to carry us further down river. The width of the river, nearly two kilometers here, enabled us to use the wind, even when it was blowing in the opposite direction. Thus by tacking about we reached Cha-che, a trade city at the mouth of a canal linking all the small lakes between this city and Han-kéou. The canal provided a much shorter route than the river to reach the latter place only. Very big junks, like ours, continued to descend the Ta Kiang,[30] which described huge curves which made the journey three times longer and was [therefore] almost deserted.

From King-tcheou, the river flowed south in an unending series of meanders which lengthened the journey so much that people had given up using this route. The canal linked Han-kéou directly to King-tcheou across a region strewn with lakes and ponds. Unfortunately, our junk was too big to follow this narrow shallow route and we had to follow the endless bends of the big river . . . The wind blew against us and increased the duration of our journey even further. In Ou-che, a trading town on the left bank, a little down river from King-tcheou, we went ashore for a while but we had such a welcome from the population that we hastily regained our junk; if we had not done so, we would have been torn to pieces. We were eager to visit more civilized cities and friendly people and no longer wanted our oarsmen to stop at night. On 2 June, at midnight, passing the mouth of lake Tong-ting,[31] the river became somewhat livelier. Two days later, at 9 p.m., we sailed amid the forest of junks which raised their innumerable masts before Han-iang fou, a city at the confluence of the Han and the Yang-toe, opposite Han-kéou. From there we

could see the high masts of American clippers coming to take tea. There was no moon and it became too dark to proceed amid so many ships. We had to anchor. This night seemed like a century to me. Early next morning we set sail. Before long I recognized the European concessions: I couldn't take my eyes off these houses, these ships lined up before me: I would have happily stretched out my hands to touch them, to assure myself that they were real. At 8 a.m., we moored before the French consulate where we found the most gracious hospitality. The joys of returning finally began. I will always remember the extraordinary feeling that night when I slept between dazzling white sheets. It was over two years since I had enjoyed such luxury.

In Han-kéou, I found the Chinese Thomas Kô, who had preceded us by way of the lakes. On our arrival in Saigon, Admiral Ohier confirmed my agreement and attached him to the Mission. Since then he has returned to China, after a stay of eighteen months in Paris and the Minister of the Navy has given him a big gold medal as a token of appreciation for the services he rendered to me as a translator.

Mr. Guénaud, Mr. Dabry's chancellor, was overseeing the consulate in Han-kéou at this time. He did us the honors with a friendliness and good will that we have not forgotten. The European colony, which had been expecting us for a long time, was most welcoming. I am especially happy to extend my affectionate thanks to Captain O'Keefe, the captain of the *Havoc*. We released the heavy junk on which we had sailed more than eleven hundred kilometers since Tchong-kin fou.

In the harbor was one of those rapid steamers which ply between Han-kéou and Shanghai. Such ease of movement had passed into the world of dreams for us. It was some time before we could believe it was real. We left on 10 June on an American steamer, the *Plymouth Rock*. Thomas Kô who had preceded us to Han-kéou embarked with us. On 12 June we dropped anchor in the port of Shanghai. Friendly hospitality awaited us at the French consulate-general. We found in Madame Brenier de Montmorand, all the charm and elegance of France, the use of which, alas! we had lost The "barbarians" whom she then received are happy here to testify to their most respectful admiration of her.

The French colony in Shanghai kindly honored our small group of explorers. A dinner which was given for us by our fellow countrymen gave us the chance to thank them for their enthusiastic and patriotic reception.

On 19 June, we left Shanghai on the liner of the Messageries [Maritimes], the

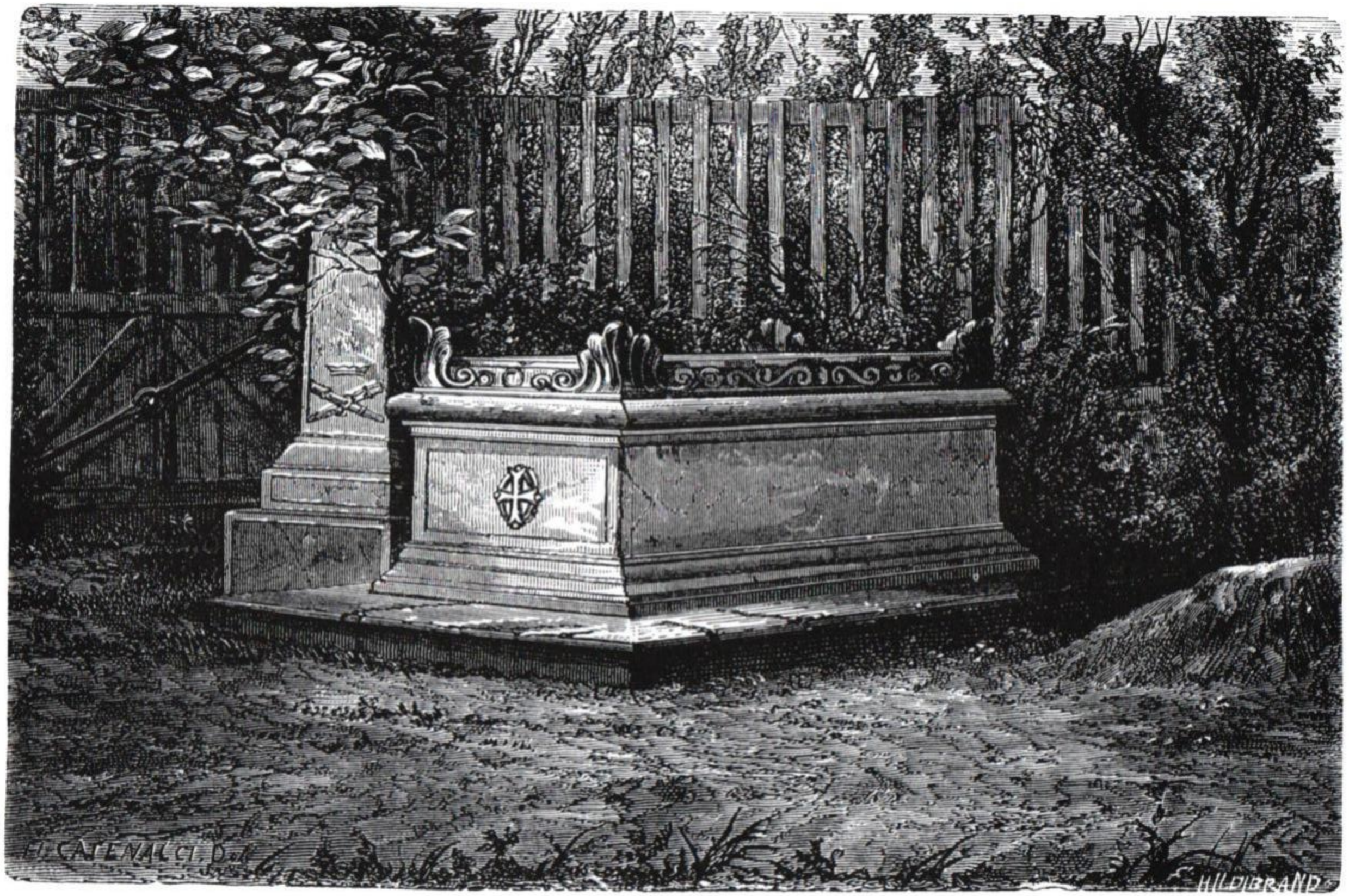


Plate 53 *The tomb of Commander de Lagrée in Saigon (drawing by H. Catenacci, based on a sketch of L. Delaporte).*

Dupleix. We arrived in Saigon on the twenty-ninth. Rear-admiral Ohier, the governor of French Cochinchina, had only the day before received my report of Mr. de Lagrée's demise. This loss was deeply felt in the colony where his memory and fine qualities were cherished by all.

High honors were accorded his remains, which were buried in Saigon cemetery. A small monument commemorates to this day this gallant soldier of France. If anything can console his relatives, it is the thought that he died on the most noble field of endeavor: that of science and civilization.

Conclusion

by

the Editors of *Le Tour du Monde*

Interrupted by the [1870 Franco-German] war, and delayed three times by the material obligations imposed on our editors by the preparation of the Official Publication of the *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine*, the separate report of the expedition ends here and it has been read, we have every reason to believe, with a legitimate interest . . .

In addition to the awards learned societies have given to the two chiefs of the expedition, . . . we must add the medal, separate from the regular competition, which the First International Geographic Conference, meeting at Antwerp on 14 August 1871, bestowed upon Mr. Francis Garnier and the cross of officer of the Legion of Honor which a decree of 26 January 1872 granted him for his "exceptional services".[1]

The Official Publication was barely finished when, without taking the vacation which years of unremitting work and the five months of the Paris siege when the heroism of the Navy Corps became legendary,[2] should have made him need, Mr. F. Garnier again departed for China to explore one of the most interesting and least known regions of Central Asia.

The preface of *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine*, written at sea on 3 October last, ended like this:

> The reader may be surprised not to find a treatise or at least some indications in this work on certain geographical questions which determined our itinerary. I have intentionally omitted the information I have obtained on the Tibetan part of some of the great rivers of Indochina. My information

> threw no decisive light whatever on this most important and certainly least understood problem of Asia's geography.
>
> I want to try, before publication, to complete them inside Tibet.

The intrepid traveler had thus decided to penetrate into Tibet and to resolve the question, as yet still undecided, of the origins of the great rivers that water India and Indochina. The reader knows what is the present state of this question.

The plateau of Tibet, which is a southern branch of the huge massif of the Himalayas, forms in the center of Asia a kind of terrace, the edges of which are characterized by uninterrupted high chains of mountains to the north, west and south but which slopes to the east and feeds most of the rivers draining the snow-melt. There, in a space of less than sixty leagues, the Brahmaputra, the Irrawaddy, the Salween, the Mekong and the Yang-tse-Kiang, etc., manage to dig out a passage and carve deep furrows in the colossal up-thrust which has so far contained them.

One of these rivers, the Yaro-tsang-bo, which rises not far from the sources of the Indus, is more or less known to the holy city of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, i.e., over a course of about one thousand kilometers. It has recently been described up to this point by an Indian *pandit* who was trained by Captain Montgomerie in the use of observation instruments. But beyond Lhasa, the geographers are reduced to conjecture.

This powerful river—does it turn immediately to the south to become the Brahmaputra and to flow into the Gulf of Bengal? Or, conversely, does it continue its course to the east and encircling the mountains of Khamti, to the north of Burma, does it flow into the Irrawaddy? Geography still hesitates and cannot answer with precision.

Chinese documents, used by the Jesuits, and J. B. Bourguignon d'Anville agrees, make the Yaro-tsang-bo the head of the Irrawaddy. Dalrymple, and Klaproth, who reported that the bend of the river is one and a half degrees further east than d'Anville had maintained to support this thesis, and more recently Father Desgodins, who is one of the few missionaries involved in scientific research and with whom Mr. Francis Garnier has been corresponding for three years, also subscribed to this opinion.

The opposite hypothesis, which states that the Yaro-tsang-bo flows into the Brahmaputra, has been supported by two Oriental scholars: Colonel Yule, of the English corps of engineers and Mr. de Saint-Martin. According to them

the Yaro-tsang-bo, the Djaihong, in Assam, and the Brahmaputra are one and the same river.

This question has stirred passionate polemic since 1820 between English and French scholars. It appears to be resolved "in theory" in favor of the latter hypothesis. However, the direct proof, following on an eye-witness observation, is still lacking and the explorer who manages to establish it will render a first class service to science.

It is to the solution of this problem which is, as we have just stated, also that of the origins of the great Asiatic rivers, that Mr. Francis Garnier wants to devote himself. The difficulties are substantial. Recently, an intrepid English traveler, Mr. Cooper, has failed in two successive attempts to penetrate into Tibet: the first was made from India, the second from China. A terrible civil war, provoked by the insurrection of the Muslim population, is devastating the large Chinese province of Yunnan, on the frontier of the region under study.

Mr. Francis Garnier, who has been able to assess all the obstacles, during his first journey, has high hopes for his attempt. He is determined to devote all the time necessary to this undertaking. The Minister of the Navy has donated the necessary equipment and seems willing to send more, if need be. The Société de Géographie de Paris will be taking care of gathering sufficient resources to facilitate the intrepid traveler in an exploration whose results must exceed those already obtained by the French Commission. In the meantime, Mr. F. Garnier is proposing to stay in Han-kéou, in the center of China and to undertake the study of the hydrography of the rapids of the Blue River, which begin at this point and continue for more than three hundred and fifty kilometers between I-tchang fou and Tchong-kin fou, the commercial center of the rich province of Se-tchouen. This hydrographic survey will call attention to the need to try out steam navigation beyond Han-kéou. Trade between Shanghai and this harbor, the last that is open to Europeans on the river, is still carried out for the greater part by indigenous boats but amounts nevertheless to hundreds of millions of francs. Silk, vegetable wax, medicinal and dyeing products descend the Yang-tse and come to Han-kéou for barter against cotton cloth and fleece of English and American origins. The security which would come from a complete substitution of the indigenous boating by steam navigation would soon increase tenfold transactions that are already very important. You might even argue that European exports will only make more progress in China on this condition: we must expect it to stagnate until the day we have acquired easy

access to the rich and populous plains of Se-tchouen. The trader who has the first good maps of this part of the Blue River at his disposal will be the best prepared for the development of rapid transport. Also, he will have the most decisive arguments to obtain the opening up of the river beyond Han-kéou from the government in Peking. [3]

Another member of the French Commission, Mr. Delaporte, bringing the results gathered by the exploration of the Mekong to fruition, and in particular the reconnaissance of the Ho-ti Kiang, an affluent of the Song-coi or the river of Tong King, done by Mr. F. Garnier on 27, 28 and 29 November 1867, proposes to ascend this latter watercourse to its source.

Much less important than the big rivers of China and Indo-China, the Song-coi derives a special value from its geographical location. Our settling of Cochinchina, and our command of the Annamite kingdom, make the opening up of a natural navigable waterway, going from the eastern coast of Indo-China to the heart of southern China, especially worthwhile. It is not indeed that great rivers ascending from Indo-China to Yunnan are lacking: the Mekong, the Irrawaddy, the Brahmaputra, at least by its eastern affluents, would be suitable to penetrate China, but they are impracticable over half their course: the Brahmaputra because it suddenly turns west; the Irrawaddy because it is not navigable over half its course; the Mekong because it traverses the pestilent forests of Laos, and gets filled by reefs and rapids and is lost in a bed so encased and so deep that we were unable any longer to follow its banks. Conversely, the Song-coi appears to be navigable up to its source.

At the beginning of last year, Mr. Francis Garnier drew the attention of the Société de Géographie de Paris to this important prospect. [4]

"It is especially now when it is important for France to create new natural resources for herself," he said, "that it is timely to use those which the route of the Song-coi offers our export business."

These words aroused strong sympathies. The eminent explorer had drawn a map of the country that was to be studied comprising the space delineated by the courses of the Brahmaputra and the Yang-tse Kiang, in order to better afford a grip on the state of the question. He warmly pleaded the cause for this complementary exploration with the Society, which immediately voted a sum of six thousand francs, to be used for the journey that Mr. Delaporte agreed to undertake.

The Minister of Public Education has, as a follow-up to this first donation, opened a credit of twenty thousand francs for the same undertaking and it has been announced that the governor of Cochinchina will provide a subsidy at least as big, from the special resources of our colony. [5]

Moreover, and this is a rare and surprising thing in France, private industry has chosen to take its first steps on this new road the commercial importance of which has been outlined. A merchant, Mr. Dupuis, using the information given to him by Mr. F. Garnier, and which this explorer has since included in the official publication of *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine,* has left Saigon with two small steam jolly-boats and has managed to penetrate into Annam from the mouth of the Song-coi and to get as far as Lin-ngan, an important city of Yunnan. [6]

It is this fact of the navigability of the river which Mr. Dupuis wants to prove scientifically. A young hydrographic engineer of the Navy must accompany him. A geologist is also part of the expedition. It is unnecessary to add that together with all those who are interested in scientific progress and the honor of our country, we extend the most sincere wishes for the success of these new explorations.

NOTES

Footnotes are both from the magazine *Le Tour du Monde* and from the 1885 Popular Edition of *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine*. Some notes have been shortened and adapted for this edition. "Author's note" refers to a note originally made by Francis Garnier; "Tran. note" refers to a note of the translator; the other notes were made by Léon Garnier, the editor of the 1885 Popular Edition.

Chapter 1

1. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 187, 195.
2. This geographical indication is worth noting and could certainly be utilized later in the interest of trade with Indo-China.
3. We have already drawn attention to the fact that Francis Garnier often speaks of the river in his description of the Mekong as if he were descending its course, when in reality he was ascending. It is a voluntary allusion which makes the task of the narrator, but perhaps not that of the reader, easier.
4. A contraction of the *pali* names of two cities, *Kemarata* and *Tunkaboury*. (Author's note)
5. In spite of these modest assessments and this voluntary toning down, the importance of the geographical work of Francis Garnier is great. Leaving aside the drawing of the map in the strict sense, which is entirely his work, we can present his contribution to the measuring of the route covered for the first time, as follows:
   —points that were measured up by Francis Garnier.....5,069
   —points that were measured up by Commander de Lagrée.....1,180
   —points that were measured up by Mr. Delaporte.....450
   —points that were measured up by Mr. Joubert.....30
6. See note 3.
7. This page is one of the most perfect samples of the writing talent of Francis Garnier. We have already indicated in passing some of these episodes, painting completed, in which colors and imagination compete for supremacy with precision in words and with a true sense of language.

Chapter 2

1. Even Commander de Lagrée himself protested at the short-sighted meanness of the colonial government! The sentence which follows makes no bones about Francis Garnier's opinion. It is a conclusion that the reader has long been expecting!
2. Colonel Yule, a distinguished Orientalist, whose principal work concerns the travels of Marco Polo, remained in contact with Francis Garnier by correspondence until the last days of his life. See the August 1873 issue of the geographic magazine, *Ocean Highways*.
3. I believe that I have already mentioned that besides their indigenous name, place names in Indo-China have a *pali* name, often borrowed from some city in India which is the origin of the religious traditions of the region. (Author's note)
4. The Laotians count by lunar months and they number the days from the new moon to the full moon—this is what is called the waxing moon—and from the full moon to the new moon, the period of the waning moon. (Author's note)
5. This was the second time that Dr. Joubert suffered from the same disease.
6. These notes on the Tong King river and the information below on this commercial route explain why Francis Garnier advised Mr. de Lagrée against leaving the Mekong valley to explore the Se Coi. In his eyes the geographic problem was solved and its practical demonstration was not important enough to distract the Commission from its official goal.
7. The same idea can also be found, expressed in more familiar terms, in this passage taken from the book *De Paris au Tibet* (p. 158): ". . . I had resolved to make an excursion of a few months to the center of China and to try to measure up the hydrography of these famous rapids which above Han-kéou, seem to block steam navigation on the river for a distance. I went on this trip alone, without an interpreter, without European servants. That is certainly the best way to *sinicize* oneself and to learn the language: there is no instructor like necessity. . . ."
8. They were going back to the departure point and, consequently, here they were certainly descending the river rather than ascending it.
9. See note 6.

Chapter 3

1. See *De Paris au Tibet*, note on Francis Garnier, p. XIII, in the note.
2. I took these details from Bowring's work on Siam, volume II, page 364, filling them out with information collected on the spot.
3. A kind of banyan tree with longer, stronger and darker leaves than those of *Ficus religiosa.* (Author's note)
4. This document was probably given to the explorers by monks.
5. A Burmese city on the Irrawaddy.

Chapter 4

1. See p. 55 of his diary in the *Parliamentary Papers* of 1869.
2. Francis Garnier had actually taken part in the 1860 campaign. A first class cadet on board *Le Duperré,* commanded by Captain Bourgeois (today Vice-Admiral and State Counselor), he distinguished himself by brilliant action on its arrival in the China seas. On the recommendation of the *Le Duperré*'s captain, the cadet was attached to the general staff of Vice-Admiral Charner, the commander-in-chief of the squadron and soon after was promoted lieutenant on merit. (See the posthumous book *De Paris au Tibet,* pp. 85-108, for the report on an episode in this campaign.) In January 1861, the young lieutenant left Woosung for the general staff office Saigon on the transport ship *Le Jura.* He was twenty-one and for the first time was to set foot on Indo-Chinese soil where he was to win fame and meet an early death.
3. One might say it was a Merovingian story?
4. See the Official Publication, pp. 410, 465ff.
5. Chinese calligraphy is independent of the sounds. See also note 3, Chapter 5.
6. See above and *De Paris au Tibet,* pp. 98ff.

Chapter 5

1. *Ta-jen* literally means "big man" and it is only an honorific designation always added to the names of high officials in China. *Ta lao-ye* (old grand-father) is the name given to lower-ranking officials.
2. We should not forget that this story is dated 1867 and since then, English guns and German cannon have appeared in China and transformed the weaponry of the Celestial Empire's army.
3. To understand this passage properly, one must remember that Chinese writing

is used in Annam and that the characters which are known to the Annamites and used by them, are read as easily by the Indo-Chinese as by the Chinese themselves but with a different pronunciation. In other words, the figurative character represents the same idea in Annam and China, but, it is not construed into the same sound. See note 5, Chapter 4, and *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 381ff. and *Le Pays d'Annam* pp. 142, 154.

4. Since the return of the French expedition, Father Desgodins has determined the exact position of Jerkalo, the Tibetan village situated on the left bank of the Mekong river, as 29 degrees 2 minutes and 30 seconds northern latitude.
5. See the study entitled: *De la colonisation de la Cochinchine* (Challamel, 1865) for Francis Garnier's opinion of the immorality of the opium trade, pp. 27ff.

Chapter 6

1. An allusion to the Franco-German war.
2. Despite the improvements which China has made to the armament of its soldiers, who today possess repeating rifles and long range cannon from the most renowned European manufacturers, and despite the efforts of the instructors specially engaged by the Chinese government, it may be that the present Chinese army is, in general, not much better than the gangs described by Francis Garnier. It is recruited from the poorest class, paid little or not at all, and essentially lacks the organization, strict discipline and especially the military spirit, essential to an army, in the modern sense of the word.
3. We will see later that the assumptions of Francis Garnier were well founded.
4. The Chinese ounce is approximately 37 grams.
5. The Ho-ti Kiang, the principal branch of the Tong King river, which has been mentioned already.
6. *Description de la Chine*, volume I, p. 251.
7. A name the Chinese give to Burma.
8. *Ta-jen* is an honorific expression that literally means "big man" and is added in China to the name of persons of an elevated rank. *Ta lao-ye*, "old grandfather", is the qualification that is given to the name of the lower-ranking officials. (Author's note)
9. This information was communicated to Mr. Dupuis when the Commission passed through Han-kéou. To support this contention we reproduce part of a letter written by Dr. Joubert to Francis Garnier in January 1872, when the

Mekong Commission was considered to have blazed the trail of this new commercial route via the Tong King river.

Caen, 2 January 1872.

My dear Garnier,
I do not see any inconvenience in your addressing the Geographical Society on the journey of Mr. Dupuis. This journey is but the result of the one that we made and *it was made only upon our indications.* When we passed Han-kéou, I talked to Mr. Dupuis, my fellow citizen, of the possibility of an important trade in arms and other European products with Yunnan and I indicated to him, *according to your assessment,* the route by way of the Tong King river, as a shorter and easier one and moreover I put him in touch with Yang ta-jeń, . . ., etc.

Joubert

10. I.e., Hanoi.
11. The Red River.
12. See the study "on the new commercial routes with China" by Francis Garnier in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* of February 1872.
13. To better realize the value of these considerations and of their quasi-prophetic character, one should not forget that they were written in 1868 and 1871.
14. It is useful to mention here that Francis Garnier, obeying the proprieties of rank and his respect for Mr. de Lagrée once more, attributes to him alone, all the credit for the reconnaissance which he himself performed and for which the greater part of the honor was due to him. Moreover, it is enough to quote here part of the report to the governor of Cochinchina by Mr. de Lagrée at this time to appreciate what role each one played in such an important discovery.

6 January 1868.

A question of the greatest importance arises here: where does the navigability of the Song-coi begin? Can it serve as the trade link between Tong King and Yunnan? To resolve this question, I sent Mr. Garnier to explore the river with orders to discover the truth and rejoin us in Lin-ngan, while the Commission went directly to Lin-ngan. Because of the ill will of the population, this officer could only descend a distance of some forty miles,

> but the information that he obtained and those that I collected myself *were sufficient for us.* Six days to the south-south-east of Lin-ngan there is a market town called Mang Kho from which the Song-coi *is navigable all the way to the sea.* To this market, still on the territory of Yunnan, and to a few others situated down river, on Tong King soil there gather, Laotians, inhabitants of Kouang-si and of Yunnan, natives from the mountains and Chinese from Canton who bring European merchandise there by the sea route. The discovery of this route will no doubt be one of the most useful results of our journey . . . .
>
> De Lagrée

We quote the text of this report from the official dispatch but when Francis Garnier was still living we saw the small register of correspondence with the governor of Cochinchina and there we found the actual draft of the report, written in Mr. de Lagrée's hand and we made a meticulous copy of this document. It had several corrections and the writer had a few times changed his mind by crossing out and replacing unconditional affirmation with a less formal statement.

Thus, instead of writing "the information that he obtained and those that I collected myself *were sufficient for us*", Mr. de Lagrée wrote, "*were sufficient to resolve the question posed.*" Well then, the question was precisely to know whether the Ho-ti Kiang, or the Song-coi, could serve as a trade link between Yunnan and the sea.

We felt that this was a difference worth mentioning. Mr. de Lagrée no doubt feared to be too certain, but in actual fact he believed the question was resolved.

Chapter 7

1. About 60 kilograms.
2. Mr. de Lagrée, after intending for some time to return via the east, took the advice of Francis Garnier and, in accordance with the official instructions, went north.
3. In 1871.
4. It is the *Chamærops.* The Chinese use the fiber from the sheath of the leaves and the hill tribes use them as coats to shelter themselves from the rain. This

palm tree which is both a useful and an ornamental tree with a pleasant appearance, has recently been introduced in the South of France. (Author's note)

5. Mr. Dupuis was this marshal's agent (Marshal Ma ti-tai) in France. During the siege of Ta-Ly fou Mr. Dupuis was already Ma's arms supplier and the latter provided soldiers of his guard to protect commercial operations across Tong King. See the very interesting and comprehensive book by Mr. Hippolyte Gautier, *Les Français au Tonkin*, pp. 80, 102.
6. Later, we will see that Francis Garnier, heading the Mekong Commission, managed to penetrate into Ta-Ly fou in January 1868 and that our explorers ran great dangers there. Later still, in 1873, when Ma ta-jen laid siege to this city again, Francis Garnier, back in China with the intention of penetrating into Tibet, wanted to make Ta-Ly his first stopover and assist the *ti-tai* for some time. Vice-Admiral Dupré, the governor of Cochinchina, was well aware of the prestige that such an intervention would give to French influence and the facilities it would provide to the travel projects of Francis Garnier, he would have to supply two gunboats that could be dismantled, and to launch them on Lake Ta-Ly each having a navy cannon, with firepower enough to reduce the capital of the new Muslim kingdom to ashes (See the posthumous book, *De Paris au Tibet,* notes on pp. 65, 144).
7. The discreet wording of this passage clearly outlines the role of and the attitude taken by our missionaries and it explains the reprisals they suffered. See the criticism and praise of Francis Garnier in *De Paris au Tibet.*
8. See *De Paris au Tibet,* pp. 261-65.
9. See *De Paris au Tibet,* p. 396.
10. The Muslims, as we will see further on, formed two parties, one hostile and the other loyal to the central government.
11. In 1870, at the beginning of the siege of Paris. At this time, Francis Garnier was attached to the Navy Office of Maps and Plans, where he was preparing the Official Publication of the *Voyage en Indo-Chine*. The terrible events that followed a few weeks later made him leave his sedentary role for active service. He was first appointed as commander of a gunboat on the Rhine, then of a leading launch on the Seine. Finally, despite his youth and relatively low rank, he became first aide-de-camp and soon thereafter chief of staff to Rear-Admiral Méquet (today Vice-Admiral), commander of the eighth sector of the heart of Paris (Montrouge) under the heaviest bombardment.

12. Francis Garnier, who spoke the kitchen Latin of the missionaries with a remarkable facility, became at this time an excellent interpreter for the Commission in its relations with the Chinese Christians.
13. The *tael* is worth from seven to eight francs in our currency according to the exchange rate.
14. See the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, February 1872, for the article by Francis Garnier that we have already cited, "Des nouvelles routes de commerce avec la Chine".
15. See *De Paris au Tibet,* pp. 397, 399.

Chapter 8

1. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 226-27.
2. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 389-411. We believe that we should indicate these two portraits as a sample of the writing talent of Francis Garnier.
3. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 231-32.
4. Approximately 5,000 francs.
5. We have already said that Francis Garnier, basing himself on the official instructions which the Commission had received before its departure—instructions to the effect that they had "to geographically determine the course of the Mekong by a reconnaissance pushed as far as possible"—kept heading north, and drafted and himself wrote, in the Commission's register, the instructions relating to the journey to Ta-Ly which Mr. de Lagrée had asked him to present to him for his signature.
6. It should be clearly understood that this letter was written in Chinese and not in Arabic as Mr. de Carné says in his report. The *Lao papa* did not know the latter language except for its name.
7. Francis Garnier was perhaps the most dauntless walker of the Commission. He always went on foot, compass and watch in hand, to measure the stretches covered more accurately.
8. Here again is an episode that is characteristic and which proves that in China, more so than anywhere else, the word of Danton is always true.
9. Tong-tchouen is in effect quite close to the Yang-tse Kiang but a part of the course of this river is not navigable for large barges. We will see below that continuous navigation is no longer possible from Siu-tcheou fou. This is where the Commission went by river after their return from Ta-Ly, but first they had

to traverse a rough and mountainous region and make a new journey on foot lasting over a month. The exact spot where Tong-tchouen is located on the Blue River has given rise to confusion. It has been said that after the commander's death, all that Francis Garnier had to do was to take the river route which would bring him to Han-kéou without any effort or difficulty. This ignores the difficult journey from Tong-tchouen to Siu-tcheou fou that he accomplished, bearing Mr. de Lagrée's coffin, and the navigation problems that occur between Siu-tcheou and Han-kéou.

10. An allusion to the siege of Paris in 1870.

Chapter 9

1. Chinese provinces are subdivided into sub-provinces, called *tao*, the governors of which have several *fou* or departments under them. Yunnan is subdivided into three *tao:* Nan-tao, or the *tao* of the south with Yunnan as the capital; Si-tao, or the *tao* of the west, with Ta-Ly as the capital and Tong-tao, or the *tao* of the east with Tchao-tong as capital. (Author's note)
2. See note 5, Chapter 8. We should not criticize the propriety or modesty of this passage. The journey to Ta-Ly, undertaken with a view to finding the Mekong again and following its course through, into Tibet, amounts to the unrelenting quest of Francis Garnier. Thus it was normal for Mr. de Lagrée to ask him to insert it in the official instructions. This fact seems to have been ignored and it does not figure in some reports of this interesting episode. We have seen the register of the Commission with our own eyes and we confirm that these instructions were written in the handwriting of Francis Garnier himself and only signed by the chief of the mission.
3. This is the Blue River which lower down takes the name of Yang-tse Kiang.
4. One more characteristic passage which demonstrates the perseverance and care which Francis Garnier brought to his work. See *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 171.
5. Does this question not clearly indicate the part that Francis Garnier played in the journey to Ta-Ly?
6. This paragraph reveals the secret desire held by Francis Garnier and also explains the second attempt he made in 1873 which he hoped to renew the next year before events in Tong King called him back to Saigon.
7. Messrs. Francis Garnier, Delaporte, Thorel and de Carné.

8. This pride in achievement is understandable and it is still astonishing that this feat of exploration, seminal for science, and glorious for the country, has been barely known or appreciated in France till now, whereas they usually glorify so eagerly the works and success of foreign travelers, whether scientists or geographers.
9. The Blue River, pp. 554 and 557.
10. *Kia* means race or family in Chinese; *I* means barbarian or foreigner. *Lolo* is a general name used without distinction for almost all the non-Chinese populations. (Author's note)
11. A translation of the word *"ta-jen"* which in China follows the name of all high-ranking persons.
12. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 261-62.
13. The specific excursions of Francis Garnier, especially the one from Oubon to Pnom Penh and back to Houten, have shown what an untiring walker he was. Here, his ardor and his exemplary behavior had once more encouraged his companions.

Chapter 10

1. Mr. Delaporte.
2. Mr. de Carné.
3. The Cambodia river or Mekong.
4. See Major Sladen's *Report* in the *Parliamentary Papers* of 1871, p. 96. (Author's note)
5. One can see that the honor of having preceded England in a geographic exploration in which this nation had surely a more immediate interest than France, was of especially significance to the narrator.
6. We noted earlier that Mr. Delaporte was not only an untiring artist but also the adjutant of the Commission. He was also charged with replacing Francis Garnier in his geographic work, and we are especially indebted to him for the measurement of the Mekong between Pak Moun and Kémarat. See Part I of the Mekong Exploration Commission Report, *Travels in Cambodia and Laos.*
7. A translation of *ta-jen.*
8. It is this daring reconnaissance of a region which no other European had so far penetrated, and to which no traveler has come since the visit of the French Commission, that earned Francis Garnier the medal of Queen Victoria (Patron's

medal), awarded by the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1870.

9. Which is here called the Lan-tsang Kiang.
10. The Cambodia river or Mekong.
11. It was to retrace this route that Major Sladen had aimed for; this was the object of the aborted attempt referred to in note 4 above.

Chapter 11

1. The Blue River.
2. See note 9, Chapter 8, on the problems of navigation on the Yang-tse Kiang between Tong-tchouen and Siu-tcheou fou.
3. This pagoda belongs to the miners' guild. Its Chinese name is *Kong ouan miao*. (Author's note)
4. See note 7, Chapter 1. One gathers from the emotion contained in this passage what respectful affection Francis Garnier held for Commander de Lagrée.
5. This arduous journey across the mountains lasted one month, with difficulties of all kinds. We reiterate this point because, as we have already said, it has been presented as if Tong-tchouen lay beside a navigable river and that after the death of Mr. de Lagrée, the journey no longer presented any difficulties. See also the preceding pages for Francis Garnier's words on this.
6. After Mr. de Lagrée's death, Francis Garnier became the chief of the mission in accordance with the instructions and also because of his rank.
7. My Chinese name. (Author's note) It is not the exact translation of the name Garnier ("*Ngan nié*" means "peaceful heritage"—see *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 259), but is the transformation into Chinese style, which consists of joining the obligatory epithet, the meaning of which we have already indicated in note 8, Chapter 6, to the first syllable of the name modified according to the local pronunciation.
8. It is known that on the occasion of the decease of their relatives Chinese officials stop functioning for a certain time. For a father or a mother, mourning lasts three years, during which time they return to private life. (Author's note)
9. This is the Chinese transliteration of the first syllables of my name, the names of Dr. Joubert and Father Leguilcher.
10. The name of the prefect and the deputy-prefect of Tong-tchouen. (Author's note)
11. Mr. de Lagrée.

12. This is the name they give, in the interior of China, to the rebellions known by Europeans as the Taïping.
13. Gangs of aimless plunderers comprising all the wretched and stateless people that are the result of the civil wars. (Author's note)
14. We have already mentioned that Francis Garnier had visited the Pacific and the South Seas at the beginning of his career.
15. The excellent observations made by Father Desgodins, an apostolic missionary in Tibet, who had received observation equipment and books from his family, prove the great advantage one could obtain from the leisure-time activities of these hardly pioneers of civilization. It gives me great satisfaction to note that the Société de Géographie de Paris has sent Father Desgodins, at my request, a measuring device as a reward for his work as a geographer. (Author's note) See *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 398.
16. Today a correspondent of the Institute. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 67, 398.
17. The name of the western part of the province of Yunnan.
18. Situated on the borders of the Ngieou-nan-Kiang, between Tong-tchouen and Tchao-tong.
19. A lower rank of the Chinese military hierarchy. (Author's note)
20. Indeed, Mr. Dupuis started his commercial relations with Ma ta-jen at this time and he brought him arms, which the latter needed very much. We refer the reader to note 9, Chapter 6, where we reproduced the text of a letter addressed by Dr. Joubert to Francis Garnier when the latter was preparing to recommend the work of Mr. Dupuis to the Société de Géographie de Paris.
21. We recall no doubt that the Reds are the Imperial troops and the Whites the Mahommedans. (Author's note)
22. Since then, the capture of Ta-Ly fou (May 1873) has been announced.
23. Part of this itinerary (from Tchong-kin fou to Han-kéou) has been carefully studied, from the point of view of hydrography and commerce, by officers of the British Navy and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce of Shanghai, after the passage of the French Commission. (Author's note)
    Later (May-August 1873), Francis Garnier made a hydrographic study of the river, from Tchong-kin fou to I-tchang fou. See *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 343.
24. One understands that this is still the Yang-tse Kiang.
25. These considerations give a special significance to the present war (1884) which started with the new occupation of Tong King by French troops.
26. See *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 267.

27. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 182-85.
28. This translator translated into kitchen Latin the manual on metallurgy which figures in the second volume of the Official Publication, the French translation of which was done by Francis Garnier.
29. See *De Paris au Tibet*, pp. 365-416, and especially the note on p. 381. This passage is one that we gladly recommend to politicians and economists. The war which began in 1884 gives it, moreover, a very special significance.
30. This is still the Blue River.
31. A lake explored by Francis Garnier in 1873. See *De Paris au Tibet*, p. 172.

Conclusion

1. At the suggestion of the Head of the Mission, a decree of the same day also awarded this high distinction to Mr. Delaporte. This young explorer was nominated knight on 10 August 1868, on the return of the expedition to France, as well as Mr. Thorel and Mr. de Carné. The latter traveler died soon after the events of 1870-71, from an illness that the hardships of the journey and the privations of the siege [of Paris by the Germans] have combined to make fatal. Dr. Joubert, who took care of Mr. de Carné until his last moment, also distinguished himself during the war, in the provincial ambulance service. On this occasion he was nominated officer of the Legion of Honor.
2. Mr. Francis Garnier was chief of staff to the admiral-commander of the eighth sector (Montrouge), the most heavily bombarded area [of Paris by the Germans]. Mr. Delaporte was also attached to a sector during the siege of Paris.
3. See the *Journal officiel* of 20 March 1873.
4. *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (February 1872).
5. *Revue politique et littéraire* of 25 March 1873.
6. *Journal officiel* of 10 May 1873.

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