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LITTLE CHINA

THE ANNAMESE LANDS

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Hevea Brasiliensis

Rice is still the largest crop of Cochin-China but the quality does not equal that of Burma, Siam, or Tongking. The yield per acre is lower than in the north. Although there is only one crop a year (as compared with two in some parts of northern Annam and Tongking) the amount produced in Cochin-China is impressive all the same—more than four and a half million tons a year. Less is exported than formerly, as when in 1862 the stoppage of rice exports from the south to Annam forced the Emperor Tu-Đuc to bow to the French demands. The new crops are everywhere spreading; maize, so much easier to grow than rice that in the climate of the south it hardly needs tending, and then there are the non-comestible crops. Rubber is the most valuable. *Hevea Brasiliensis* does fairly well on the grey lands to the south of Annam and the east of Cochin-China and flourishes on the red soil north of Saigon. As yet most of the great plantations are between Saigon and Nhatrang (and you pass through them for miles when you take the Mandarin Way south), and in the Hon-Quen and Thu-Dâu-Môt red earth districts where Michelin has his forests.

Before the Japanese occupation Indo-China was exporting about 50,000 tons of rubber a year, with a strong tendency to increase. This amount was enough to satisfy all the domestic demands of the metropolis.

Northwards of Saigon where the jungle has not been cut down for *rizières* are some of M. Michelin's plantations. One of them is run by a smart young Corsican, *très sport, très moderne*, just married to a Little Russian beauty, tall, slender, lily-white, with blue-black hair and very much the *russekaya dama* after twenty years of mediocre life in the Vaugirard quarter of Paris. The forests around the plantation bungalow are full of vicious little black bears, but you must go much farther afield if you would get real big game, cheetah, leopard, tiger, elephant, gaur, sladang, and perhaps rhinoceros.

Dalat

There are several chains in the Annamese Chain and these several ranges are separated by high, extensive, and undulating plains. The most southerly of these is the plateau of

Dalat

Lang-biang, some 4,500 feet up and covering between 250 and 300 square miles. It is, for the most part, a great green meadow intersected by grey tree-clad downs. The soil between the grass is generally a dull red clay produced by the disintegration of igneous rocks, and the Da kam-li River runs through this upland. The station of Dalat is nearly 5,000 feet above sea-level and is built on the shores of a lake. It is surrounded with pine woods that make the place seem like Switzerland until you find orchids in the woods. Dalat is the only hill-station in Indo-China that has 'caught on', for the climate of Cochin-China is unbearable for long even by the most hardened, whereas that of Tongking is, although trying at times, almost temperate in comparison. Every European-seeming vegetable you are offered or proffered in Indo-China is guaranteed to come from Dalat. Dalat lettuces, Dalat strawberries (which the rather pathetic little girls and boys hawk in the streets of Saigon; they certainly look like strawberries and you can give them some taste if you smother them in sugar and crush them in maraschino), Dalat asparagus—and Dalat cabbage. Even on these heights you must raise from European and imported seed and never use the native growth. Lettuces will sprout up and bulge to fantastic size. The Dalat produce should, however, be washed in dilute permanganate of potash, although some people, curiously enough, seem to think that because the things are grown 5,000 feet up there is no more danger of typhoid. But, of course, although Dalat has a mountain climate, it is still in the tropics; days and nights do not vary in length, therefore some of the so-called 'long day' plants, those that need our pale nights and twenty-hour days of summer, will not do well.

Dalat is, I think, from many points of view, the best hill-station in the Far East, better even than Baguio and far better than Chapa or Bana near Tourane, but I hated it. Ladies, twin sisters to the swarthy, blowsy beauties of Marseilles *Vieux Port* and all the friendly pretentiousness of the French *petite bourgeoisie*.

For the gaurs and sladangs and stories of takin and panda, you have to go still farther afield to Jiring or farther north and over into the Laos country that is so well described by Colonel Roosevelt and Mr. Coolidge in their book.

The great plateau of Dar-lac is a different affair. It is a huge basalt plain lying lower than the Dalat region. Ban Methuot is the centre and the starting-point of the elephant hunts, for the whole marshy upland teems with wild elephants. This is where from time immemorial the Annamese Court have drawn their tame beasts, some of which found their way as tribute to the Court of Peking. Here the new-caught elephants are tamed by thrashing and starvation.

The beasts of Indo-China are still much as in Tavernier's time and the game (with the exception of the rhinoceros,¹ which is so rare as to be almost extinct) is what the Chinese chroniclers tell about when they first entered the country in the third century before our era. There are 'neither lions, asses, nor sheep² . . . but the Forests are full of Tigers, Harts and Apes and the Fields are full of Beeves, Cows, and Hogs. As for Hens, Ducks, and Turtles, they are not to be numbered'.

The old Frenchman thought the horses of Indo-China 'very well shap'd'. One sees, at the present time, very few of them. They are no bigger than a Dartmoor pony but when they are well looked after and groomed they are shapely enough, with thick arched necks that make them look something like the heavy-headed horses of the Palaeolithic cave-paintings or the Mongolian wild ponies of the north.

Tavernier found no cats in Tongking. They are not uncommon now but they may be of European importation. You do not come across Siamese cats in Siam, at any rate they are very rare. I found one at Kompong Thom in Cambodia but its owner told me that she had bought it in Marseilles.

Cochin-China is the home or one of the homes of the jungle fowl. The domestic variety, especially in the country districts, looks very much like its wild forebears and as it fends a good deal for itself it is rather gamey if exceedingly tough when out of the *poussin* stage, although you do not have to eat your chickens about a week old so that they may be tender, as

¹ Father de Rhodes wrote: 'Je mangeay encore de sa chair, qui me sembla plus delicate et agreable au goust que d'aucune autre venaison ou gibier que j'aye iamais mangé.'

² Sheep will not 'grow' in Indo-China even in the uplands of Dalat and the plateaux.

they do in Rumania, where they go whole into the soup. In fact, in a well *mijoté* chicken *ciorba* you can almost swallow the bones.

There is plenty of tiger in the jungles that border the plateaux and slope down to the lowlands between the eastern Cambodian frontier and the Mekong. Over the Dar-lac plains formerly the wizard king of the Jarai held sway, but that ghostly government is a thing of the past. The population is mostly Rhadé, who pass for the most advanced of the 'Moi' peoples.

This name 'Moi' is what the Annamese call the wild and semi-wild men of the mountains as distinguished from the semi-civilized peoples of the north: Man, Meo, Thai, and Muong. 'Moi' is a generic name and corresponds to the Burman 'Karen', the Cambodian 'Phnong', the Laotian 'Kha', and the Siamese 'Stieng', and is just loosely used for all the mass of tribes and clans, mostly 'Indonesian' of varying physical type, of differing languages and of widely separated customs. Some have described the 'Moi' as smelling like well-groomed tigers (most of the tigers I have had occasion to smell were not particularly *soignés*) and certainly they give off a bouquet compared with the odourless Annamese or Chinese. You can smell your way into a 'Moi' village by its human, friendly perfume but not by the fetid stink of decay that assails you in a Man or Meo hamlet. The simplest but perhaps not the most satisfactory way of classing the 'Moi' is by language. They exhibit a surprising variety of tongues. The Rhadé dialects of Dar-lac are, for instance, allied to the Cham language, but whether the Rhadé have been 'Chamized' and have lost their own tongue entirely (such examples are by no means rare even among civilized peoples, the Bulgarian language bears not a trace of the original agglutinative tongue that the old Volga Bulgars spoke before they adopted a Slav speech) or whether the Cham is a civilized variety of the same family of tongues as Rhadé, is uncertain. The Jarai in the north of Dar-lac and the south of the Kontum plateau have, obviously, been strongly influenced by the Chams, but whether the Jarai language and the Cham tongue are fundamentally of the same stock is not clear. The Raglai and the Churu talk almost pure Cham. On the other hand, the Koho, the Kie of the Upper Dông-nai, and the Bahnar have Mon-Khmer languages, that is

building or gallery used as a dining-room when the Emperor receives European guests. The west side bears the name of the Propylaea of the Splendours of the Moon, and the east side that of the Propylaea of the Glory of the Sun. Beyond is the Purple¹ Forbidden City.

To the west and the east of the first esplanade before the *Thái-Hòa* Palace are the Palace of the Spirits of the Six Emperors, the Temple of Generations, the Temple to the father of the Emperor Gia-Long, and the Nine Dynastic Urns varying in size from six to seven feet and in weight from two to three tons. They were cast in 1835.

With the sacred cauldrons are linked in a mysterious but imperative way the fortunes of the dynasty. The First Emperor of China and his Han successors were never able to recover from the river the dynastic tripods which the last Chou rulers had confided to the spirits of the waters, and one of the most impressive pieces of early Chinese sculpture represents a scene of the ineffectual fishing.

The ancestors of the imperial line are commemorated in two temples: one, the *Thiên-Miếu*, dedicated to Nguyễn Đục, the First Ancestor of the present reigning house, under his posthumous name of *Triều-tộ-tĩnh Hoàng Đế* (so that he is considered an emperor who was but a village headman). The other is the *Thái-Miếu* shrine erected in 1803 to the nine Chúa Nguyễn, who were Lords of Cochín-China (that is, the present-day Annam) from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth.

The Roads of the Steppes

It was the ever-increasing desiccation of the lands to the north-west and the wild tribes of savage nomads who spread because of the shrinkage of cultivable land, that secured the seclusion of China. Neolithic sites in the north of the country reveal the remains of warmth- and moisture-loving beasts, such as water-deer, who could not possibly live there to-day. During Shang times elephants certainly and rhinoceri possibly were hunted in Northern Honan.

¹ Purple in this sense has nothing to do with our imperial colour. In Chinese the Pole Star is known as *Tseu-Wei-sing*, that is, 'Purple Myrtle Star'; the Pole Star is the symbol of the Sole Ruler or Emperor.

The existence of the Gobi Desert between Outer Mongolia (the region of the Baikal forests as well as of the Orkhon and Kerulen steppes) and Inner Mongolia (that is, the land of the Ala-Shan, Ordos, Chahar, and Jehol steppes) has been the main hindrance to the survival of any Turko-Mongol empire.

North of the Barbarian Way and along it the confusion of peoples is and has been for ages, great. What is Turk and what is Mongol, and how each has influenced the other are questions of almost inextricable complexity. For instance, at the present time, a Turki-speaking people—the Yakuts—live in the far north-west, north of the Tungus. The Yakuts may, however, have migrated so far north in comparatively recent times. They are probably natives of the Lake Baikal region.

What is, nevertheless, clear in all this confusion, is that the Turki, Mongol, and Tungus languages (the 'Altaic' group) are allied, although they must have become differentiated long ago. It also appears to be certain that these tongues have no clear connexion with the Finno-Ugrian and Samoyed groups, although they were formerly all classed together under the general designation of 'Uralo-Altaic'. It may well be that, after a period of differentiation in separated areas, the Turki, Mongol, and Tungus languages influenced each other in circumstances of renewed contact.

Prince Millet

In an interesting summary of our knowledge concerning Chinese origins published in 1939 as a supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Dr. Carl Whiting Bishop discusses the origin of early Chinese cultivated plants. He says: 'Millet, rice and sorghum ("kao-ling" or "giant millet") came from India, just as did sugar-cane and cotton later on. Wheat reached China, about the beginning of her belated Bronze Age, from the west.'

Now, according to Vavilov and his fellow-workers, the six main areas of plant-crop origin are:

- (1) A region probably between the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas: bread wheats, small-seeded types of flax and leguminous plants, Old World cottons, turnips, carrots, apricots, and peaches.

at least among the early Chinese, the right performance of the sacrifices could ensure the maintenance of the social order.

By the *Nhâm-thân* hour (three to five o'clock in the afternoon) the ceremonies of the Little Dressing are completed.

The body is then exposed upon its catafalque in the Great Hall of the Palace and the Place of Wailing is marked out. The Inscription is written upon the Tablet of the Soul and the Messenger of Woe leaves to make the formal announcement of death to the Emperor. The Dynastic Cauldrons are brought forth, those great tripods with which in a mysterious but imperative way the fortunes of the dynasty are linked.

At the *Ât-Hồ* hour (from nine to ten o'clock in the evening) the body is placed in its coffin¹ in the Great Hall of the Càn-chánh Palace. The head is towards the south.

On the morrow of the decease it is announced at the South Gate of the Imperial Chancellery. Mandarins in white receive the Imperial Message on their knees. A proclamation is drawn up for dispatch to the provinces.

The Emperor, in person, presides over the ceremonies for a dead Empress.² On receiving the message of death, the

the souls of sages and rulers. The rest of the people were, perhaps, conceived as not possessing such souls. According to Waley (whose indispensably valuable notes and comments on early Chinese life and custom I have not hesitated freely to utilize) in the unquestionably ancient *Book of Odes*, 'Ch'i' (which means in modern Chinese the vapour of cooked rice) signifies the 'life-spirit': 'Min', the 'male soul', is literally the cloud that issues from one's mouth on a frosty morning, and 'P'o' (the original signification of which was human semen) in contradistinction to the 'Min' is the female soul that lodges in the tomb. 'Shên' did not come to mean 'spirit soul' until about the beginning of our era.

¹ An imperial coffin should be quadruple and the innermost should be made of rhinoceros hide, at least the word 'ssu' used in the classical books in this sense now signifies a rhinoceros. In Chou times, however, it meant 'wild cattle', although it may primitively have had the signification that it now bears. Both rhinoceros hide and cattle hide were used for defensive armour, hence, probably, the custom of burying rulers in a coffin of skin. Coffins in Annam are often constructed of the wood of the *cycas revoluta*. They are covered with layers of lacquer and mastic mixed with coal and sand that renders them liquid-tight. A stalk and leaf of the Ten Thousand Years plant (*cây van tuê* in Annamese) is generally laid in the coffin. For ordinary men and women in Little China the shroud is of red cotton-cloth and the corpse is packed into the coffin by means of cushions and wedges of red paper stuffed with shavings. They are called *Bô-quyê*.

Vide Tavernier, *Of the Funeral Pomp of the Kings of Tunquin and their Manner of Burying their Dead*; he says of the body that it is 'presently embalm'd and lies upon a bed of state sixty days'. The Sovereign is buried with 'Massy Bars of Gold and Silver'. The people were admitted to view the Lying-in-State.

² The microcosm of the 'Purple Forbidden City' in which the Emperor

Emperor removes all his jewels, bonnet, ornaments, and robes. He and all the male members of the imperial family then assume the white mourning garments of their rank. The Emperor, as Chief Mourner, puts on the deepest mourning, that is, vestments made of the coarsest cloth. The Sovereign should isolate himself for one hundred days.¹

In very early times mourners lived lives apart in booths near the tombs. When the whole apparatus of Chinese life was fixed and stylized under the Han, a prolonged mourning period was preserved. It was probably much less of a curse to the mourners than would appear at the first blush. The temporary withdrawal from the world came generally late in middle life (the Chinese have always married early) and it was an occasion of surcease from the toil of public business and from the boredom of family life. At the transition from maturity to age, a man could survey his existence and strike a balance. Many early codes have recommended a 'return to Nature' for a period. The forest-life of the mature man, mentioned in the Laws of Manu, is, in this respect, typical. The Chinese *literati* did well to keep the piously long mourning of their forefathers.

The Chief Mourner must wear a coat and skirt of unhemmed and untrimmed hempen cloth, a twisted girdle, rush shoes and a hat with string cords and four flaps, one to cover each ear, one the nape, and one the eyes.

White is not the mourning 'colour' in the sense that yellow is that of the imperial dignity or red the colour of the south and good omen. White is the colour of mourning in China and in the countries subjected to her cultural influence, because mourning garments have been made from the earliest times of natural and undyed materials. It is the coarseness and cheapness of the stuff that makes it peculiarly suitable for funerals, not its whiteness. 'The acts of greatest reverence,' says the *Li-Ki*, 'admit of no adornment.'

The Chief Mourner in the imperial funeral, the Emperor Bao-Đai, carries in his hands a roughly pared-off stick of wood, so long that it may, when held so that one end touches the

conducts the funeral ceremonies is the microcosm of the Secluded Sovereign, successor, in some measure, of the 'Sole Man' of the early Chinese monarchy.

¹ The Annamese Code was revised and remodelled by the Emperor Gia-Long and the part dealing with ceremonial made to conform even more closely to Chinese precedent than the old prescriptions of the Lê kings.