

**HISTORY OF THE
MOUNTAIN PEOPLE
OF
SOUTHERN INDOCHINA
UP TO 1945**



**Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C.**

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

(TRANSLATION)

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F O R E W O R D

The present study, begun in 1951, was continued at the suggestion of H.E. the Director of the Imperial Cabinet. Having lived for the past three years far from the plateaus of the "montagnards" and the libraries of Saigon and Hanoi, I have been unable to continue my documentation beyond 1945-46, and I therefore chose this point at which to break off my narrative. This accounts for the absence of references to dispositions and documents compiled by authority of the Imperial Cabinet and of his Majesty.

My thanks are due to Mr. François Paul Antoine, H. M. Commissioner for the Education of the MPS, who was kind enough to encourage this paper, review the text, and give me the benefit of his valuable experience with the mountain tribes.

The geographical sketches are reproduced by courtesy of Mr. Delacour, Assistant to the Director of the Public Works Department in Phnom Penh, and of Messrs. Bui-Quang-Tra and Nguyen-Bao-Loc, both engineers with the Cambodian Public Works Department. I should like in this foreword to place on record my sincere gratitude to them.

Bernard Bourotte

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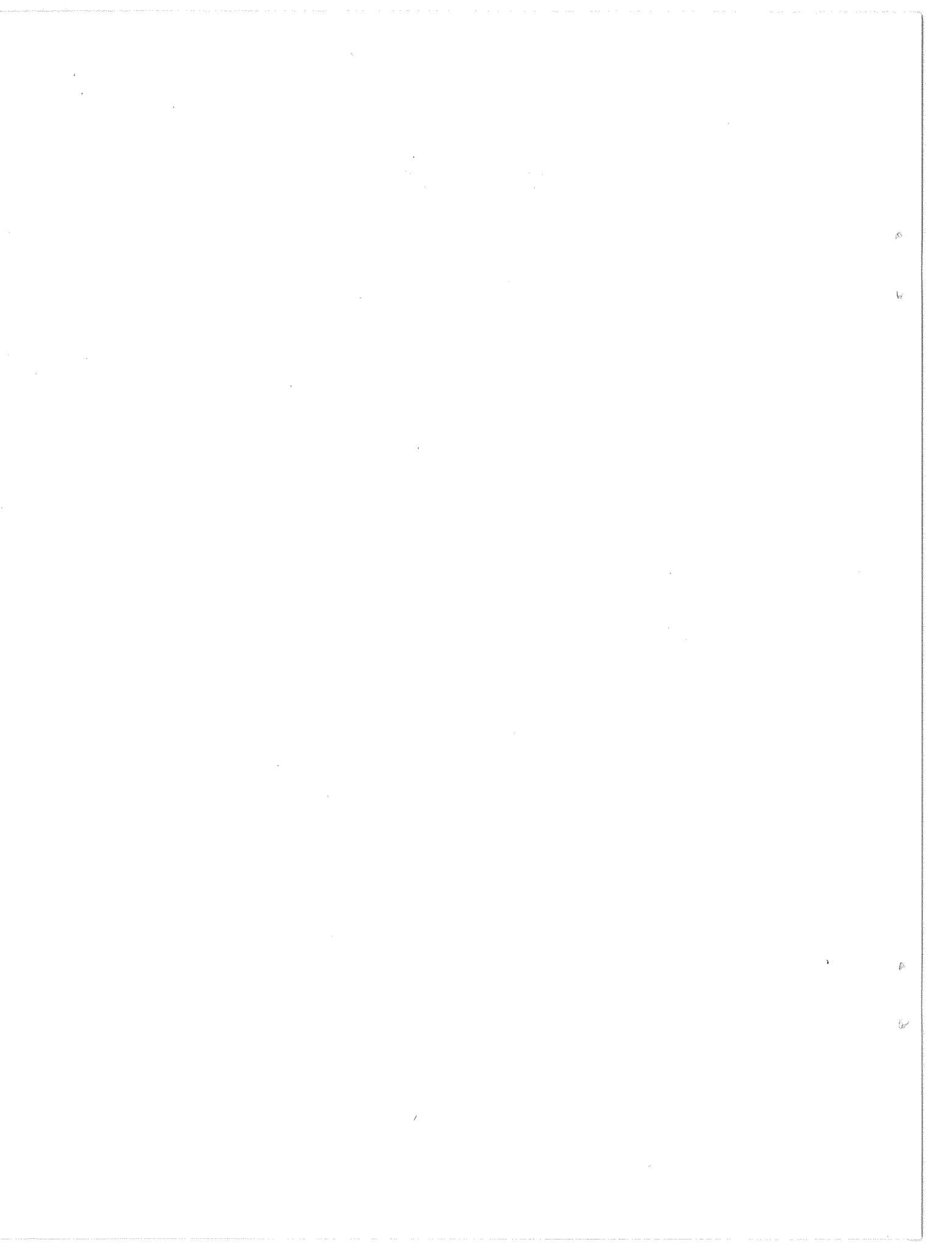
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THE HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE
OF SOUTHERN INDOCHINA UP TO 1945

CHAPTER ONE

THE COUNTRY

1. MAIN STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS

The mountains of Asia are the highest in the world.

In prehistoric time the southernmost of these ranges were thrust against the very ancient, thick, resistant massif of southern China. Their mountain folds, close-packed and deflected toward the south, extend across Indochina until they reach a fracture marked by the Ailao* Pass and the course of the Se Bang Hieng river.

South of this line, which runs close to the 17th parallel N, the physical structure of Indochina changes: in contrast to the close succession of parallel folds found to the north, southern Indochina resembles a vast sandstone tableland. Starting from the east, it slopes gently toward the Mekong in a series of broad tiers punctuated by smaller steps.

Like that of the Massif Central in France, the eastern edge of this plateau drops away abruptly to the east, as a result of earlier subsidence, onto the coastal plain of Vietnam. When seen from the open sea, this escarpment looks like a gigantic wall and is sometimes mistaken for a mountain range. Like our Massif Central, the Indochinese plateau contains extinct volcanoes, in some of whose craters placid lakes may be found; subsidence has hollowed out the surface sandstone to form occasional marshy depressions, some of which have been developed as irrigated paddyfields. (1)

*For technical reasons, the names that appear in this essay in the quoc-gnu transliteration have been written without diacritics. For those of our readers who are interested in their exact orthography, we include as an appendix an alphabetical list of all these names. N.D.L.R.

(1) This tectonic foreland, to use the term proposed by geologists to describe southern Indochina, has the advantage of coinciding approximately with the region inhabited by the mountain people of the south.

Care should be taken not pursue this comparison between southern Indochina and the Massif Central of France too far; it was introduced here for the sake of simplification, as well as to combat the belief in the existence of an "Annamitic Chain" - not to say cordillera - which textbooks and maps imported from France seem unable to shed.

Unlike the Massif Central of France, which culminates in the southeast, the highest elevations in southern Indochina are found in the northeast of the foreland; moreover, the plateaus are covered by a thick layer of sandstone, whereas granite predominates in our Massif Central.

Near the Krong Ana river, the region around lake Dak Lak provides a typical example of these fertile pockets. Here and there, on the Bolovens Plateau, in Kasseng country, from Kontum to the southern part of the Darlac Plateau, on the Djiring plateau and the slopes of the lofty Chhlong, the red and black topsoils of the depressions, formed by the decomposition of the basalts, are used for crop growing and nowadays even plantations.

These scattered enclaves of fertility stand out in sharp contrast against the remainder of the highlands, which bristle with impenetrable jungle, and against the vast expanses of savannah and sparse woodland. These plateaus, these seemingly infinite tracts of for the most part poor land, are now the home of the mountain people whose history is summarized in this study.

2. THE TRIBES OF THE INTERIOR FORMERLY OCCUPIED THE COASTAL PLAINS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN VIETNAM

It seems probable that at first the mountain tribes inhabited the narrow strip of low-lying and relatively fertile plains which hugs the coastline, because some of their legends still speak of the sea. Driven out by invaders, they took refuge in the mountains. Safe behind the mountain ramparts overhanging the coast, they settled in the highlands, where fever and fear of the Spirits reign. The appalling reputation of these regions, the formidable slopes barring access to them, and the impoverishment of the soil repulsed would-be conquerors and deterred them from pursuing the fugitives, who had become "mountain people."

This term "mountain people" or MPS (Mountain People of Southern Indochina) calls for clarification: the MPS are not confined to the peaks, as are the Ka Taouat and the Ka Tu from the sources of the Len and the Banao, or the Meo, true mountain tribes which came from South China. To the Meo, altitude is a necessity; they are not at home at sea level. If they are forced to stay below about 5,000 ft., their systems react

dangerously; in any event, they have so far shown little inclination for cultivating irrigated paddyfields. On the other hand, numerous tribes of southern Indochina (the Sré, Bih, Mnong Rlam of Dak Lak) make excellent rice growers; some of them, for example in Quang Ngai, still live in delta areas. By and large, if men from the hinterland happen to be brought to the coast, they are neither surprised nor unduly awed by the sea. Moreover, if transplanted to the banks of the Mekong, they generally stand the move very well. This happened in the case of some of Po Cheun's companions: driven out of their country by the Jarai, they have been thriving for more than 50 years now in the neighborhood of Peam Chi Lang in Lower Cambodia. The Tiom Pueum and the Bih, too, who were expelled from their villages by the Mnong Preng in 1887, settled in lowland areas that had been left vacant by successive wars, raids and invasions.

In reality, therefore, the mountain people are plateau people.

3. THE HINTERLAND

Hinterland is the term applied to the regions of the interior that lie between the coastal plains of the South China Sea and the banks of the Mekong.

From an altitude of 8,125 ft. at Ataouat in the northeast and of 6,825 ft. on the La Mère et l'Enfant (Mother and Child) massif, the highest point in the southeast, the land drops away gradually to 1,950 ft. west of the Central Plateau and only a few hundred feet in the spurs and foothills of this plateau.

The administrative limits of the present-day MPS do not include all the mountain people of southern Indochina; their territory formerly comprised five provinces. From north to south, these were:

1. Kontum, in which the Bahnar and the Sedang were predominant.
2. Pleiku, inhabited chiefly by the Jarai.
3. Darlac (Ban Me Thuot), in which the most important groups were the Rhade and the Mnong.

4. Lang Bian and

5. Upper Donnai, both territories belonging to the former principality of the Che Ma.

If one were to confine oneself strictly to the history of these provinces, sizable groups of undeniable importance would be passed over, for example the Da-Vach of Quang Ngai, south of the Col des Nuages (Pass of the Clouds), who are traditional pickers of cinnamon and were formerly subjects of the Sonphong in Quang-ngai.

Under cover of the foothills that run seaward from the mountains of Annam, mountain people are sometimes found right up to the sea shore.

In Binh-dinh (2), Phu-yen, Khanh-hoa and Ninh-thuan, they occupy large areas, and the entire western part of these provinces is their domain.

In the southwest, the Kuoy, the Mahai and the Antor are spread out as far as the Mekong and even beyond, although they fall outside the scope of the present essay.

4. BOUNDARIES OF THE HINTERLAND

To the east, the hinterland begins with the lines of ridges that skirt and dominate the plains of central Vietnam. Along this eastern boundary the steep scarp face of the plateau effectively isolated and protected the Bahnar, the Sedang, the Jarai and the Rhade: the boundary is strikingly clear-cut. The races which inhabit the plateaus have remained relatively pure.

To the south, the boundary is irregular: it reaches almost to the coast near Ba-ria, then moves northward to beyond the Donnai river.

To the east of the median course of this river and as far as the Binhthuan extends a region of hills broken by marshes, "filthy mudholes" and impenetrable forests. It is here that the Che Ma took refuge after being driven from the plains of present-day Vietnam.

(2) Mr. Antoine has visited villages west of the La Hai valley, where the people, who describe themselves as Bahnar-Cham and Jarai-Cham, have maintained some relations with their parent stock on the plateaus.

Within the shelter of this "infernal" region, certain groups of Che Ma managed to retain their original character and qualities for a long time.

Next, the oblique boundary twists its way toward Hon-quan. Between Ta-Lai, situated on the R. Donnai (Done?--Translator), and the Song Be, it slopes gently upward to meet the Central Plateau.

The same transitional character is found reflected in the inhabitants of this region: they are the Stieng, a people whose original character changed on contact with the Vietnamese and Cambodians. Ease of access attracted outsiders into the area and, in a way, encouraged them to examine it and finally settle there.

From this quarter, lacking in protection from the mountains, the hinterland has frequently been crossed by traders and migrating tribes, as well as by others engaged in wars and pillaging.

5. THE CENTRAL PLATEAU OF INDOCHINA AND THE CENTRAL DEPRESSION

The sloping land of northern Indochina rises toward a region which has been called the Central Plateau of Indochina, known as the Yok Laych by the people who inhabit it. It is here that the Song Be rises and here, too, is the meeting point of the Three Frontiers (South and Central Vietnam and Cambodia).

The foothills of this plateau extend as far as Sre Khtum and almost to Kratie on the R. Mekong. At 150 km. north of the highest point of the "Yok Laych," halfway between the Ya Liau and the Se San, the terrain dips to form a depressed area which stretches as far as the outskirts of Kontum. These lowlands separate the northern part of the interior from the mountains of the south (Darlac, Lang Bian and the Central Plateau). East of this intrusion, the width of the high-altitude strip from east to west barely exceeds one hundred kilometers; at no other point in the whole of Indochina are the Highlands so narrow.

The flat land along the lower and central reaches of the Srepok is covered by sparse forest that is virtually uninhabited. The highlands,

and with them the mountain people, reappear around the 14th parallel N in the regions watered first by the Se San and then by the Se Kong, the Se Don and the Se Bang Hieng rivers.

Peaceful invasion by the T'ai came late to these parts. The broad tributaries of the Mekong (Se San, Se Kong, Se Don and Se Bang Hieng) favored the infiltration of outsiders into the interior. From Stung Treng to the Se Bang Hieng River, the western edge of the hinterland, which hugs the great river, is never farther than 50 km. from it.

CHAPTER II

THE INHABITANTS

1. MOUNTAIN PEOPLE OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

The population of the mountains of northern Indochina consists mainly of groups of Mongol origin, in particular the Meo, Man and Tho tribes, but in between the isolated blocks they form are found tribes whose physical type, customs and language are reminiscent of the more southerly MPS. This is true of the Bolovens, the Ta Hoi and the Ka Lu; others who live still farther north, e.g. the So, the Sek or the Sue, have undergone the influence of the Laotians, whose language they speak in addition to their own, which appears to be of Mon-Khmer origin. They have also taken over the Laotian method of writing, in addition to numerous customs. These Kha people, as they are called by the Laotians, are found in the north as far as Nape, and even beyond the Tran-ninh.

The limestone massif of Kebang, however, situated west of Dong-hoi, forms a natural barrier between the people of the north and of the south. I shall be mentioning the former only incidentally, as they are found in smallish groups and little is known of them; they are not part of the MPS and their history is bound up more with Laos. My study will be concerned to some extent with the tribes now dwelling south of the Kebang massif, but above all with the people who are found south of the 16th parallel, which runs through the approaches to Da Nang (Tourane) and the Col des Nuages (Pass of the Clouds).

2. FIRST HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

European maps make no mention of the mountain people until the 17th century, in 1645 to be precise. It was the missionaries who first revealed their existence. The first people they recorded on their maps were the Moi. Naturally, in showing Europe that these peoples existed they gave them a name. The Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Cham knew of them because they had had to fight against them to the west of the coastal plains of Vietnam,

but on the whole they did not differentiate among the various tribes which we distinguish there today.

The Chinese referred to them under the collective name of K'ouen Louen; the Vietnamese under that of Moi Thuoc and Moi Da-Vach, according to whether or not they were subject to the King of Hue; and the Cham under that of M'Lecchas (savages) or Kiratas (hill people). However, the Cham, who of all the people of the plains became the most actively involved in the life of the highland people, already knew the Rhade, the Jarai and the Ma.

3. ORIGINS OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Where do these peoples spring from? Even they do not know. Some Bih and Rhade legends claim they emerged from the bowels of the earth through the Bang Adregne hole. The Bolovens, Alak and some of the Rhade, according to their own traditions, originated in Vientiane or Muong Theng (Dien Bien Phu). Let us remember simply that they claim to come from the north; the most intriguing of these legends suggest that the peoples now inhabiting the plateaus of the interior first lived along the seashore. Other (Alak) versions indicate that they came from islands in the Pacific Ocean that have now vanished beneath the waters.

This particular version, which tallies fairly closely with present geological data, would also serve to explain the familiarity which springs up so quickly between the mountain folk and the sea; at the same time, it would account for disconcerting similarities between certain people on the Asiatic and American seaboards of the Pacific Ocean.

"The most obvious conclusion to draw from this fact is that the original inhabitants of Indochina and the Malay Archipelago were akin to those still living on the islands of the Pacific today."⁽³⁾

4. MELANESIANS

In the light of present-day ethnological knowledge, there is seen to be an extremely wide variety of physical types and languages in the hinterland.

(3) Coedès, "Histoire des pays hindouisés de l'Extreme-Orient," p. 4.

Bone remains found in the lowest layers of prehistoric deposits, for example at Linh Cam, suggest that Indochina was originally inhabited by Negroes, Papuans and Melanesians similar to the aborigines of Australia and New Guinea. These people have now disappeared from Southeast Asia. In former times they appear to have spread from one side of the Pacific Ocean to the other.

In Indochina, the chipped stone tools that it has been possible to classify prove that these races extended northward as far as Tonkin. There are probably still pygmies in the hinterland of Dong Hoi near the approaches to the Mu Gia Pass (Col de Mu-gia), while farther to the south certain dolichocephalic individuals with curly or frizzy hair now appear to be survivals from a very distant past.

5. INDONESIANS

Still in very remote times, though at a slightly later stage, people of Indonesian race became superimposed upon and intermixed with the former Negrito stock, of whom only scattered traces remain.

It is this Indonesian race which is now predominant on the plateaus of Indochina; it is also found in Indonesia and on the islands of Polynesia. Perhaps it was this race which first brought neolithic and "polished-stone" industry to the Far East. The Malays arrived later, but, settling along the coast, they cross-bred very extensively.

According to some scholars (Kern, Cabaton), southern Indochina was the birthplace of the Austronesian or Polynesian race. "The cave-dwellers of Pho Binh Gia seem to represent the earliest type of this race" (Mansuy), which presumably then spread throughout the Pacific Ocean. The path followed by these peoples appears to be marked by the Bac Son massif in Tonkin and by the caverns of Annam, 600 km. farther south. These early inhabitants of Indochina may be compared with the Wadjak of Java.

Others hold that these Indonesians came from the Malay islands or possibly from Borneo, from where they radiated westward to Indochina--some claim even to India--and eastward to the islands of the Pacific.

6. MOUNTAIN PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN INDOCHINA RELATED TO COASTAL PEOPLES
OF THE PACIFIC

The dialects, art and certain features of the customs of the mountain people of Indochina are reminiscent of those of certain Pacific peoples. For example, the sacrificial poles of the upper Quang Nam and the way in which they are decorated call to mind the art of the Maori of New Zealand. The breeding of hogs with curved canines is common both to the Polynesians and to the Ka Tu who live at the foot of Mt. Ataouat and Mt. Bana. In two fact-filled articles in this Bulletin, Mr. Pierre Paris drew attention to some details that are common both to the mountain people of Indochina and to some tribes of American Indians: feathers are used to decorate the turbans of the Jarai; ivory or wooden earrings are common to the Indians of Honduras and to the Che Ma of the Djiring region. Like the Sre, the Incas also believe that the sun contains the souls of the departed.

Coedès writes: "Long before the arrival of foreign seafarers (he was referring to the Hindus), these peoples had their own navies."

The voyage recently undertaken by Norwegian scholars, who cast off from Peru and were carried as far as Polynesia by the winds and the currents, gives some insight into how these navigators were able to make use of the natural elements. Far from being the savages their conquerors claim, the tribes of the hinterland of Indochina probably represent a lost civilization, "which developed close to the sea, along the coastal rivers of Annam" (Coedès).

Some of these Indonesians came from the north. In this respect, ethnologists are in agreement with what can be unraveled from the legends of the Halang, the Niaheun, the Bolovens, etc. But others came from islands in the Ocean, and it is therefore impossible, without some reservations, to accept the claim that the mountain tribes of southern Indochina originally formed a single people.

7. DIVERSITY OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Widely differing physical types are found within each tribe. The Jarai alone have such a large number of men of tall stature that in former times recruiting parties used to leave behind men less than 5 feet 7 inches tall.

On the plateaus one comes across faces whose features have a distinctly European cast; others call to mind the Australian aborigines, and yet others the American Indians. Their hair, though generally sleek, is occasionally wavy and sometimes frizzy. Among the Sek a large number of men with reddish-brown hair are observed.

As a rule, all the tribes deny the ascendancy of the mother within the family structure, although the rice growers form an exception to this rule. This fact makes it inaccurate to attribute to all the mountain people the custom of migrating slowly within a confined area. The only characteristic common to these people seems to be their reluctance or inability to accept a hierarchy or authority extraneous to their own villages. For centuries, kingdoms or even confederations are found only very exceptionally in their history.

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CHAPTER III

THE SETTING OF THE MPS AND THEIR RELATIONS
WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

1. IN ANCIENT TIMES

Very little is known of Indochina in ancient times. The mountain people have no history, nor do they attach any importance to it, the notion of events being spread out in time being entirely foreign to them. Their legends, although frequently picturesque, gives us virtually no insight into their distant past.

A Mnong legend speaks of a flying man, and reference has already been made to traditional evidence that the Indonesians spent some time near the seashore, and to their advanced navigational skills.

The legends barely spread beyond the immediate domain of the tribes; each group has its own but more often than not is ignorant of those of its neighbors.

It is to the races with histories, the Hindus and above all the Chinese, that we must turn for clues as to how the mountain people now living on the plateaus of Indochina were led to settle there.

Populated by Melanesians and later by Indonesians, ancient Indochina, to use the expression of both Hindu and Chinese historians, was "inhabited by naked men."

As Alfred Foucher points out, nakedness is not a measure of "savageness." These primitive tribes possessed a certain civilization that was not entirely unlike that of pre-Aryan India. Moreover, it is believed that these early inhabitants maintained relations by sea not only with India but also with the shore dwellers of the Pacific and with Indonesia.

2. RELATIONS WITH INDIA

The relations of the Hindus with the Indochinese peninsula are the first on record. Even before the great revolutions of the second century had driven the vanquished parties to what is called Outer India, Hindu merchants came to reconnoiter the coast of Indochina. They learned that the country produced spices, perfumed woods and resins, and above all gold. We know that the countries of Southeast Asia were reputed to contain inexhaustible reserves of this metal, hence the name "Golden Chersonese."^{*} Accordingly, the Hindus set up trading stations in the Mekong estuary and along the coast of Vietnam.

Conversely, Indonesian traders from Indochina sailed to the shores of India and founded small groups in some of the major ports.

This sea-borne trading paved the way for the settlement of Hindus along the Indochinese coast. They arrived at a time when the "great prehistoric migrations of the Melanesians, Indonesians and Austro-Asians

*Old word for peninsula, from the Greek: chersos - dry; and nēsos - island.

had come to an end," in other words, after the Indonesians had become established along the coast of the Indochinese peninsula.

Trade and the quest for luxury articles, intensified by the creation of the Empire of Alexander the Great, caused the Hindus to press on into Southeast Asia, which extends from Burma to the islands of Indonesia and to China. The rise of Buddhism, the struggles, and particularly the weakening of the caste system which ensued, gave added impetus to Hindu migrations toward Indochina.

3. FIRST HINDU SETTLEMENTS AND THEIR EFFECTS

The Hindus settled chiefly near the estuary of the Mekong River. It was here that they had their trading posts. What they brought with them in the way of art, culture and language had practically no influence on the local inhabitants, but, simply for the sake of their business, the Hindus were unable to put up with the particularism and anarchy of these tribes. From these trading posts they promulgated their political views and their conception of royalty. It is not known today whether the people merely offered no resistance, whether they actively sought to elect a Hindu leader (as would appear to have been the case with the Brahman Kaundinya, founder of Funan), or whether for that matter the settlers gave their backing to an influential local notable who subsequently consolidated his position by adopting the Hindu faith; the fact remains, however, that the first kingdom, or rather the first confederation of scattered principalities, was formed in this way in the 2nd century of the Christian era: it was Funan.

4. FUNAN

Funan was the name given by the Chinese to what we now call Cambodia. In addition to the lake region, it appears to have included present-day Cochin-China, that is, the alluvial land of the Mekong delta, where rice growing was possible.

Originally, Funan also encompassed the southern provinces of Central Vietnam (south of Cape Varella); after the 3rd century A.D., it fell to the Cham.

5. HINDUIZED INDONESIANS AND INDONESIANS OF THE MOUNTAINS

Those of the natives who were unwilling to submit to the new rulers of the plains, or to accept their monarchical system and the customs they had brought with them, were led by their liking for independence to withdraw into the mountains and forests.

A difference therefore began to spring up between the hinduized and the other Indonesians, and it was the latter who formed the first groups of mountain people.

The distinction, however, was not always clear. The search for precious products sometimes took the Funanese far up into the mountains, where they found their old tribal kinsfolk. From them they endeavored to obtain not only gold but also some of the highly prized commodities that are found in the mountains, such as ivory, rare woods and resins. What is more, the need for labor led to raids to provide slaves for the rulers of Funan.

By reason of these forays and expeditions, and of the reprisals and pillaging that resulted, the mountain folk remained in touch with the "civilized" people of the plains. It may be supposed that, starting at this remote period of time, the Funanese language must have left its imprint on that of the natives: "Their dialect and their blood will by this time have received such a heavy Mon-Khmer admixture that it will no longer be possible to recognize them as the original brothers of the Moi of the Annam hinterland" (Maj. Nyo).

6. THE CHAMPA

During the time that Funan was being established and was gaining firm control of the Mekong delta, other Hindu immigrants and seafarers, carried by the current which had borne them eastward from India and urged on, no

doubt, by the desire to establish links among the trading posts they had strung out along the coast, began to advance along the southern seaboard (present-day Vietnam), subduing unruly native tribes as they went. They organized them to form a new confederation which the Chinese at first called the Lin Yi, but which we know under the name Champa.

7. EXPANSION OF THE CHAMPA

This kingdom comprised tribes of Indonesians who had not yet become hinduized. A certain K'iu Lien formed an embryonic version of what might be termed a Cham state. In 136 A.D. a thousand "barbarians from south of the Pass of the Clouds" attacked the Chinese sub-prefecture of Siang Lin, which appears to have occupied the southern part of the present province of Thua Thien.

By 192, the Cham had established themselves in the south in what are today Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan, taking land from Funan in the process.

In the north, taking advantage of the tottering Han dynasty, the Cham again attacked Je Nan (between the Gate of Annam and the Pass of the Clouds) and one of their chiefs proclaimed himself king of Siang Lin. According to Mr. Coedès, the Cham who led this offensive in 193 were probably hinduized. In 248 they conquered the region of Hue.

8. RESISTANCE BY THE EARLIER COASTAL DWELLERS

It is unlikely that the earlier occupants allowed themselves to be driven off good land without resistance: "Before relinquishing the coastal areas and retreating to the cover of the mountains and the Darlac plateaus, the Jarai and the Rhade fought many battles against their former Cham brothers, now turned invaders." At all events, the memory of their common origins has survived to the present day: "We and the Cham are brothers with the same mother."

As in Funan, the adoption of a foreign culture by a section of the population had the effect of thrusting back into the mountains the tribes

farthest from the coast and most jealous of their independence. Here again, the earliest inhabitants of Indochina tended to split up into two groups: the mountain people, who stuck to their age-old customs, and their kinsfolk who stayed behind on the coast. They, the Cham, changed on contact with the Hindus, whose influence was most pronounced in the matter of language. The Khmer-ized mountain people occupy the hinterland north of a line drawn between Qui Nhon and Stung Treng, while a second group stretches south of the 12th parallel.

The area between these two branches originating in the west, in Cambodia, gradually came to be filled with tribes spreading like a wedge from the east and from the Annam coast. These tribes--the Blao, from Phu Yen, the Mdhur, Chur and Krung, and finally two major groups, the Jarai in the north and the Rhade in the south--show signs of being influenced by the Champa and its language. Separate from this nucleus, but similarly influenced by the Cham, the Roglai form a semicircle round the last surviving bastion of the Cham at Phan Ri/Phan Rang.

9. TRADE AND WARS

Despite the steep mountain wall protecting the tribes which had retreated to the safety of the plateaus, the Cham attempted to remain in touch with them. We know what highland products the traders had always sought after.

The Cham had remained a warlike people; the inroads which their acquisitive urge led them to undertake toward the west--the country of gold, ivory and aloes-wood*--aroused a considerable reaction on the part of the inhabitants of the hinterland. For the mountain people, the appearance of the Champa and its attempts to encroach on the plateaus led to wars that were to flare up periodically for as long as this kingdom remained powerful.

*The French "bois d'aigle" has two meanings in English: (1) aloes-wood: the heart of the Asiatic tree *Aquilaria Agallocha*, which when burned gives off a fragrant, resinous odor, much appreciated by the ancients and still used widely in India and the East; and (2) eagle-wood: the inner section of the trunk of a tropical Asiatic tree which is used for fumigation and as an incense. The two English terms are thus virtually interchangeable, although (2) will be preferred in this translation on account of its unmistakable similarity to the French term.

10. THE CHAM AND THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Their skirmishes with the Cham did not prevent the mountain people from developing feelings of respect and gratitude for their masters. They were to miss them when, after the collapse of the Cham hegemony, the inhabitants of the hinterland came under the domination of new rulers. It is known that when the peoples of the plateaus were required to pay tribute-money to the Vietnamese, the latter having overrun the entire territory of the Champa, they nonetheless continued to pay their tax to the Cham mandarins, who transmitted it to the Court of Hue. Moreover, as the guardians of the royal insignia and last treasures of the Cham, the mountain people have always had great respect for these precious relics. Indeed, until relatively recently, a call for help from a latter-day princess of the Champa royal house--who had admittedly fallen on very hard times--was all that was needed to bring the people of the forests rushing to offer her all the services at their command, without expecting any form of reward for their trouble.

Such devotion is accounted for more than anything by the approach which the Cham adopted; they behaved less like conquerors than like guardians and advisers: "Far from being wiped out by the conquerors, the natives found in the Hindu society--transplanted from its source and grown more flexible--a framework within which their own societies were able to find identity and develop." This is so true that whereas the Cham are now reduced to only a few thousand souls, the mountain people are far more numerous than they were before. The Cham merely sought to establish traditional ties, without political dependence. They accepted the mountain people as they were and respected their customs, without forcing upon them either their chiefs or their hierarchy.

11. INFLUENCE OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE ON THE CHAM

It is almost certain that the Cham even accepted the mountain people as kings. This much we are able to glean from certain legends. The Cham were quite happy to marry the daughters of the mountain people;

though the marriage of Choi Koho to the Cham Nai Tolui was reputed to be a bad match, such unions later became so much the accepted practice that Glui Glah, a Cham chief, sought the hand of a highland girl in marriage. We also learn from the legend of Du Droe that the husbands of two mountain girls were chosen by the Cham to be regional chiefs.

This legend, one of the most striking in the entire folklore of the Sre, celebrates both the happiness and the strength that such marriages between mountain girls and the Cham brought to the country. For confirmation of this we can turn to history itself, rather than to legend.

According to Mr. Rolf Stein, the accession of the Fan family to the Champa throne (Fan Hiong ascended the throne in 270, was succeeded by Fan Yi, etc.) marked the assumption of power by the indigenous element, possibly with the support of the people. In this family, as with the Indonesians, princes inherited their right to the throne through their mother and not their father. The Hindus, on the other hand, and the peoples to whom they brought civilization, remained faithful to their custom of handing the crown down from father to son.

12. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHAM OCCUPATION AND ITS BENEFITS

What is more, the benefits which the MPS owe to their former conquerors have not been forgotten by them: the end of human sacrifice, and the expansion of the mountain people which followed; the art of training elephants and, in all probability, that of metalworking, as well as that of cultivating the paddyfields and irrigating, in which not only the Sre but also the Bih, the Cop, the Mngong Rlam and the Mdhur of the lower Song Ba valley excelled.

Memories such as these explain the loyalty of the peoples of the hinterland toward their conquerors; even the taxes were usually agreed to without undue resistance. And if the Cham were able to send large quantities of ivory, rhinoceros horn, eagle-wood, perfumes and medicinal plants as tribute to the Chinese Court, then these products undoubtedly

came from the highlands. So much gold accumulated in the Cham capital that when it fell to the Chinese in 446 it yielded 100,000 pounds.

13. THE VIETNAMESE

Thus far, we have seen the land around the mountain people of the hinterland gradually becoming occupied by people from India. The great thrust which carried them eastward became deflected toward the north along the coast of Vietnam and seemingly petered out near the Gate of Annam.

"Nowhere are the Hindus on record as having undertaken military conquest and annexation systematically in behalf of a State or metropolis" (Coedès).

Subsequently, another wave of invaders was to sweep through the country, this time from the north: having settled in Tonkin around the 4th century B.C. and undergone colonization by the Chinese in the 2nd century, the Vietnamese were to act not through infiltration, nor through trade, as the Hindus had done, but by conquest. Freed from Chinese control in 934, they succumbed almost at once to the attraction of the regions of the south and their rich rice-fields. Inevitably, they came up against the Cham, whom they began to drive back in 1003; by 1301 they had pushed them south of the Pass of the Clouds.

The conquerors must have hugged the eastern edge of the hinterland farther and farther south, since by the 17th century they occupied the entire coast of Annam as far as present-day Cochin-China. Their territorial conquest was accompanied by incursions into the mountains, resistance by the men of the plateaus, and raids by both sides. But this struggle never resulted in races being annihilated, nor in their wholesale and complete eviction, as happened with the Red Indians in America, the aborigines in Australia, or the Yukaghirs in Siberia. There is no record of any race having been wiped out among the MPS.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST CONFEDERATIONS OF MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

1. FORMATION AND DIFFERENTIATION OF DIALECTS

We have described how one branch of the Malay-Polynesians, which became the Cham people, yielded to the control of the Hindus and allowed itself to be civilized. The others, farther away in the interior, retained their primitive customs and continued to be regarded as the "savages."

To begin with, the Cham were not to follow them into their "impene-trable" domain, although "continuing relations and a deep-seated affinity were destined to subsist between these two quite different offshoots from the parent stock."

"Thus, close to the Champa kingdom, there was to develop the nucleus of a large Moi family that was to produce descendants embodying many Cham elements. It is this family which has spread over the Jarai and Darlac plateaus and along the Annamitic range from Phu Yen to Binh Thuan--the Jarai, the Rhade and the Rglai. It is also the family that bears the closest resemblance to the Malay type.

"In the meantime, on the Mekong side, the Malay-Polynesian indigenous tribes, cut off from the original branch by the kingdom of Funan and later by that of Tchenla, were undergoing very different destinies that were to make them more and more unlike their sister tribes on the Annamitic slopes.

"By about the 6th century, the kingdom of Tchenla extended as far as Chantaboun, Battambang, the Dangrek, the Khone falls, Bassac, and Attopeu.

"In Tchenla the monarchs of Mon-Khmer stock were to change pro-foundly the natives they subjugated. By the time the latter, in order to escape from their bondage, fled the plains and retreated toward the interior, they had already altered to an enormous extent. Their dialect and their blood must by now have received such a heavy admixture of Mon-^{they} Khmer origin that/could no longer be recognized as the original brothers

of the Cham and the Moi of the Annam hinterland."

It is these families, apparently the last survivors of the tribes of Funan and Tchenla, which make up:

- the western groups: Che Ma, Stieng, Muong or Phnong, with their numerous subsidiary peoples, such as the Preng, the Biet, the Noong.
- the northeastern groups: Bahnar, Sedang, Bolovens, Tahoi, etc., whose dialect is shot with Khmer elements and whose skin on occasion is deeply tinted.

Mr. P. Guilleminet points out, on the other hand, that the Khmer influence "made a far deeper impression on the Bahnar and Sedang of Kontum than on certain tribes of the Upper Donnai, and would appear to have been exceedingly weak, if not nil, on the Rhade and the Jarai"(4).

"However, primitive and independent principalities--more warlike in nature or better protected by the inaccessibility of their territory-- must have continued to exist side by side with the two great kingdoms that ruled southern Indochina between them, the Tchenla and the Lin Yi (Cambodia and Champa)."(5)

2. FAN WEN

This Wen, a native of Kiang Sou in China, became adviser to the Cham king Fan Yi and served him so well that he became more and more powerful. When his master died in 336, he usurped the crown. First of all, Wen pacified the savage tribes in the interior of the kingdom who still formed independent states, and later went on to attack the tall and the short Kik'iai, the Che Pou, the Siu Lang, the K'iu Tou, the Kan Lou and the Fou Tan, all of whom were savages who spoke a primitive tongue (Maspero).

"They tattoo their faces and bodies and run naked. Of all the Moi conquered by Wen, the Jarai and Rhade were the most warlike" (Henri Maitre).

Among the chiefs which the mountain people elected to rule them-- following the example set by the Cham and thus reacting against their own

(4) P. Guilleminet, "Recherches sur les croyances des tribus du Haut-pays d'Annam, les Bahnar du Kontum et leurs voisins, les magiciens," B.L.I.E.H., 1941, pp. 9-33.

(5) Maj. Nyo, "La pénétration française dans les pays moi," B.S.E.L., XII, 2, 1937, pp. 48-49.

natural tendency to anarchy--we should perhaps mention the princes of the Ma and the "sadet" of the Jarai. The power of both kinglets was at best exceedingly precarious.

3. THE PRINCIPALITY OF THE MA

The indications are that the Ma abandoned the plains of Cochin-China only after a prolonged period of domination by Funan by which they became deeply influenced. They settled in a very inhospitable region, in the tract of hills, forests and swamps that extends from the coast near present-day Binh Thuan (Binh Thanh?) as far as the middle and upper reaches of the R. Donnai (Done?). This unproductive strip of land forms a link between southern Annam and the country of the Stieng. For all its unpleasantness, it nonetheless provided a passage to Cambodia.

Each of the groups (Chrau, Koho, Chasre, Cop, Chato) belonging to the principality grew what crops it could on its soil and traded its produce with its neighbors. The Che Ma were renowned for their skill in harvesting and weaving cotton, from which they made blankets and clothing.

This State, which was to survive until the 17th century, was a free principality, although under the suzerainty of Cambodia. The sway of the Che Ma princes stretched southwest to the Lagna basin and northward onto the present-day plateaus of Djiring and Lang Bian.

4. THE JARAI AND THEIR "SADET"

Farther to the north the Jarai had settled, or the Mada, as the Cham called them. This sturdy and warlike tribe retained its independence. As chiefs it had two sorcerers: the Patau Ya or Water King and the Patau Pui or Fire King. They lived apart from each other and were supposed never to meet. If they did, it would bring down unspeakable calamities on the country. For the same reasons, they similarly took care not to be seen by their subjects.

The Patau Ya, lord of the waters, possessed the power to cause rain, floods and even a deluge that would cover the earth.

Their authority was purely mystical and never concerned itself with things temporal. It extended to the Jarai, all the Bahnar and some of the Sedang, to mention only the north. "Though rarely willing to submit to any authority, they all recognized the Sadet."(6)

5. THE PATAU PUI AND THE CAMBODIANS

The Fire King was the depositary and guardian of a magic saber (7), the prah khan of the Cambodians. Legend has it that a Cham king had drawn this saber out of a river in which, although submerged, it continued to glow. Like the Cambodians, both the Jarai and the Rhade claimed possession of the sabre. Po The entrusted the blade to the Fire Lord of the Jarai, while the Khmer apparently gained possession of the scabbard, which they carried off to their capital. Jayavarman II (802-854) had a fabulous palace built to house the talisman. By thus dividing ownership of the blade and the scabbard, Heaven was showing that it wished to see the Jarai and the Cambodians live on good terms with each other and exchange gifts. These precepts were observed until the end of the 19th century. During the reign of H.M. Norodom, in 1860, the Sadet ceased to receive the convoys which the Khmer monarchs used to despatch with great pomp from the monastery of Sambok to the residence of the Patau Pui and the Patau Ya "in the Ayonapar region," that is, in the region of the Ayun, a tributary of the Song Ba (Yapa). The Sadets had therefore settled near the confluence of the Ayun and Song Ba rivers (8).

As late as the beginning of the 19th century, the Sadet, who were traditionally selected from the Siu clan (through their mother), still preserved their attachment to this region. When the kings of Cambodia stopped sending their offerings to the two magician-chiefs, the latter also refrained from dispatching theirs, which were of very little value

(6) P. Guilleminet, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-33.

(7) "This weapon was not a mere object, or a sign of alliance with the spirits. It was, and this is unique, a relic, the possession of which made the Sadet the heir of the yang (spirits)." (P. Guilleminet, *ibid.*)

(8) The list of the gifts sent every three years by the Khmer king: 2 bull elephants, 2 star-spangled palanquins in which to ride on them, 60 buffaloes, ceremonial langooties, striped clothing, mattresses and cushions, 2 rice and 2 water services, 2 red costumes with accessories, musical instruments, long-handled parasols, pottery, 100 napkins, 100 bowls, 2 wagonloads of salt, 500 ingots of iron and 20 of lead, clothes and bolts of silk, 200 needles, etc.

anyway in comparison with the rich flow of presents they received from Cambodia. Let us compare them for a moment: the Sadet sent their sovereign a little ivory and a rhinoceros horn on behalf of the two Patau; and, from each of them, a cake of beeswax bearing the imprint of the right thumb. This paucity of the vassals' dues makes the lavishness of the sovereign's gifts even more astounding by comparison. Historians have long sought to explain this anomaly. Some assume that on some unknown occasion, possibly before the Cham invasion, the Sadets had helped their king out of a difficult predicament. To this day, however, the greatest authorities on Cambodian history admit they have no idea what form this service could have taken. Nor does folklore do much to clarify matters: "By giving the Cambodians the scabbard, which is lesser than the sword, could Po The have been trying to suggest that in the exchange of gifts between the Khmer kings and the Sadets, those from the Cambodians were to be greater?" In the message which accompanied the shipment of presents every three years, the Cambodian sovereign enjoined the magician-chiefs of Ayonapar: "to remain ammachas (rulers) of all Rhade, Jarai and Phnong territory, as you have been from antiquity to the present, and to guard the roads and the forests well against all enemies." The Sadets were thus put in charge of defending the outer limits of the Khmer realm. Be this as it may, the Cambodians seemed to attribute magic powers to the gifts they received from Ayonapar, which considerably enhanced their value. In grave emergencies, the kings of Angkor or Lovek used to invoke these powers: "Whenever the king, in an attempt to break the drought, decided to pray to the five Kshatriyas--protectors of the kingdom--the piece of ivory, the rhinoceros horn and the costume sent by the Fire King and the Water King would be brought out and sprinkled with lustral water while the four Maharajahs squatted underneath them, croaking like frogs." We are at grips with the miraculous.

It is recorded that if the Bok Redau (Patau Pui) was on the point of dying his attendants would "help him on his way" by delivering the

coup de gr^âce; moreover, if his successor was not designated by the yang, as required by tradition (9), the new Patau Pui would be selected from among the dignitaries who had assisted his predecessor during his lifetime. A chieftain of the Ksor family would then tie a bracelet of cotton thread around his wrist, after which the new Sadet selected the officials who were to serve him. His jurisdiction embraced the Hagou, the Golar, the Habau, the Jarai and others. His trips into the interior of his fief were regulated, as were the offerings that each village visited was expected to make to him in the course of his official tours.

CHAPTER V

MOUNTAIN REGIONS CAUGHT BETWEEN WARRING KHMERS AND CHAM FROM 11th TO 15th CENTURY

1. AREA RULED BY THE KHMERS

Besides the Sadets of the Jarai people, the King of Cambodia held sway over the tribes along the banks of the Prek Te, the Prek Chhlong, and the lower reaches of the rivers Se San, Se Kong, Se Don and Se Bank Hieng, although, in the case of the latter, only until the end of the 13th century. This date marks the beginning of the gradual retreat of the Khmer empire toward the south. The invasion by the T'ai, Laotians or Siamese from the north was to weaken and subsequently curtail the domination of the Khmers, which, in the 10th century, extended over the northern part of the Malay peninsula, the Menam basin, the north of present-day Laos as far as the divide between the Black River and the Song Ma, and finally the highland strip overlooking the plains of Annam.

By the beginning of the 14th century, the Khmer had lost all control of the regions situated north of a line drawn between the island of Khong and Qui Nhon.

(9) When the Sadet dies, the young warriors gather in the longhouse; while they are asleep, one of the elders suddenly cries out: "Who will be the Bok Redau?" Still asleep, one of the young men answers, "It is I." When they wake up the next morning, they notice that on his wrist he is wearing a bracelet, a thread of cotton tied there by the yang (spirits).

Throughout its rule, Cambodia had maintained "relations with the Moi tribes in its hinterland, penetrating as far as the Darlac plateau, ..., since it was possible for wagons from Cambodia to reach the heart of this plateau" (Henri Maitre).

Farther to the south, the Mngong and the Che Ma tribes, darker-skinned and more or less interbred with the Khmers, were frequently pillaged by troops led by the kings of Angkor, and it was to them that Cambodia turned for slaves. Accordingly, these tribes "sought their salvation in withdrawing into the heart of the mountains."

In addition to slaves, the Cambodian and to a far greater extent the Chinese traders took back from these regions deerskins and forest products (wax and gamboge), as well as gold and, of course, rhinoceros horn and ivory. Here, as was true throughout the interior, the main trading commodity was salt.

2. THE PLATEAUS, BATTLEFIELD OF THE WARRING KHMER AND CHAM PEOPLES

Khmer troops frequently marched through the interior. In 1051 and again in 1065, the king of Cambodia had to quell uprisings. The leader of the second revolt, crossing the mountains of the interior, fled to the Champa kingdom with his army.

The year 1113, when Suryavarman II ascended the throne, marked the start of a "hundred years' war" between the Khmers and the Cham.

In 1123 and 1145, when the Cambodians occupied the Champa kingdom, and again in 1148, the warriors of these countries swept across the plateaus, and we know that any tribes who happened to be in their way paid dearly.

In 1150, yet another Cambodian force crossed the mountains, this time in the direction of Tonkin.

In 1177, the Cham once more turned to the offensive, driving their chariots from Binh Dinh toward Angkor. The expedition was ill-fated, but in the following year a naval force, pressing inland from the coast of the Champa, seized the Khmer capital. The Khmer kingdom was thereupon annexed and remained a Cham province until 1181. It took the great king

Jayavarman VII (1181- after 1200) to liberate Cambodia, a success which he followed up by taking control, in his turn, of the kingdom of his enemies. A great builder of temples, Jayavarman VII also built roads that later drew words of admiration from Tcheou Ta Kouan, the celebrated Chinese traveler: "Along the road are resting places rather like our own relay stations." One of these roads ran clean across the hinterland, linking Angkor with the capital of the Champa kingdom.

3. WESTERN PART OF THE PLATEAUS OCCUPIED BY THE CHAM

The mountain people played an extremely important part in the history of the Champa. From 939, the year in which Vietnam succeeded in throwing off the Chinese yoke, the northern frontier of the Champa was the scene of continual turmoil.

In 1069, the king of the Cham, Rudravarman III, was forced to yield Quang Binh and Quant Tri to the Ly; this event heralded the beginning of the Vietnamese advance toward the south.

Seventy-six years later (sic), in 1149, the Khmers had invaded the Champa, as mentioned earlier, and the first task of Jaya Harivarman I was to drive out the Cambodians from his country again. He then had to reassert his authority over the "Kirata" (mountain people): the Rhade, Mada, and others, who had taken advantage of the difficulties plaguing the Cham to come down from the plateaus and seize control of the plain. These insurgents found a leader in Vamcaraja, brother-in-law of the king of the Champa. Vamcaraja asked the Vietnamese for help, and in the tenth month of the year 1150 they sent troops from Thanh Hoa and Nghe An.

The mountain people and the Vietnamese put up a tremendous fight, but were unable to triumph over the enemy armies. Vamcaraja, their chief, died on the battlefield, along with his ally Nguyen Mong, the Vietnamese leader.

The date 1150 is an important milestone in the history of the tribes of the hinterland, since it marks the start of the conquest and occupation

of part of the plateaus by the Cham. This occupation was to last for 300 years.

Pressing home his victory, Jaya Harivarman pursued the Kirata into the highlands, and it was then that the Cham won control of the northern Darlac plateau by advancing up the Song Nang valley; this admirable penetration route forged by the course of the Song Ba and the Ayun rivers brought them to the land of the Jarai and the Rongao. They appear to have exerted an influence over the Jarai and the Sadet region for a considerable time. Although the southern part of the Darlac plateau was spared, their influence seems to have been particularly strong on the tribes that had settled in the mountains running from Phy Yen to Binh Thuan (the Blao and the Roglai).

Cham monuments abounded throughout this empire, and their ruins are held in awe and reverence even today; there are the towers of Yang Mum and Drang Lai, near Cheo Reo; the towers and the small walled town of the Mhong on the Eahleo (Yang Prong), 40 km. north of Ban Dou; a rasung batau (10), near Ban Me Thuot and Keu Deu (Ko Do), beside the Meteung (11), east of Pleiku, and last but not least the altars that can still be seen today here and there up to the approaches to Kontum. The conquest may even have extended as far as Veun Sai in the west, as Henri Maitre writes that he has heard reports of remains, "possibly of Cham origin," in the vicinity of this town.

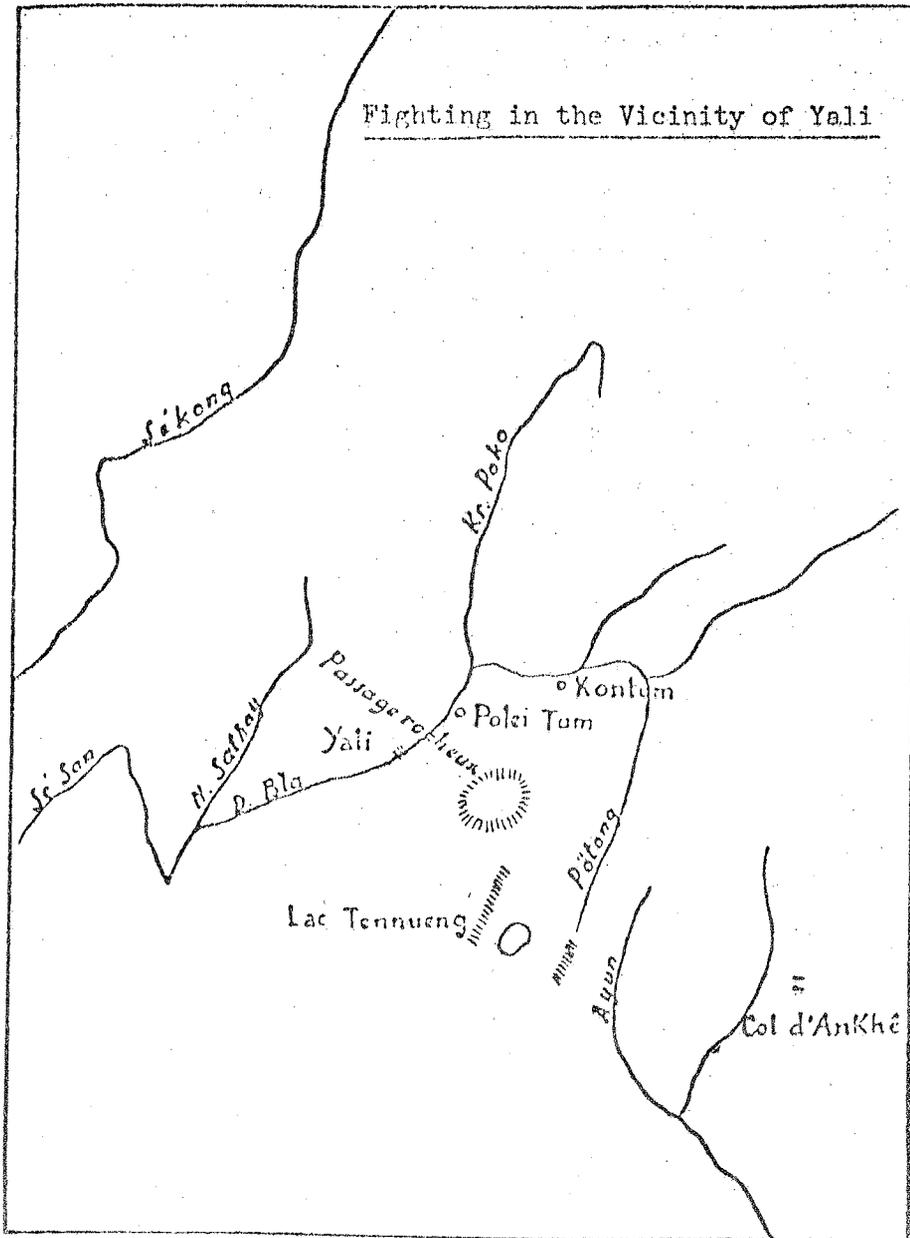
To facilitate movement within the whole of the area they had taken over and to enable their settlers to become established, the Cham opened up roads. French explorers discovered the one which led from Kontum to Quang Nam, although attempts made since to reopen this road have proved unavailing.

This control of the country, tantamount to a stranglehold, explains why the Cham king, Indravarman V should have taken refuge in the mountains in 1283, at the time of the Mongol invasion toward the end of the 13th century. Either by persuasion or coercion, he appears to have prevailed

(10) Rasung batau: ceremonial washing urn transported nearly to Ban Me Thuot.

(11) Meteung or Po Tong. These ruins are found at the edge of the swamps from which the Meteung draws its waters.

FIG. 2



on the people to supply him with armies, which he despatched to fight the invader: "Entrenched in his mountain fastness, he continually rebuilt his forces which were promptly put to rout by the Mongols. The invaders, however, were unable to make any real progress in a country where they suffered from the heat, from sickness and from lack of provisions" (12). Indravarman V came down to the plains again in 1285, when Sagatou, the general commanding the enemy forces, had been defeated by the armies of Tran Nhan Ton in Thanh Hoa province.

Nonetheless, the dynamic thrust that had earlier carried the Cham deep into the hinterland finally petered out. To the north, the Jarai and the Rongao still cherish the memory of the defeats they inflicted on the invaders.

Henri Maitre lists the battles fought by the mountain people against the retreating Cham, in the following chronological order ("Jungles Moi," p. 443):

1. Battle of Lake Tenueng, north of Pleiku, at which the Cham were drowned;
2. Battle of the River Peto (Po Tong), 5 km. south of Kontum;
3. Battle of the Jrai Li (Ya Li) falls on the Dak Bla.

Knowledgeable authorities have pointed out that this succession of encounters would have thrust the Cham back toward the west or northwest, but there appears to be no reason why the fugitives should have retreated in this direction. The Bahnar consulted by Mr. Antoine are categorical on one particular: that the Cham came from the west. From Ya Li they are said to have moved first toward Lake Tenueng and later toward the road to An Khe so as to reach the coast. This route appears to be the more likely.

It may therefore be assumed, as the Bahnar contend, that the Cham were intending to cross the Dak Bla upstream of the Ya Li falls, where the river is easy to ford. The mountain people laid in wait for the enemy at this point, very close to Dom (marked as Polei Tum on the 1:400,000 road map), and cut them to pieces.

(12) G. Maspéro, "Histoire du Champa."

The survivors were pursued into the region that extends between the Dak Bla and Lake Tenueng; the latter hugged the path that led on from there to An Khe. The Bahnar who have been asked about the matter have heard no stories of Cham being drowned in Lake Tenueng. Mr. H. Maitre gives the following account: "At the very bottom of the lake, say the Jarai, lay the great jar of the Ia Tiaou, the Seron Yuan; now, by diverting all the water into the Menam plain (a vast swamp area 5 km. north of Lake Tenueng), the Cham had greatly lowered the water level. The jar, however, was blocking the mouth of the spring and therefore, when the Cham tried to remove it, the waters came gushing out in torrents, engulfing the Cham and refilling the lake."

Without necessarily wishing to give more weight to the Bahnar version than to the Jarai's, we shall assume like Mr. Antoine, for the reasons of probability outlined above, that the battles took place in the following order:

1. Ya Li falls
2. River Peto
3. Lake Tenueng.

The poem of Phin Disiak tells us of the resistance put up by the men of the southern highlands. In 1328, the "Vrlas" (Orang Glai), and more especially the Chrau, Koho and Stieng, revolted. A general named Nok put down the rebellion.

4. LOSS OF THE HINTERLAND BY THE CHAM

In 1471, when the victorious Le Thanh Ton became ruler of the Champa as far as Varella, the Cham troops and settlers who had been cut off in Kontum and the north of the hinterland by the Vietnamese advance along the coast, were forced to abandon the regions of the interior where they had settled. The provinces of Kaurana (Khanh Hoa) and Panduranga (present-day Ninh Thuan) became the bastion of Cham resistance. After an uprising by the Vrlas (Orang Glai, Chrau and Sre) against the troops of the Champa

kingdom, the advance of the Annamites had the effect of bringing the "Kirata" closer to the Cham for the purpose of defending the region together. The Roglai legends tell of the battles which the mountain people of the south fought side by side with their old masters against the new invaders. It was thanks to the "Kon Cau" that the Cham were able to hold out for almost 200 years in Panduranga. The story of Tamrac may be traced back to this period. Sunka, the Cham chief, called on the men of the plateaus to fight at his side. The Cham at this time were fighting with crossbows. We know what extraordinary archers the Roglai are, for example, and even more so the Çil. According to legend, the battle of Mount Jodong lasted seven days and seven nights. According to some, Tamrac was taken; others aver he committed suicide. In the end, the Cham gave up the struggle and renounced their hegemony over the mountain people.

The latter remained faithful to the memory of their former rulers. The Cham influence can be detected in some aspects of the customs and language of the Jarai, the Rhade, the Krung and the Roglai, just as the Khmer influence left its mark on the dialects of the Che Ma, the Stieng, the Mngong and the Bahnar.

CHAPTER VI

THE EASTERN PART OF THE HINTERLAND FROM THE 15th TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 19th CENTURY

1. THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE FROM THE 15th TO THE 17th CENTURY

Even though the Mongols had been unable during the 13th century to conquer either the domain of the Tran in Tonkin, or the Champa, or Cambodia, which then held sway over the peoples of present-day Indochina, the offensives launched by Kublai Khan had liberated the T'ai and had started them moving toward the south; moreover, they had brought to light the fighting abilities of the Vietnamese. Later, too, they were to precipitate the downfall of the Khmer empire, already under fire from the north by the Laotians and from the west by the Siamese, while the Champa,

which faced a less immediate threat from the Cambodian side, was to succumb to the onslaught of energetic and ambitious adversaries--the Vietnamese from the north.

Carried along the coast of Annam as far as Varella by the momentum of their triumph in 1471, the Vietnamese reduced the Champa to a small territory boxed in between Phy Yen to the north and the northern boundary of "Cambodia of the Water" (Cochin-China). Halfway through the 16th century, the Cham kings were recognized by the Court of Hue. While the Vietnamese, almost immediately after their victory, came into contact--and conflict--with the mountain people, the latter, as we have already seen, turned against their former masters and attacked the Cham. The Cham, in turn, threatened by the advancing Vietnamese, evacuated the plateaus they still occupied and retreated toward the coast of the South China Sea.

2. WANING OF THE SADET'S INFLUENCE

Although they did not assume overall command of the struggle against the Cham, the Sadets nevertheless played a substantial part in it. Led after a fashion by the Patau Pui or the Patau Ya, whose role Westerners always tend to overestimate, the Jarai and the Rhade dogged the Cham troops as they left the regions around Pleiku and the northern part of the Darlac plateau.

Farther to the south, around the middle of the 15th century, the Orang Glai, the Churu and even the Sre (Koho), seeing that the kings of Panduranga and their people were streaming back into their territory, first fought to keep them out. Later, faced with the threat of invasion by the Vietnamese, the Cham and the Roglai (Orang Glai) joined forces in what often became heroic stands. To this day, at Glai Jaboung (west of Phan Rang), the Roglai proudly preserve the head of Po Binh No Svor and the ornaments from the temples abandoned by their former Cham masters. We know, also, how piously the Chrau and the Sre have guarded the treasures of the Champa princes.

At about the same time, the mountain people, having less to fear now from the Cambodians, whose power was beginning to decline, started to settle in the hinterland formerly controlled by the Khmers, and established their influence over the region bounded by the Prek Chhlong, the Mekong and the Se Bang Hieng rivers.

The Khmer empire began to totter under the blows of the T'ai advancing from the north. West of the Great River (Mekong), the Siamese had seized Lovek in 1587, while east of the river the Laotians were infiltrating along the valleys of the Se Don, and later of the Se Kong and Se San rivers, spreading their influence where earlier the Cambodians had held sway. Giving up the lowlands to these new arrivals, the Ta Hoi, Bo-lovens, Brao, Halang and Champuon withdrew to the high-lying parts of the hinterland; under the shelter of their forests, they retained a large measure of freedom and independence.

Early in the 17th century, the Laotian advance southward came to a temporary halt. Seeing this, the Khmers under Chey Chetta II attempted to regain part of their former domain. In the south, in Cochin-China, the Vietnamese took advantage of the absence of the Cambodian troops, mustered elsewhere, to attacks in the north and northeast. In 1641, the Dutchman Van Wusthof found the Cambodians had regained control of the Mekong area south of Bassac; they had set up a trading station at Somboc, where they were doing a brisk and profitable trade in salt, for which the tribes of the interior paid exorbitant prices or gave slaves in exchange. The Khmer empire at this time once again extended as far as the Phonough (Darlac) plateau, some of whose inhabitants were paying tribute to Oudong. It was presumably during this offensive comeback by the Cambodians toward the north and east that the kings of Cambodia received such valuable assistance from the Sadets that an agreement was drawn up in 1601 setting forth the gifts which the Khmer kings were to exchange every three years with the magician-chiefs of Fire and Water (Patau Ya, Patau Pui). We mentioned earlier that in both value and volume the presents from Cambodia

far outstripped the insignificant offerings from the mountain chiefs. These exchanges were carried out to the letter for 250 years, until H.M. Norodom put an end to them in 1860.

Furthermore, the presence of the Vietnamese along the coast, coupled with the organizational system the Le kings had by 1540 imposed on the mountainous regions of Quang Ngai and later Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, with the able assistance of Bui Ta Han, and possibly also occasional flying columns despatched across Jarai country prompted the Sadets to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Nguyen. Indeed, no sooner had Nguyen Hoang been appointed governor of Thuan Hoa (1558) than the Sadets agreed to pay him tribute. This royalty, which consisted initially of elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns, was paid to the Court of Hue until 1841.

By now the influence of the Sadets, who were paying tribute to both Phnom Penh and Hue, had dwindled to a mere shadow of the political power (which had always been rather ill defined anyway) that the Lords of Fire and Water had once exerted over the Jarai and the Bahnar (Hagu and Golar) and even over the Sedang (13). The Vietnamese showed them some respect, however, as evidenced by their sending a funeral urn made of metal, reputedly silver. It was a token of the dignity conferred on the newly elected Sadet, and delegates from Phu Yen brought it to him following his appointment. The most obvious mainsprings of their authority, however, were fear of the evil spells the people believed they could cast and their custodianship of the legendary sword or of a flower-decked rattan cane, both of which were special "Ya" attributes.

3. DOWNFALL OF THE CHE MA PRINCIPALITY

Nearly a century later, relations between the mountain people and the princes of Panduranga recovered much of their former loyalty, and the Cham princes of Phan Rang regained sufficient power to enable them to travel through the hinterland very much as they pleased. This much is apparent from the story of Po Rome (1627-51). From Darlac, to which he had advanced, the king brought back a wife from the Rhade tribe: Bia Tan

(13) "South of Cheo Reo, the authority of the Patau Ya was unknown to the Jarai" (P. Guilleminet, "Recherches sur les croyances des tribus du Hautpays d'Annam," B.I.T.E.H., 1941).

Chan. Later, when the Vietnamese had invaded Panduranga, some of Po Rome's officers sought refuge among the mountain people, but the king himself tried to resist the invaders. He was killed, and Bia Tan Chan flung herself onto her husband's funeral pyre. The statue erected in honor of this exemplary wife can still be seen near Phan Rang. The Vietnamese, however, continued their push to the south.

Carried as far as Varella by their victory in 1471, they spent the years that followed consolidating their occupation of the interior of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces. They succeeded in doing so by multiplying the number of don dien and dinh dien; in 1654, leaving Varella behind them, they conquered Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan, and the king of the Champa was forced to recognize the ascendancy of the Nguyen. In 1696, maritime Cambodia also fell to the Vietnamese; the year 1699 witnessed the appointment of the first Annamite governor at Gia Dinh. The jurisdiction of the Court of Hue then extended all along the coast of Annam, and the mountain principality of the Che Ma was thus doomed to fade away.

For as long as the southern coast had been occupied jointly by the Cham in the north and the Khmers in the south, the principality of the Che Ma separated the two empires by a kind of wedge, from which would-be aggressors were deterred by the mountains lying inshore and the swamps. With the establishment of Vietnamese regiments and settlers in Panduranga and later in the Donnai delta, the land of the Che Ma was finally encircled. The continued existence of such an enemy enclave, however, might have jeopardized the arrival of Annamite reinforcements had the situation in Gia Dinh made it necessary to send for them. The suppression of the Che Ma appears to date from the end of the 17th century: "Alas," runs a Chrau war song, "there was once a king of Tioma, there was once an Annamite king. The Annamite king carried off the king of Tioma's wife, and that was the start of the war." The legends of the Chrau, the only ones to mention the subject, speak only of giant turtles, enormous egrets, and various kinds of cyclops, and the peril in which these monsters placed

the people sometimes led them to seek help from the Vietnamese. These legends also tell of the occupation of the heights situated two days' march from Krontuk, that of a mountain overlooking the lower reaches of the Dambre, a tributary of the Da Houe, and finally that of the source of the Lagna. The territorial progress of the Vietnamese westward made a great impression on the minds of the mountain people.

At the end of the 18th century, the surrounded principality fell apart; the distaste of these tribes for any form of organization hastened their return to their native anarchy. Where the process of breaking up did not proceed so far as to leave only independent villages, only a few groups of Ma, Sre, Çop and Çil tribesmen were left in the area of the former confederation. The Vietnamese lost no time in strengthening their domination, and began to lay out roads. At the close of the 19th century, Lt. Gautier rediscovered sections of the one which led from Tri An to the old territory of the Che Ma via the confluence of the Da Houe and Donnai rivers.

Another road hugged the river Lagna and, after skirting the Nui Ong, led into Khanh Hoa. It was the mountain people who supplied the labor to build these fortified roadways that enabled the Vietnamese to avoid Panduranga, of which they were never too certain. In 1755, ten thousand Chrau and Che Ma tribesmen who had been transplanted to the Go Vap region on the instructions of an Annamite general, were set upon by the Cambodians. Five thousand of them were rescued by the Major-General Trinh. They were able to withdraw into the area near Mt. Tay Ninh. In 1757, a number of Moi conscripts acting under Annamite orders were among the troops who entered Phnom Penh.

Although the Sadets and the Che Ma had been forced to submit to the growing power of Vietnam, the Sedang, the Da Vach and the Kontu, in the shelter of their mountains, were to hold out for a long time against any outside influence.

4. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MOI COUNTRY BY THE VIETNAMESE, AND THE
EXPANSION OF VIETNAM TOWARD THE SOUTH

Barely thirty years had elapsed since the victory of Le Thanh Ton (1471) and the establishment of Tonkinese colonies in Cham country, before the Cham and the Moi in the south revolted against their conquerors during the reign of Le Uy Muc. The uprising was quashed and the mountain people evicted from the plots they still held in the coastal plains (1504-1509).

It had taken less than thirty years for relations to become strained between the Vietnamese and the Sedang and Bahnar living along the edge of the mountains in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai. In no other area was there such constant rebellion against the new occupation forces. Accordingly, in 1540 the emperor appointed Bui Ta Han governor of the province of Quang Nam. This leader proved as able an administrator as he was an enterprising soldier. He built forts on the western frontier of present-day Quang Ngai (the province was not actually created until a hundred years later). Thanks to this line of defense and to the fear that governor Bui Ta Han was able to inspire, peace was restored to this trouble spot early in the 16th century (sic)* "Many mountain people became servants of the Vietnamese and tended their orchards"(14).

In the 17th century, the military organization was further strengthened. Six dao (frontier provinces) were established along the border with the territory occupied by the mountain people.

In 1750, when Nguyen Hoang, the founder of the Cochin-Chinese dynasty, became governor, he seems to have respected and retained the organization instituted by Bui Ta Han. He had placed a native giao dich in charge of the mountain district under his control; two centuries of peace (according to the Annals) firmly established the virtues of this system, which was later extended to the southern provinces as Vietnamese influence spread southward.

*T.N. If the governor Bui Ta Han was not appointed until 1540, the restoration of peace at the beginning of the 16th century can hardly be attributed to him. I suggest "début" is an error for "milieu," which would bring pacification forward to sometime in the 1550's, a much more likely chronology.

(14) "Phu Man Tâp Luc," by Tiêu Phu Su (1871), RI, 1904, p. 456 et seq.

THE SE BANG HIENG REGION, AND VIETNAMESE PROGRESS WESTWARD

A rather special system of government was later granted to the Pou T'ai, So and "Kha" tribesmen of the Se Bang Hieng region.

Laotians from the upper Mekong had taken refuge there under the leadership of their phaya to escape from the Hi and the Burmese. The king of Vientiane had granted these fugitives his protection and the right to occupy the territory of the Pheng My (from the Se Bang Fai to Ban That). A revolt by the natives, the So of the valleys and the Kha of the highlands, was crushed by the Laotians. Some of the vanquished Pheng My emigrated eastward and settled in the Cam Lo region occupied by the Vietnamese.

The Court of Laos had left the administration of the people in the Se Bang Hieng region in the hands of their former hereditary chiefs, the pho ban.

Later, around the beginning of the 18th century, the kings of Hue, who prior to the defeat of the Pheng My by the T'ai, had received elephants from them as an annual tribute, successfully pressured Vientiane into reviving the tradition. Vo Vuong (1738-65) created five among in the region, but selected their chiefs from the very families from which the pho ban who served the Laotian sovereigns had been chosen. The influence of these official agents, who were approved simultaneously by the Courts of Vientiane and Hue, was to have the effect of heartening and pacifying the region, where Vietnamese colonization later took a strong hold. With the acquiescence of the Laotians, the Nguyen thus came to control the best of the roads linking the sea coast with the banks of the Mekong. This road started from Cam Lo and went through the Ai Lao pass. This outcome is all the more remarkable because since 1421 and especially since 1479 relations between Annamites and Laotians had been marked by hostility.

5. AIM AND PROCEDURES OF THE VIETNAMESE ADMINISTRATION

From the time of the Dinh (967-979), that is, ever since the Annamites gained their independence, the question of the mountain people had

confronted all the dynasties which successively ruled Vietnam. The attitude and behavior of this nation toward the tribes of the interior have been evaluated in widely differing terms, according to the individuals appraising them and the period or the region considered.

In their relations with the people of the hinterland the Mandarins had three objectives: to contain the tribes which had retired to the highlands, and to deny them access to the fertile land suitable for irrigated paddyfields, especially as the Moi, who formerly owned these plains, tended to return to raid them whenever they had the least chance to do so. The military organization along the frontier thus began to take shape, and with it a rigid separation between the Annamite world and that of the mountain people. Near the approaches to the demarcation line, the establishment of dinh dien (15) and don dien (16) was the customary method the Annamites used in spreading their influence.

From the tribes they conquered the Vietnamese demanded payment of tribute, either in silver or in produce: rattan, rice-straw fabric, metals and lumber (calembac or eagle-wood) in the southern region.

Finally, their aim was also to reserve to the Court of Hue and its mandarins the profits from trade with the inhabitants of the plateaus, a trade which was all the more profitable since competition was entirely eliminated.

In their favor, the Vietnamese can adduce the fact that--contrary to what had taken place during the Khmer or Cham domination and to what could be alleged regarding the T'ai, Siamese or Laotians--slavery with them remained the exception rather than the rule. Admittedly, the missionaries and, later on, the French troops were to come across many slaves in Vietnamese territory, especially in southern Vietnam, and there was indeed a slave market in Saigon (cay da thang moi (17), near the stud-farms),

(15) Farming settlements.

(16) Military farms.

(17) L. Malleret, B.S.E.I., 1935, No. 4, p. 18.

but survivals of such practices are hardly out of place in former Cambodia of the Water (Cochin-China).

Whereas the Khmers and the Cham, followed after the 15th century by the Laotians, made their way into the hinterland and mixed readily (in the case of the Cham and the Laotians, anyway) with the mountain people, the Vietnamese made only furtive excursions west of the frontier, which was drawn roughly along the scarp edge overlooking the coastal ranges.

The only road by which the troops and agents of the Court of Hue were able to advance as far as the Mekong was the one north of Hue that led out of Quang Tri through the Ai Lao pass. Just prior to the revolt of the Tay Son, the Annamites occupied the left bank of the Great River between the 16th and the 17th parallels, roughly between Kemmarat and Ban Don.

Against this background we shall attempt to pinpoint some features of the civil and commercial organization which the Vietnamese imposed on the mountain people.

It was clearly understood, to begin with, that the non-Annamite members of the population would never be regarded as subjects of the Court of Hue. The emperor Gia Long rejected a request to this effect "because no notion of social obligation can be detected in these barbarians."

The conquerors did indeed seek to expand onto the fertile land which had been cultivated by the mountain people, but the villages taken over in this way were fairly rapidly brought under the common system of administration. The Nha Kinh-ly became just one more huyen, and the frontier was pushed a little farther westward than it was before.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL ORGANIZATION

However, bearing these general principles in mind, the regime applied to the mountain people was one of great flexibility.

The boldness and unruliness of the tribes of the Quang Ngai hinterland led the Nguyen to make this province something of an experimental area, and the organizational system developed here was later to be extended all along the mountainous ledge of Annam from the Col des Nuages to the outermost foot-hills of Binh Thuan.

A Moi region was created with a native giao dich as chief. First instituted midway through the 16th century, the giao dich was not abolished until 1863, when the Son Phong was created. The district placed under the control of the giao dich was subdivided into four nguyen, where the provincial Annamite administration was represented by a cai quan with one or more con quan as deputies. Their primary function was to select the thuong ho, who were the only persons authorized to travel in the interior of the nguyen for the purpose of trading; a few mountain people were given the right to trade in Annamite country. In addition, the thuong ho acted as tax collectors. Apart from the tax paid in silver (whose value was roughly equivalent to 1,500 piasters for the four nguyen of Quang Ngai province), it was forbidden to demand anything further from the mountain people living beyond the boundaries of the nguyen. Any attempt to extract more from these sturdy people led to revolts. The proliferation of the commercial agents of the thuong ho: cac lai, thuoc lai and, later, thu ngu, had the same results.

This administrative system was subsequently extended southward to the entire western edge of the territories occupied by the Annamites; moreover, it was modified and adapted to the particular conditions of each district.

In Panduranga, the last remaining stronghold of the Champa kingdom in the south, the names given to the trading-agents-cum-tax-collectors were not the only things to be changed: the tax system and the extent of the extortion practiced by the collectors and their deputies varied locally according to how fearsome or harmless the mountain people appeared.

In Ninh Hoa, the Blao were feared for their stormy nature. Accordingly, although it was seldom possible to gather even half of the tax due, the collectors never resorted to violence. Indeed, the tax-farmers even paid for feasts. However, in addition to the official amount of the tribute, the provincial authorities "had themselves offered" gifts.

The Roglai of Nha Trang, weaker and more wretched, did not receive such kid-glove treatment: the thua bien recouped themselves, as we can

only imagine, for the considerable trouble they went to in traveling great distances to collect the ivory, rhinoceros horns or eagle-wood in which the tribes there paid their dues. With the passage of time, the abuse grew so serious that in the 19th century the Court of Hue issued an edict forbidding such practices. Violators ran the risk of being beheaded.

Many of the mountain people living very close to the frontier used to satisfy free of charge the needs and even the whims of the mandarins, who sometimes resold their surplus. Ultimately, however, it was the Chinese who profited from this business by buying up cheaply the merchandise obtained in this fashion, flouting the orders issued by the royal government.

In Binh Thuan, the Cham, the Roglai, the Ma, the Sre (despite their more advanced development) and the Chrau seem to have been in an even more sorry predicament: there, three tong dich both collected the taxes and served as judges. Although poorer, these mountain tribes paid as heavy a tax as their brothers in Khanh Hoa. They paid extra taxes of beeswax, rhinoceros horns, iron, eagle-wood (also known as calembac or ky nam) and honey.

To this were added, for the entire former territory of Panduranga, the sums paid by way of hoa co and hoa mai (18), the brunt of which fell on the most docile.

7. COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATION

The organization created by Bui Ta Han (died 1568) had successfully pacified the mountain people. The peace lasted for 200 years. Even the wars between the Trinh and the Nguyen (1627-77) failed to elicit any serious reaction on the part of the people of the hinterland, even in the direst moments for the Cochin-Chinese, their masters. Moreover, neither the civil wars, nor the struggle against the Champa, were seized upon by the mountain people as an opportunity for a general uprising.

(18) Hoa co: the furnishing of materials and coolie day-labor for the construction and maintenance of public buildings.
Hoa mai: goods procured for the palace feasts and the needs of the royal family, ranging from torches through logs of precious woods to rhinoceros horns. The prices, fixed at rock-bottom level by the central administration, were subject to commission paid to the middlemen. In practice, no payment at all found its way back to the suppliers.

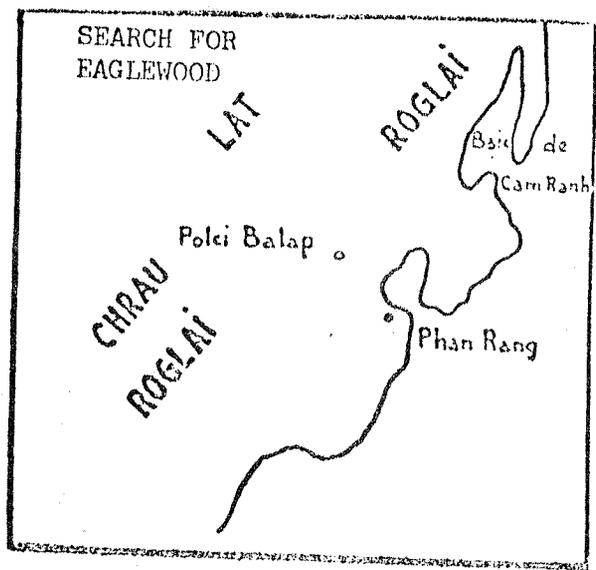
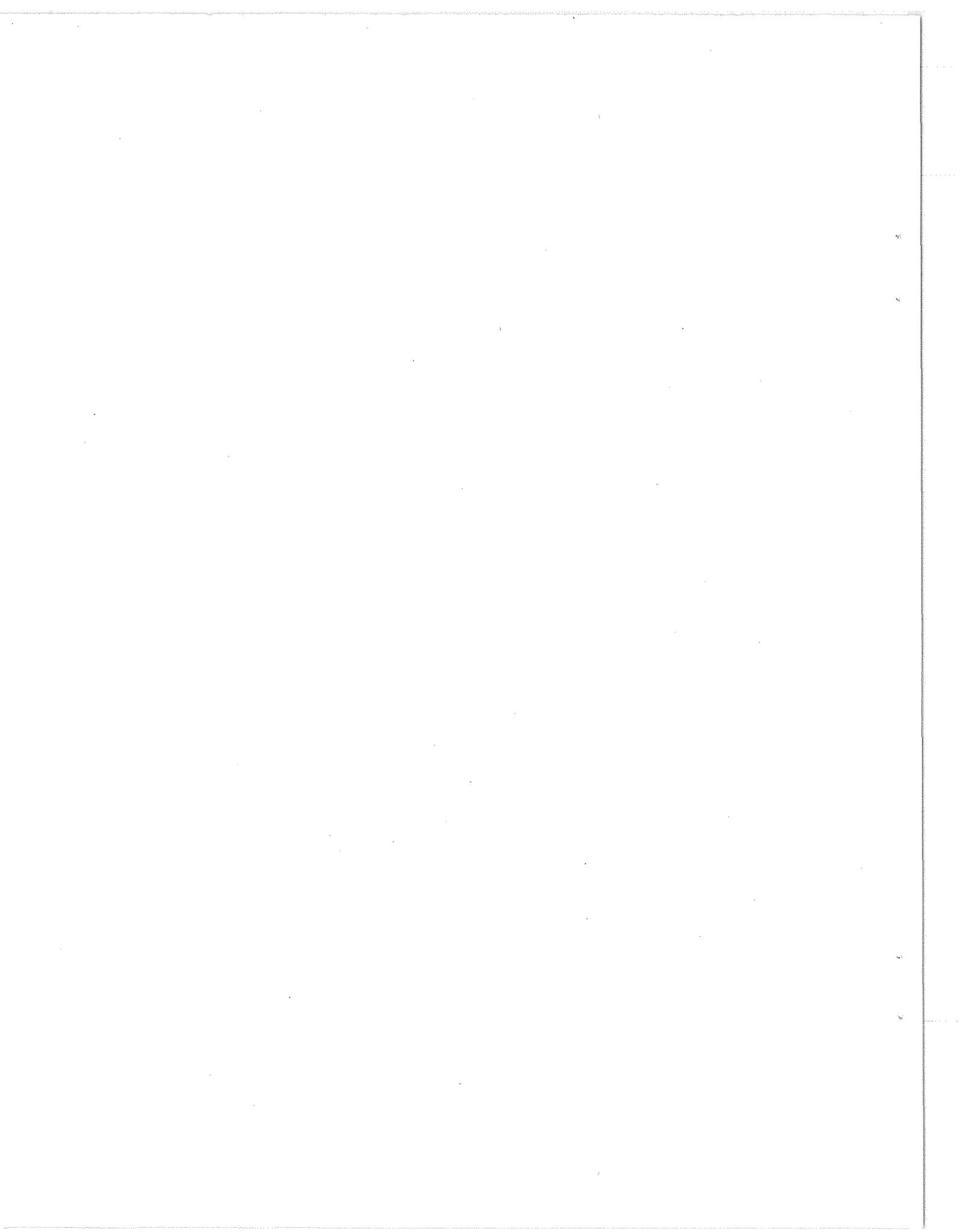


FIG. 3



During this period, the Vietnamese conquerors appear to have respected the customs of their subject tribes. Ultimately, the Vietnamese were satisfied as long as the labor of these people provided them with the wherewithal to pay their tribute and as long as the bulk of the profits from their trading activities ended up in the royal treasury and the mandarins' coffers.

The following is an account of the procedure adopted in Ninh Thuan province in searching for and cutting eagle-wood (the "seuf of the Arabs" calemba, ky nam), "the most precious commodity to be extracted from Cochinchina for export to foreign lands" (19). The search was entrusted to a Cham mandarin, the Po Galhao, chief of the moslem village of Palei Balap, 10 km. north of Phan Rang.

Under his orders, sixteen kani supervised the Roglai and their chief, the pavak, who was responsible for locating and cutting the wood. Preceded and followed by sacrifices to the deities worshiped in the valley, the expeditions in quest of eagle-wood were conducted in silence; it was believed that the sound of a human voice would impair the fragrance of the tree. "The calemba is an essence which belongs to the king (of Hue) alone, by virtue of the esteem in which its perfume and powers are held."

As for cinnamon, though it was known and was mentioned in the earliest reports of the missionaries, it was not really exploited until later. The Vietnamese and mountain people have, in fact, recognized its commercial value for less than 200 years. It is said that they learned of it through the Chinese. Before the revolt of the Tay Son, the value of the tribute demanded of the mountain people of Quang Ngai province in the form of cinnamon was less than one seventy-fifth of the amounts levied in silver (20 ligatures* worth of cinnamon in the nguyen of Cu-ba alone, compared with a levy of 1,470 ligatures for the four nguyen together). In addition, from the 17th century onward, rattan, woods, rhinoceros horns,

(19) R.P. Cristoforo Borri, "Relation de la nouvelle mission au Royaume de la Cochinchine," B.A.V.H., Nos. 3 and 4, 1931, p. 299.

*Translator's note: The "ligature" was the local form of currency. It seems to have consisted of a number of pieces or coins of silver (or gold) threaded on a string.

ivory, elephants, betel, beeswax, etc., not to mention the ocellated pheasants for the emperor of China, all came to swell trade between the Moi and the Annamites. Direct trading in these products, which accounted for a large part of the Vietnamese economy, was not tolerated anywhere. The thuong ho of Quang Ngai, cac lai of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, thu ngu and thuoc lai, thua bien of Nha Trang, and thong dich of Phan Thiet, the only societies of licensed traders, frequently abused their monopoly. The exasperation which ensued, the irritation caused by the imposition of heavier taxes, and, to an even greater extent perhaps, an awareness that the Nguyen were gradually weakening during the second half of the 18th century, were eventually to lead to renewed uprisings by the mountain people.

8. THE REVOLT OF 1761

The reign of Vo Vuong (1738-65) was a troubled one, and the mainspring of the trouble lay in opposition to the policy of Truong Phuc Loan, the regent.

The mountain people of Quang Ngai--the Hre, Tare and Kare, who were interbred with Cham and Jarai stock; the Xa Giang and Ka Giong, of the Sedang family; the Bonom, of the Bahnar family; and finally the Tava and the Talieng--were lumped together by the Annamites under the collective name of Da Vach (cf. the Dayaks of Borneo). In Hue, they were regarded as relatively peaceful, forgetting the defeat which these "Moi" had inflicted on the Vietnamese near Mt. Da Vach. These tribes, though completely divorced from the political agitation going on in Annam, may nonetheless have detected a certain loss of assurance among the mandarins, who acted as agents of the Court of Hue. Agitation immediately grew rife among groups of Kang-y, Nuoc-to, Nuoc-tru and Nuoc-gia, whom Vietnamese records depict as being the most unruly. Farther to the west, the Cuoi Trang "Moi" were particularly troublesome. All of them grew increasingly reluctant about paying their taxes, which were becoming steadily more burdensome. The royal administration began to pester the thuong ho more and more, and in 1761 the Annamite villages which had so painstakingly

been established along the frontier, under a peace that had lasted through eight successive reigns, had to be evacuated.

It was not until 1770 that Tran Ngoc Chu, invested with the rank of kham sai, was finally able to quell the revolt. Having once again driven the rebels back into their mountains, he built fortified posts along the frontier to hold them back. He restored the villages that had been evacuated in 1761 to their former owners, strengthened them by putting in new settlers, and ordered a resumption of rice growing.

At about this time, the Nguyen were swept from power by an insurrection staged by the Tay Son (1773) and the capture of Hue by the Trinh. In their downfall they brought down Tran Ngoc Chu and all he had achieved. Many mountain people placed themselves under the orders of Nguyen Van Nhap and his brothers, who were trying to muster as many fighting men as they could for the conquest of the Annam plains. In 1775, under the assault of the mountain people and the Cham, the Vietnamese were once more repelled, this time as far as the sea.

9. THE TAY SON AND THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Hailing from Nghe An, the Nguyen Van Nhap family had been established on the An Khe plateau in Tay Son for four generations. Nguyen Van Nhap had begun by trading in betel with the Moi and Bahnar tribes in the territory in which he lived, and had later become a tax collector in Van Don.

When, after squandering the money entrusted to him, Nguyen Van Nhap fled into the mountains, he promptly recruited a band of "Chinese, jungle bandits, and Cochin-Chinese rebels."

Supporters flocked to his cause, urged on by the increasing burden of taxation and by the situation of such abject destitution that in 1774 a handful of hulled rice cost one ligature and human flesh was on sale in the markets (20).

Though he robbed the rich, Nhap gave some of his booty to the poor, and thus became known as the charitable robber. In this way he won rapid

(20) Cadière, "Le Mur de Dong Hoi," B.E.F.E.O., 1906, p. 238, n.1.

popularity; with the help of contributions from certain local notables, he built up his forces and in 1773 succeeded in taking Qui Nhon.

In November of the same year, the Tay Son revolted and fought a pitched battle on the boundary of Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai. The rebels comprised three bodies of troops: "one Chinese, the second barbarians deployed on either wing, and the third the rebel Cochinese sandwiched in the center"(21). For the first time since the beginning of the uprising, the royal troops made a serious attempt to resist. The battle lasted three days. Finally, the Chinese fought their way through to the bravest of the mandarins (the doi Be, according to the Spanish missionaries) and the rebels carried the day.

History records that the mountain people and the Cham serving with the Tay Son later took control of the north of the province of Quang Ngai as far as the port of Co Luy Tan on the sea coast. "In certain valleys in these regions one finds a large number of cultivated plots which formerly belonged to the Cochinese, who were forced to abandon them on account of the almost daily thefts and murders by the mountain bandits.... Only one who has crossed the mountain region can really know the cruelty of its inhabitants" (22), and the missionary goes on to mention that "no clothing protects them against the thorns, it being their custom to fight naked."

On December 21, 1773 another battle took place, but farther to the north this time, in Quang Nam. "On the left, the mandarins, who were supposed to hold back the barbarians, turned tail and fled with all the elephants" (22). However, the royal troops rallied and the Tay Son were obliged to withdraw into the mountains.

There is no call here to retrace the history of the Tay Son; it will suffice to highlight just some of the episodes in the war against the rebels in which the mountain people appear to have been involved. Contrary to what we had hoped, the book by Mr. Hoang Xuan Han throws no light on this subject.

(21) "Les Espagnols dans l'Empire d'Annam," B.S.E.I., 1940, Nos. 3 and 4, p. 75.

(22) "Les Espagnols dans l'Empire d'Annam," B.S.E.I. 1940, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 72 and 76.

After the decisive successes of Nguyen Anh in the south, "the rebels sought to move down the Mekong; in putting this plan into effect, they doubtless passed through the Ai Lao gap and the hinterland of the Se Bang Hieng, which they controlled. However, upon arriving in Cambodian territory they came up against a Siamese army which promptly forced them to return to Annam by the way they had come" (23)

In 1790, there was an uprising in the region round Bassac; the Vietnamese garrison was unable to control it, and prince Hoi had forts built along the new demarcation line. In the course of this same year, the province of Binh Thuan changed hands several times.

In 1794, after the death of Nguyen Van Hue, followed by that of Nguyen Van Nhap, the Tay Son, who were laying siege to Dien Khanh, were forced to take to the mountain road in order to reach Qui Nhon.

In 1797, the mountain people of Binh Thuan revolted against the troops of Nguyen Anh, and military columns had to be organized to subdue them.

Two years later, Nguyen Anh demanded that a Siamese army cross the highlands; the Annals list only the Siamese, Khmer and Laotian units of this army, but in all probability it also numbered some mountain people in its ranks. This force was supposed to attack Nghe An, while the Cochinese, advancing from the south, tried to drive back their adversaries northward. This operation provided yet another opportunity for levying troops. In the following year, 1800, the Siamese, twenty elephants led by Cambodians, and above all the Laotians, having reached the northern part of Annam, incited revolts in Nghe An and Thanh Hoa. By way of reprisal, the Tay Son did their best to turn the tribes of Tran Ninh against Nguyen Anh, and to thwart this attempt at subversion the latter had to send reinforcements under the command of Le Phuc Tuong by the mountain road passing through Cam Lo and Lao Bao. Thereupon, the prince enjoined the Laotians and the Moi to guard the defiles. The future emperor Gia Long took advantage of this opportunity to organize bodies of troops in the Annamite mountains.

(23) H. Maitre, "Jungles Moi," p. 468.

Finally, after the Tay Son movement had been finally crushed in 1802, the rebels who had escaped from Qui Nhon fled into the mountains led by their generals Dieu and Dung. Le Van Duyet and Le Chat pursued them and forced their surrender; with them, 150 elephants fell into the hands of the Nguyen.

Another version has it that after being crushed by Gia Long the Tay Son took refuge in Sedang country, where they remained for quite a long time (24).

It would be necessary to examine the part played by each of the military leaders in order to find out how, if at all, the mountain people were involved in this conflict.

The following, for example, is what we are able to glean from the biography of Chau Van Tiep (25). He was a native of Phu My, in present-day Binh Dinh. In the course of his trading, he struck up relations with Nguyen Van Nhac, and, with his three brothers, Tiep mustered more than a thousand Moi and took up a position on Mt. Tra Long. Le Van Quan, his brother-in-law, had married Le Thi Dau, the celebrated Chau Muoi Nuong, who was gifted with a particular flair for war, as are all the girls of Binh Dinh province according to a local proverb.

Nhac, worried by the Trinh in the north and threatened in the south by Tran Gia Dinh, who was serving the Nguyen, concluded an agreement under the terms of which Tiep was to place his troops at the disposal of prince Duong, the son-in-law on the leader of the Tay Son. However, when the latter betrayed the cause of prince Duong, Chau Van Tiep returned to occupy Mt. Tra Long, this time against the Tay Son. On behalf of Due Ton (Hue Vuong), he defended Phu Yen and Binh Dinh provinces in 1776 and Binh Thuan in 1778. "Thereafter, the imperial army held its head a little higher." Tiep died in the service of Nguyen Anh in 1784.

Nhac had also found another ally in a certain Duyen, who had first distinguished himself when defending Nam Ngai against attacks by the Moi.

(24) Lavallée, "Notes ethnographiques sur diverses tribus au S.-E. Indochinois," B.E.F.E.O., 1901, p. 291 et seq.

(25) B.S.E.I., 1910, and B.A.V.H., 1914, pp. 134 and 135.

During the reign of Gia Long, the Siamese took control of the Cambodian provinces of Melou Prey, Tonle Repou and Stung Treng, and their rule then extended as far as the right bank of the Mekong south of the Khone falls. The former ascendancy of the Cambodians over the tribes of the hinterland gradually gave way to domination by the T'ai peoples, the Laotians in the north and the Siamese in the southwest.

At around the same time, that is, 1800, "the Annamite armies penetrated into the hinterland of central Annam, spreading their control from Hue on the coast to the Mekong and along this river from the 16th to the 17th parallel north; this included the entire basin of the river Se Bang Hieng, the splendid natural route down which the Annamites advanced" (26). In the Se Bang Hieng region, five districts established by the Court of Hue were subdivided into nine muong, in which authority was vested in the Pou T'ai, who collected the tribute (27) and despatched it to the imperial treasury. The bulk of the revenue came from taxes on lumbering in the forests of the Annamite range. The royalties continued to be paid until the Siamese invasion.

To the east of the nine muong, there were nine tong covering a total of 67 Moi villages under the jurisdiction of the tri-phu of Cam Lo. A road two to four meters wide was built from Cam Lo to the Mekong, passing through Mai Lanh and Lao Bao, and another via Lam Bui, Lang Sen and Xuong Thanh.

"Thus, the tribes of Cam Lo, the Moi tribes of Annam, and the Sadets of Fire and Water brought gifts to the capital and came to pay homage to the sovereign" (28).

10. THE ADMINISTRATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS OF GIA LONG. THE TRAN MAN.

Gia Long refused membership in the empire to the barbarian tribes of the mountain region that sought to join; once restored to the ancestral

(26) Maj. Nyo, "La pénétration française dans les pays moi," B.S.E.I., No. 2.

(27) For the district of Song Khone, this consisted of one elephant, with each man paying his share of the cost.

(28) Maybon, "Histoire moderne du pays d'Annam," p. 386.

throne, the prince's first concern was to reassert his authority over the Moi territories and to resume trade with the subject tribes. He was assisted in this by Le Cong Duyet, from Mo Duc, who had shared the years of ordeal with him in the south and on whom he had twice had to call to quash revolts in Nam Ngai.

As always, the organizational set-up was first established in Quang Ngai. In 1804, in the western part of the province, the king founded a completely Moi district called Tran Man, which became the appanage of the Nguyen Cong Toan family of Binh Son. In the reign of Due Ton, that is, before the Tay Son, Nguyen Cong Toan had won fame by routing a body of Moi troops who were returning from a raid with their spoils, and by thus setting free many captives held by the mountain people.

Just as before 1773, Tran Man comprised four nguyen with five dao (frontier provinces) at Cu-ba, Dao, Phu Ba and Ba To, and six kien co. Nguyen Cong Tru and Nguyen Khac Tuan fortified the frontier by constructing frontier posts at strategic points.

The tribute fixed by the Court, which incidentally was paid in a fairly regular manner, was lowered to its 1773 level. Recollections of the trouble which the Tay Son had encountered when they had tried to double the tribute paid by the nguyen of Da Bong effectively ruled out any question of increasing the taxes. Indeed, except for the Quang Tri region, only the mountain people in the east were subject to the tax. "The Annamites never dared to venture very deep into the hinterland."

In 1819, the year before the great emperor died, Le Van Duyet began to build the defensive wall to ward off the incursions of the mountain people; although as a fortification it was not particularly strong, some traces of it can still be found today on maps and at its site.

One hundred and fifteen posts, each manned by ten soldiers, were placed at intervals along the 90 km. of this truong luy, which was protected by ditches and a hedge.

"The Annamite colonization was thus destined to continue, more unbending than ever, and still based on the same system as had been employed

ever since the conquest of the Champa kingdom, a system which the Moi uprisings had only temporarily been able to thwart. The Moi withdrew farther and farther into the mountains before the conquerors, yielding the valleys they still occupied in the plain to the new arrivals, who were more tenacious, harder workers, and above all more prolific. The hillsides, barely scratched by the primitive dibbles which the tribesmen used, now began to be turned over deeply by Annamite plows (29), and at the center of the cultivated plots first one, then two, then ten huts would spring up; finally, and, as time went on, with growing ease, a central longhouse or dinh would appear, symbolizing the early beginnings of community life in the budding village (30).

11. THE VIETNAMESE, THE CHAM AND THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE OF BINH THUAN PROVINCE. PO CHEUN CHAN.

Throughout the different districts of central Annam, from Quang Tri to south of Varella, the Annamites' policy of expansion continued its regular advance along the fringe of the mountain people's territory.

Conducted with greater brutality than in Binh Thuan, it met with setbacks not encountered elsewhere. It was against this background that the story of one of the last Cham princes of Panduranga, Po Cheun Chan, unfolded.

In 1799 Gia Long had placed him in command of all the Cham and all the Koho (Sre), given him the title of dieu khim, and instructed him to build a large citadel. The latter was constructed at Baring, but its location has been lost to posterity.

We do, however, know the name of the prince's wife, which was Brah; we also know that he was taken ill and withdrew to Bhok Cham in southern Binh Thuan. He was not lacking in energy, however, and indeed occasionally

(29) P. Lechesne, "Les Moi du Centre Indochinois," R.I., 1924. Among the Bahnar it was for a long time regarded as sacrilege to use a plow. A. Baudenne, R.I., 1913, p. 238: "Plows are used only by the neophytes of the missionaries The others would feel bound to offer all kinds of sacrifices if they ventured to break the ground in this fashion."

(30) Maitre, "Jungles moi," p. 469.

resorted to violence. An Annamite mandarin found this out to his cost when he tried to ravish his daughter: Po Cheun Chan had him killed. These events seem to be contemporaneous with the death of Gia Long and the accession of Minh Mang (1820).

It was undoubtedly because of that murder that while on a reconnaissance trip in the territory of the Chrau Bala, in the southwest of the province, he received instructions through an envoy from the king to give an account of his actions before the governor. Po Cheun Chan was to bring his sons and grandsons with him; however, the Chrau seized the Vietnamese messenger.

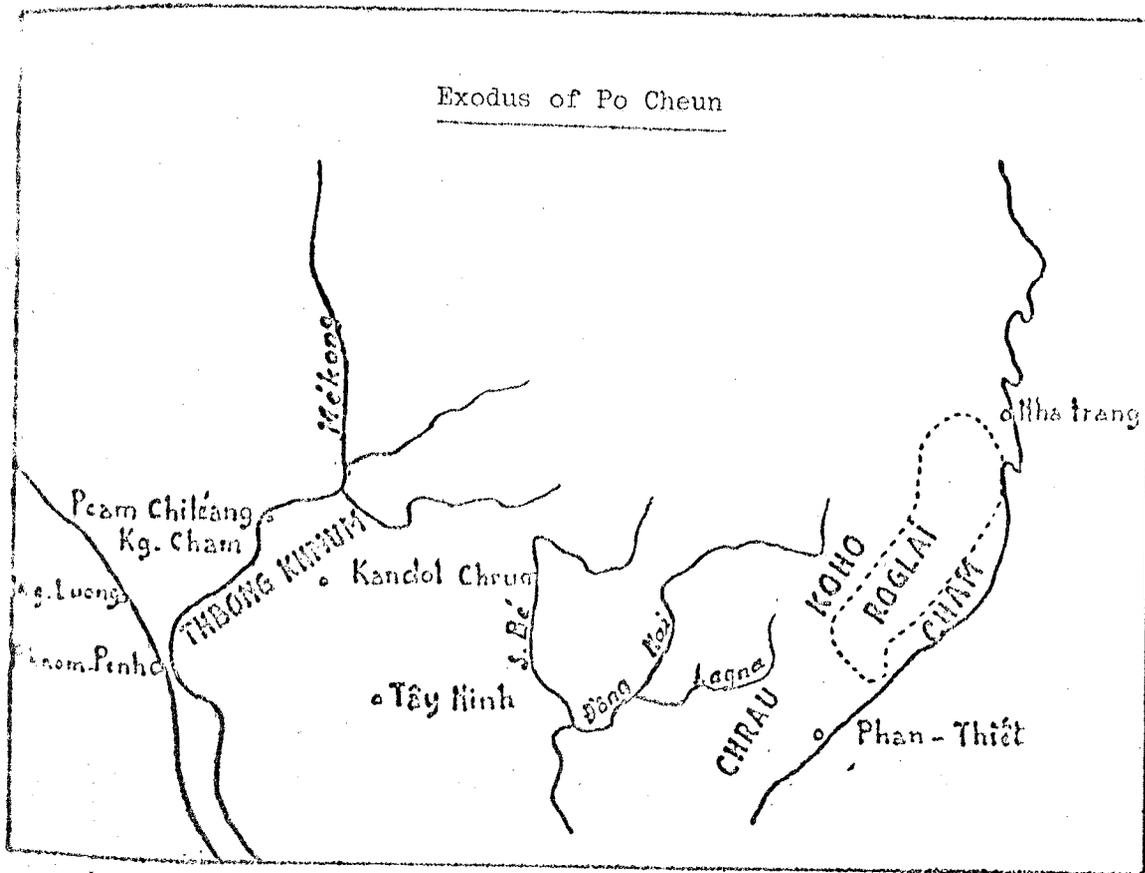
Along with the summons to appear, the messenger had brought gifts of clothing and rolls of material as a mark of the esteem which the Court of Hue intended to show its vassal.

The dieu khim duly set off for the plain and the capital. On his way, a minor mandarin stopped him at Busai and had a cangue* placed round his neck, although it was later order to be removed by a more senior official. However, the prince was forced to remain in captivity for two months. He was then subjected to violent treatment at the hands of a certain Ong Ta, who was apparently out to execute him. On the morning of the day set for the execution, a high-ranking official sent for the prisoner for questioning. Po Cheun Chan finally made good his escape from the violent clutches of the provincial authorities.

As soon as he was free, weary of all these struggles, he planned to lead his followers (Cham and mountain people) to Cambodia. The Annamites tried to stop him, but after winning the ensuing battle he was able to evade them. He fled to the Koho (Sre) and asked them what route he should follow to reach Khmer country. The first Koho he met gave him a warm welcome, but a little later a force of 200 warriors of the same tribe--conceivably at the instigation of the Annamites--attacked him. A Cham officer, Juk Bang, managed to break through the line, whereupon the Koho took to flight. Po Cheun Chan finally subdued them after four months of struggles.

*T.N.: See Webster's Third International Dictionary.

FIG. 4





In the end, the king of Annam authorized the exodus of these moslem Cham tribesmen in the direction of Cambodia, and the Dong oknha guided them as far as the Bu Svai area, while Juk Bang remained behind with the Koho to raise the necessary buffaloes and victuals. After repulsing a last-minute attack by Koho pillagers, the Cham settled along the Mekong river in the region of Roka Ba Bram (Peam Chileang); they are still to be found there in great numbers today.

Some ten years later (around 1830), the Siamese invasion drove some of them toward Kompong Luong and later south of Phnom Penh; others who had reached the Tay Ninh region subsequently moved back to Po Prah En, east of Thbong Khmum, about 8 km. from Kandoi Chrum and in that general area (31). The plateau of the Che Ma thus lost a large proportion of its population.

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CHAPTER VII

THE WESTERN PART OF THE HINTERLAND

FROM THE 15th TO THE EARLY 19th CENTURY

1. SLAVE RAIDS

In the east, the tribes of the hinterland, subject to the suzerainty of the Vietnamese, systematically driven from the plains and the fertile crop land and treated generally as inferior beings, were forced to withdraw into mountains that were too forbidding to tempt the conquerors to further pursuit. Although the control of the Annamites had its harsh side, at least the inhabitants of the plateaus benefited from the order which their conquerors endeavored to establish there.

The western part of the hinterland, on the other hand, entered on just as disastrous and chaotic a period of their history as did the regions bordering on the Mekong at the same time. The 17th and 18th centuries were to precipitate the downfall of Cambodia. The powerful and splendid Lan Xang of the 17th century was destined to be cut up into four

(31) Aymonnier, "Légendes historiques cham," E. et R., XIX, 1890, p. 148.

Laotian kingdoms (Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, and Bassac). Siam, flushed with its victory over the Khmers and Laotians, seemed poised at the turn of the 19th century to assume control of the entire Mekong basin.

It was the mountain tribes which paid the price of these upheavals. Falling into the hands of one master after the other, disorganized and demoralized, they inevitably fell prey to slave-hunting raids by the Khmers, Siamese and Laotians. The more active and bellicose tribes--the Ta Hoi, Sedang and Jarai--joined in these manhunts for their own ends, and it was they who by depopulating the Champoun region, and the banks of the Se San and Srepok rivers, kept the markets of Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Attopeu, Siempang, Bassac and Stung Treng supplied with slaves from the mountain regions. The Annamites, it is said, ordinarily refrained from the slave trade, although unwary Vietnamese were sometimes captured in the bush and kept as slaves. In such cases, they endured a far harsher servitude than that suffered by the mountain people who were in captivity.

The Stieng in the south, for their part, were active purveyors of slaves.

2. THE RETREAT OF THE KHMERS

Harassed by the Annamites in the east, the Laotians in the north, and above all by the Siamese in the west, the Khmers had lost all their influence over the hinterland which they had formerly dominated and which Diego Bellosso, when searching for King Sotha I who had taken refuge in Laos, could still cross from the Annam coast to the Mekong (32) in the years that followed the capture of Lovek by the Siamese (1593). By the beginning of the 17th century the Khmers had lost everything they once controlled north of the Khone falls; the Laotians, descending the valleys of the Se Kong and Se San, had infiltrated everywhere when Chey Chetta II (1618-28), overlooking the threat from the Siamese, despatched a small force of Japanese, Chinese, Malays and Khmers in the direction of Attopeu

(32) H. Maitre ("Jungles moi") states that D. Bellosso and B. Ruiz traveled from Hue to the Mekong by way of the river Se Bang Hieng (1596).

and the gold mines he believed they would find there. The first expedition was a disastrous failure, but the next brought the Cambodians back into the hinterland and along the Great River north of Bassac. The Dutchman Van Wusthof reported their presence there in 1641.

A century later, around 1775, two adventurers, Ta Seng and Ta Pang, at the head of a band of Khmer slave hunters, set up base in Seng Pang (now Siem Pang) on the lower Se Kong river. Their mass raids on the Brao drove them northward in the directions of Attopeu. Later, at the beginning of the 19th century, some Cambodians from Romeas Hek who were being persecuted by the governor of Thbaung Khmum arrived to swell the numbers of the Khmers in Siem Pang. Subsequent events show how in a short space of time the Siamese were to convert this Cambodian outpost into a Laotian muong.

3. THE ADVANCE OF THE LAOTIANS

At the beginning of the 18th century the Laotians, who were established along the Se Bang Hieng river and had ruled over Attopeu since the end of the 16th century, intensified their infiltration toward the southeast, although their advance never assumed the proportions of a real conquest. At home in the forest which the Annamites so dreaded, the subjects of the king of Vientiane mixed readily with the Sue (cross-breeds of the Kha and Laotians) of the valleys and contributed to the spread of Laotian customs. The Se Kong and Mekong rivers brought them as far as Stung Treng, which the Cambodians, who were also under attack from Siam, gave up without a struggle. The indomitable mountain people, for their part, fled from the slave hunters and sought asylum in the high-lying areas; the stream of Laotians, spurning these mountainous outcrops, sought out the fertile land and clung to the navigable waterways. In this way they gained control of the Se Don basin and the Bolovens plateau.

Following down from the Se Kong, the Se Su river brought the T'ai eastward into the heart of the territory of the Halang; there they levied

taxes and charged gold-dust for the buffaloes they brought into the country. Finally they supplied the officials with Laotian trading licenses and seals. For a few years, Ban Ek actually became the capital city of the province. Applying once again the policy that had served him so well in the Se Bang Hieng region, the king appointed a native chau muong in charge of the muong of Sathan.

Still farther to the east, a Laotian post was set up in Bahnar territory on the right bank of the Bla river opposite present-day Kontum. In addition, a chau muong was placed in charge of the Kon Hara region.

The sedang, incidentally, credit the Laotians with having first introduced them to the art of iron-working.

To the south, travelling as far as the river Srepok, the T'ai founded Ban Laia and Ban Don, among the Mnong.

Thus, tolerant and beneficial for those who accepted it, but catastrophic for the rebellious tribesmen threatened by the slave traders, the influence of the Laotians had spread southward as far as the 12th parallel and eastward to the brink of the scarp face overhanging Annam.

4. SIAM AND LAOS AT WAR

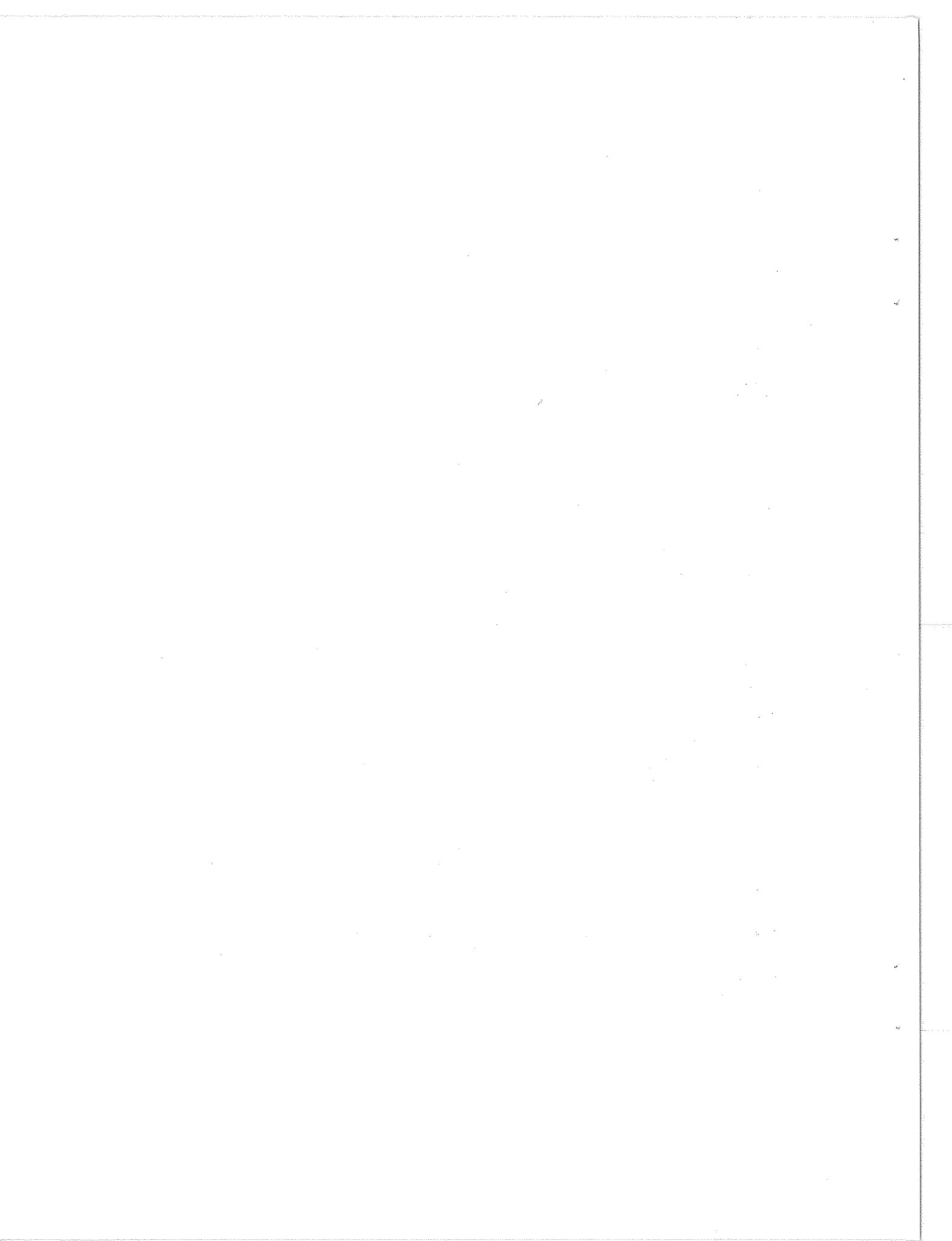
However, since 1771 the King of Laos, Sai Ong Hue, had been at war with Siam, which had entered into an alliance with the kingdom of Luang Prabang and attacked Vientiane.

Some of the mountain people near the approaches to the Se Bang Hieng preferred to leave all their chattels behind them and, rather than remain in subjection to the Laotians, settle down in the east near Cam Lo under the authority and protection of the Vietnamese, while others of the So tribe, for the same reasons, crossed the Mekong to the west and settled in the vicinity of Melou Prey and Tonle Repou. They are sometimes identified with the Kuoy of modern times.

The kings of Vientiane, at grips with the Siamese, joined in the exodus of their subjects toward Cam Lo, thereby hoping to win the support of the Vietnamese.

FIG. 5





5. THE SIAMESE INVASION

After conquering Melou Prey, Tonle Repou and later Stung Treng (1814) the Siamese accepted the surrender of Ponhea Muk, the Cambodian who was the commander at Siem Pang and who thus became the first Siamese vassal on the left bank of the Great River. The Siamese gave him a deputy or ou pahat of Laotian nationality called Thao Oun, who replaced Ponhea Muk as the chau muong when the latter died. Once again, therefore, but this time at the instigation of Siam, the influence of the Laotians supplanted that of the Cambodians in the hinterland. The latter rapidly became "lao-sized." For the rest, only the slave traders and hunters were left in the region; the crop growers, saddled with intolerable taxes, had taken refuge in Bassac.

After 1827, when Vientiane was taken, the plateaus fell rapidly into the power of the Siamese. The Vietnamese did attempt to block the invaders progress and on the first occasion (1828) succeeded in driving them back; later, pushing forward a second time, the Siamese depopulated the region of the Se Bang Hieng river, whereupon the subjects of Hue retired in the direction of Cam Lo. The enemy persevered with its expansion, however, and when, beginning in 1887, the French intervened in support of Annamite claims, they found the Siamese flag all along the Annamite range to as far south as the latitude of Nha Trang (just above the 12th parallel N).

The most important Siamese dignitaries were stationed in Attopeu, Bassac, Stung Treng and Oubon.

Occupation by the Siamese proved disastrous for the mountain people. The Siamese levied a tax payable in gold (33) on their subject peoples; the gifts made to the minor mandarins constituted an additional burden. On the whole, policing was entrusted to Laotian militiamen. The new rulers did nothing to enhance the welfare of the people. Mass migrations took place from Laos to Siam, which was being raided by the Burmese. The entire hinterland was laid waste by the slave trade which was tolerated, when not actively encouraged, since the officials received a tithe on the proceeds.

(33) Some villages were required to pay, in gold-dust, the weight of 2, 5 or eight grains of rice per inhabitant.

Without hope, their fields or their food-gathering (ray) grounds in utter neglect, the tribes led an existence of unspeakable wretchedness.

6. REVOLTS

Around 1820, urged to action by a Laotian bonze, Ya Pu (34), the Blao of the Se Kong river sacked Attopeu and the land of the Halang. The Laotian authorities, temporarily thrown off balance by the suddenness of the attack, finally managed to isolate the leader of the revolt on an inaccessible peak, which has been known as Ya Pu ever since. There, in return for provisions that were brought to him by willing supporters, the rebel distributed miraculous water. The police forces eventually succeeded in storming his retreat: Ya Pu was taken captive and beheaded. Many similar risings ensued; the farther the mountain people sink in their misery, the more they tend to look for a "messiah" who will restore their good fortunes. We shall have frequent occasion to revert to this topic, and we shall encounter this same confidence, as enduring as ever, in the magic powers of a potion that protects warriors and wards off all disease.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE FROM THE RESTORATION OF THE NGUYEN IN ANNAM UNTIL 1859

The revolt led by Le Van Khoi, and the wars which had preceded it starting in 1830--wars between Siam, Cambodia and Annam fought in the theaters of Cambodia and Cochin-China--all these upheavals resulted, when peace came in 1846, in the evacuation of Cochin-China by the vast majority of the Cambodians who had lived there since the close of the 17th century. However, one Khmer enclave remained in the northern part of the province of Tay Ninh.

(34) According to P. Guilleminet, a ya is a heroic demigod born of a male or female genie and a human being. In former times, the ya peopled the earth and lived for hundreds of years. They were invulnerable and possessed elixirs of far superior potency to the best remedies to be had today.

1. THE STIENG

This demographic revolution affected the border of northern Cochin-China. For two hundred years Vietnamese legislation had been applied to the subject zone, which lay approximately south of a line between Nui Ba Ke and Nui Tho Son. From 1850 onward, Annamite infiltration intensified on the southern edge of the gentle and easily accessible slope which rises toward the plateau of central Indochina and whose population, originally Stieng, had long been influenced by the Khmer occupation.

The Stieng whose blood was purest were situated farther to the north and had such a formidable reputation that they have sometimes been referred to as the Sedang of the south.

The incessant guerrilla warfare against the Mngong tribes profited the slave dealers more than anyone else. Bands of Stieng tribesmen ventured beyond the Che Ma plateau in search of Gop or Lat captives which they brought back from the Upper Domai for sale in Cambodia, and in Cochin-China, too. In Kratie the slave trade was recognized to such an extent that the Khmer government imposed a levy of 6 francs for every captive sold in the city's slave market.

On either side of the Song Be valley and of the section of the present Route 13 that runs parallel to it, the primitive tribes, who had up to then been plundered by and compelled to interbreed with the Cambodians, the Cham and the Che Ma, henceforward met the same fate at the hands of the Annamites. In this way, the Tio Ma, Che Ma, Budeh, Preng, Nong, Biet Belen and Biet Bunur, at least those closest to the delta, lost what few distinctive characteristics they might still have retained. The cream of these tribes was subsequently skimmed off by the Annamite wood-dealers and tradesmen whose avarice was not tempered by even nominal supervision. However, although Cochin-China at this time received Moi slaves either

from the Stieng or Mngong hinterland, or from Binh Thuan or Khanh Hoa (35), it must be acknowledged that by and large the country was spared the scourge of slave-trading, which was repugnant to the Annamites. Nonetheless, as Henri Maitre points out, "The peaceful invasion of the Annamites, who left nothing behind them but degenerate dregs riddled with alcohol and contagious diseases and saddled with the administrative yoke, was in fact far more damaging to the Moi than the brutal raids by the Laotians and Cambodians.

Against this backdrop of unbridled cupidity, only a catholic mission, which was established at Brolam (36) around 1851, appeared to be inspired by charitable motives. It was destined to be razed to the ground during the revolt of Pou Combo in 1865.

2. PANDURANGA

The rebellious movement led by Le Van Khoi in Cochinchina had repercussions in Binh Thuan and in Cham territory. In 1833, Tha Va, a moslem from Ninh Thuan province, led an uprising of the Sre and the Chrau there. Within eight days the Annamites had stifled the movement, and captured and executed its ringleader. The Cham, held responsible for the revolt, were once again decimated. These reprisals were a disaster for the province. It was then that the Sre and the Chrau, who had come down to the plains in answer to Tha Va's call, returned for good to their mountains, taking with them the treasures of the former kings of the Champa, which they concealed and kept in the forest.

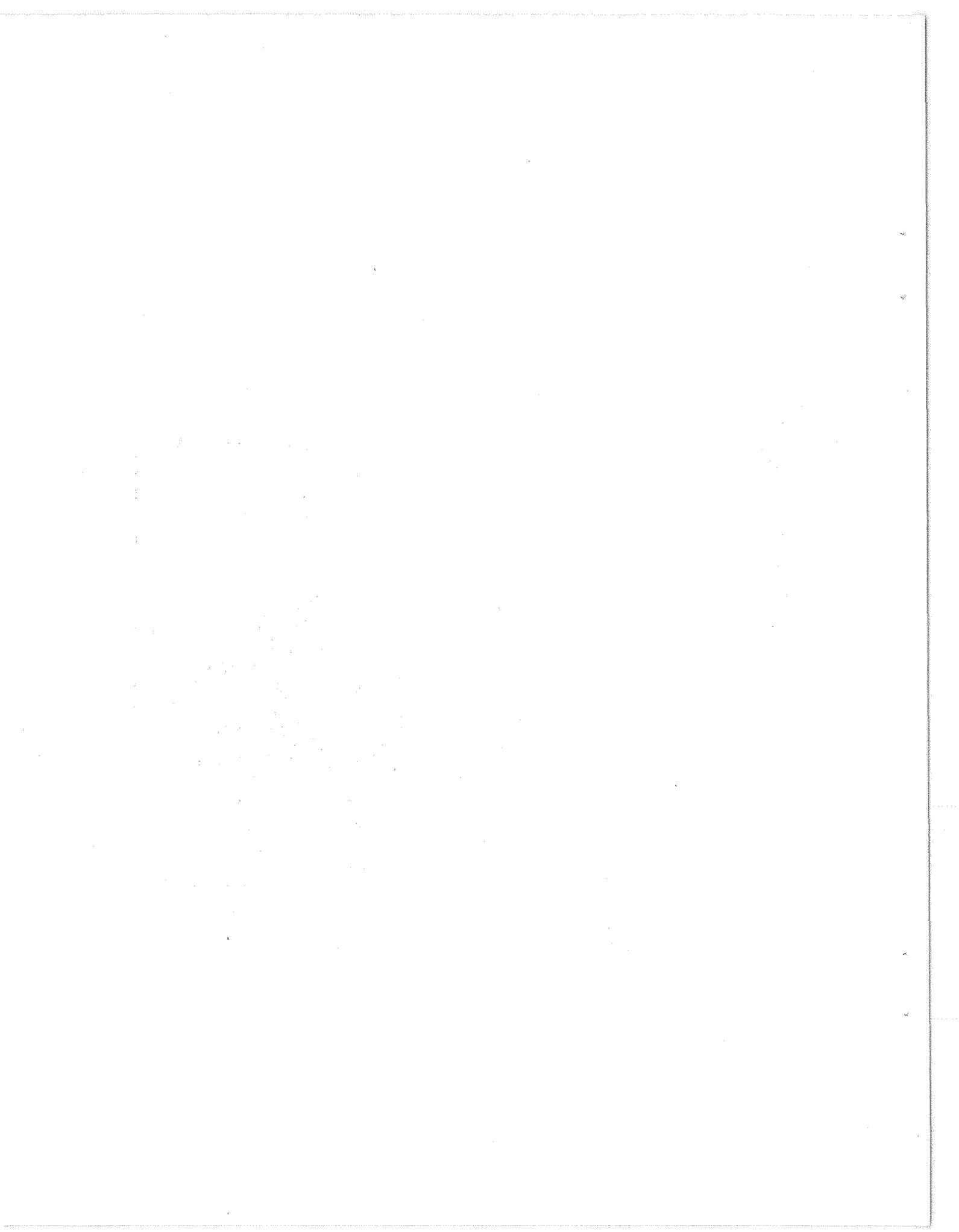
(35) The French troops found Mngong slaves at Sadec and Long Xuyen in 1874; child hunting was organized along the banks of the Song Be.

(36) Father Azémar, "Les Stieng de Brolam," in "Variétés sur les Moi," p. 125 et seq. F. Azémar also compiled the first Stieng dictionary.

The efforts of Father Azémar had been preceded in 1770 by an attempt to establish a mission by F. Jugnet, who died of exhaustion along the Prek Chhlong, another by F. Faulet, who left us a few observations on Stieng customs, and a third by F. Grillet, who traveled about 40 miles through Stieng country. The inhabitants did not take readily to being converted.

In F. Azémar's view, this tribe seemed to be hospitable, and lazy and vagrant rather than warlike; however, it warmly welcomed defensive wars since an attack provided a good motive for reprisals later. War justified pillaging, and the capture and sale of women and children. The Stieng, F. Azémar goes on, suffer from incorrigible lack of foresight: each year part of the harvest is used in making alcohol and each year famine results. They work iron, grow a little cotton, know how to fire crude pottery, and use the same tinder-box as is found among the Meo.

According to Patte, Brolam may be located in the north of Loc Ninh, near Budop close to the fork in the present Saigon-Snoul road.
(Contd. at foot of next page)



In the provinces of Binh Thuan, Phan Rang and Khanh Hoa (Thuan Khanh) the Vietnamese extended the administrative system which they had first devised in Quang Ngai. The mandarins of Hue viewed the Moi preeminently as taxpayers. Thong dich in Binh Thuan, quan muc and dau muc in Khanh Hoa, and dinh nguyen in the Ninh Hoa region collected the tax and passed the proceeds on to the provincial authorities. The Rhade of the Darlac plateau were required to pay a royalty of 800 cân of beeswax in lieu of any other tax. Everywhere, however, the tax collectors doubled as pedlars and, though technically prohibited to all but the agents licensed by the Annamite government, trade with the mountain people was profitable business. The enormous profit which the traders made on the sale of salt, earthenware, gongs and cotton goods, was more than doubled by the exorbitant quantities of forest produce which they demanded in return.

In Phu Yen and Binh Dinh the tax paid by the mountain people was collected by the village chiefs.

3. SON PHONG

Quang Ngai had been the scene of the first experimental attempts by the Court of Hue to devise an administrative system whereby it could control the mountain tribes. This had given rise to the Tran Man in the reign of Gia Long.

But the mountain people of Quang Ngai are unruly. It proved difficult to collect the taxes, and rebellion was brewing. "The frontier villages were then devastated by incursions launched by the tribesmen. Most of these villages were abandoned. The troop strength of the eight co (regiments) was very deficient"(37).

(Note 36 cont. from foot of preceding page)

Maitre placed Brolam 18 km WSW of Budop, that is, slightly to the east of the point indicated by Patte. On the 1:400,000 road map this spot is now marked by Kohor Bret

Maitre described the Stieng huts: "They stand on piles, and resemble the huts of the Jarai, except that the partitions, instead of being at right angles to the floor, form a very pronounced obtuse angle with it."

(37) "Phu Man Tap Luc," by Tieu phu su (Ng. Thanh), R.I., 1904, p. 456 et seq.

In 1842 the lanh binh (co) Nguyen Ninh believed he could put an end to it by terror. Thirty mountain notables, tricked by promises of pardon and peace, came down to Binh An. Their throats were promptly slit on the very doorstep of the Vietnamese trading agent. The majority of the tribes thereupon refused to pay their taxes. War was declared immediately. In 1844, a few victories by the Vietnamese restored peace. In an effort at appeasement, the authorities cut the number of their military posts, hacked down the hedges protecting the truong luy, and disbanded the militias. A scant nine years later, however, in 1853, the country was again up in arms. When a reduction in the total taxes to 1,320 ligatures failed to disarm the revolt, the Court of Hue resorted to force: 80 new posts were built to reinforce the 71 which had been retained in 1844. The authorities were counting on 500 recruits, levied in the frontier region, to pacify the country, but the franc-tireurs of Tran Tru, the mandarin whom the Court had charged with punishing the insurgents, lost three battles in the Lang-y region.

In 1855, three years before the first French attempt to take Da Nang (Tourane), there was a military operation against Minh Long that at first seemed certain to succeed, but the Vietnamese were deeply troubled by the brush, which to them was hostile and full of genies. As the column wound back on itself, "the whispering of the breeze and the cries of the swans" (38) sowed panic among the ranks, and the soldiers killed each other in the dark.

In 1859, the battles at first began to take a heavy toll of the mountain people, and the regular troops advanced as far as Nuoc To in the highlands, which had resisted all attacks up to then. Once again, however, the Annamites allowed themselves to be taken unawares, and the campaign cost them many arms, men and officers.

In 1863, finding himself at grips in Cochin-China with the French expeditionary force which, after taking Saigon, had extended its control to the eastern provinces of Cochin-China, H.M. Tu Duc, anxious to restore calm to central Annam, decided to accept the services of Nguyen Tran, the

(38) Ibid, p. 456 et seq.

an sat in Thai Nguyen in a T'ai province of Tonkin. This mandarin was instructed to "subdue the Moi by force of arms and organize the country." He was given six years in which to accomplish this task. The situation had by then reached a point where it was necessary to organize a powerful repressive column.

Nguyen Tran was a direct descendant of Nguyen Cong Toan, the administrator of the Tran Man; holding the rank of tieu phu su, he was not merely an exceptional military man; in addition, his assignment gave him an opportunity to show his skills as a politician and administrator. Annam owes to him the idea of the Son phong, of which he remained the chief until his death and which was imitated as far as the borders of Cochinchina and all along the frontier that separated the Annamite lands from the tribes of the hinterland. In addition, he was the founder of a dynasty; first his son Nguyen Do, then his grandson Van Minh, the son-in-law of H.M. Thanh Thai, succeeded him in his post until the Son Phong was abolished in 1904. The last of these great mandarins wrote a dissertation that is indispensable for anyone wishing to study the Son Phong (39).

"The Son Phong is an extraordinary jurisdiction. Its principles are strictly military, and it did not assume the direct collection of the taxes paid by the Moi until the administration of Nguyen Thanh, when it did so by setting up the chau. The Son Phong remained the almost exclusive appanage of one landowning family because of the services it had rendered."

This institution operated under the direct control of the central government. It covered the entire province of Quang Ngai, the region of Tra My (cinnamon), in Quang Nam, and extended throughout the hinterland of northern Binh Dinh.

THE MILITARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SON PHONG

The tieu phu su raised 3,600 regular troops and strengthened their ranks with partisans. He eliminated the giao dich (tax collectors) and

(39) R. F. Durand, "Les Moi du Son-phong," R.I., 1907, pp. 1055-58. Haguët, "Notice ethnique sur les Moi de la région de Quang Ngai," R.I., 1905, p. 1419 et seq. Maj. Nyo, "Pénétration française en pays moi," B.S.E.I., 1937, No. 2, pp. 45-67 (and 1 map). Trinquet, "Poste administratif de Lang Ri," R.I., 1908, II, p. 346 et seq. (and 4 good maps). Laborde, "Monographie de la province de Quang Ngai," B.A.V.H., 1925, pp. 153-192, and above all "Phu Man Tap Luc," R.I., 1904, p. 456 et seq.

cancelled a whole year's taxes. Subsequently, he established three (and later four) large fortified stations under the command of Mo Duc, the military and political core of the district. From Tra My (Quang Nam) to Chi Doc (Binh Dinh) about ten forts were constructed.

To assist him, the chief had a staff composed of an inspector-general, a dê dôc, two chau lanh binh (divisional), and two pho lanh binh (corporals).

The country was divided into two commands: Nghia Bien (Quang Ngai and southern Quang Nam), comprising 7 regiments and 7 forts, and Dinh Bien (northern Binh Dinh), comprising 3 regiments.

The recommendations issued to the field officers give quite an accurate idea of the principles underlying the policy of the Son Phong: "Sound knowledge of the mountain people, circumspection, and solicitude, but also unwavering firmness in certain cases. (40)

"Keep your operations secret; do not allow taxes that are overdue to remain in the coffers of the collectors. If the mountain tribes attack, harvest their crops. On the other hand, once the enemy has been defeated, distribute food and clothing, and have the sick taken care of. If they do not resume their tax payments then, cut down their rice; but, turning the well-known loyalty of the tribes of the hinterland to good account, always act in an upright manner. Keep your word; if rebels surrender, do not demand reparation for earlier misdeeds." The tieu phu su was aware of the courage of the Moi: "They slash their thighs and hold a burning coal on the flat of their hand without a murmur. Those of the mountain regions are well known for their unruly nature; their gait is light and agile, like the speed of whirling lightning, according to Vuong Khoi, a poet of the Han era.

"Without a sovereign and without any form of government, these Moi inhabit impenetrable regions. Naturally given to acts of hostility and aggression, they live by pillage and plunder. If we use energetic means to subdue them, they flee; if we attempt to win them over by appealing to

(40) "Phu Man Tap Luc," R.I., 1904.

their emotions, they become insolent. If we kill any of them they swear hatred, and if we are magnanimous, they show no gratitude.

"The task calls for an energetic approach, and faint-hearted acts must be shunned. The commander-in-chief of the expedition must be a resourceful man, well loved by his men, fair, as generous with his rewards as he is harsh in his punishments. He must plan his operations with care, and reconnoitre roads and paths well, in addition to the position of the enemy's hideouts; he must train his soldiers in the use of rattan shields, javelins, arquebuses and cannons, and in wielding the scythe, because clubs, sabres and lances are of no use."

By 1866-67 the tieu phu su had subdued all the Moi Thuoc with the exception of those in Nuoc To and Nuoc Xanh, which, together with Nuoc Gia and Coi Nam, formed the Lang-y region. These people "protected by their mountain fastnesses, still showed themselves to be indomitable."

By 1869 the uprising had been completely quelled.

FISCAL REORGANIZATION

The tieu phu su began by suppressing the giao dich, trading agents and tax collectors selected from among the mountain people themselves.

Their duties were thereupon taken over by tong nguon under the direction of the Vietnamese canton chief; in other words, tax gathering became an Annamite affair. Following instructions from the tong nguon, the dau muc, chosen from the mountain people, and the sach truong, who were rather like mayors, were made responsible for delivering the tax monies (1,350 ligatures, instead of 1,470, for the entire territory of the Son Phong) to the tong nguon. The taxes payable in kind were brought in by the cac lai. As it happened, the tieu phu su had imposed a tax of 1,200 hóc of paddy; the original tribute of one million lengths of rattan was later abolished.

ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

The Thu ngu and thua bien were eliminated, and the district was split into four chau (districts) in 1887 (Ha Tinh and Tra My, Nghia Hanh, Duc Pho, and Bong Son).

Their chief, the tri chau, was assisted by five officials. Under his orders he had Annamite chanh tong and pho tong, in addition to tong nguon, canton chiefs, who were in command of "montagnard" dau muc, and of sach truong, rather similar to mayors in function, and also of "montagnard" origin. Whether or not the dau muc and the sach truong were tractable depended on their mood at any given time.

The chau formed appendages to, rather than integral parts of, the prefectoral administration; the tri chau, although residing in the same civil territory as the provincial mandarins, were only permitted to discharge their functions within the precise limits of their powers, which inevitably gave rise to occasional friction (41).

In other words, within the province the Annamites were administered by the provincial mandarins; only the tri chau and their assistants were charged with the administration of the mountain people.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

Barter markets known as truong thi were opened by official order close to each tong nguon; they attracted few people, however. Indeed, all trade and business was reserved to the agents of the Son Phong, who sublet to each tong nguon the right to trade in one or more villages in the mountain region.

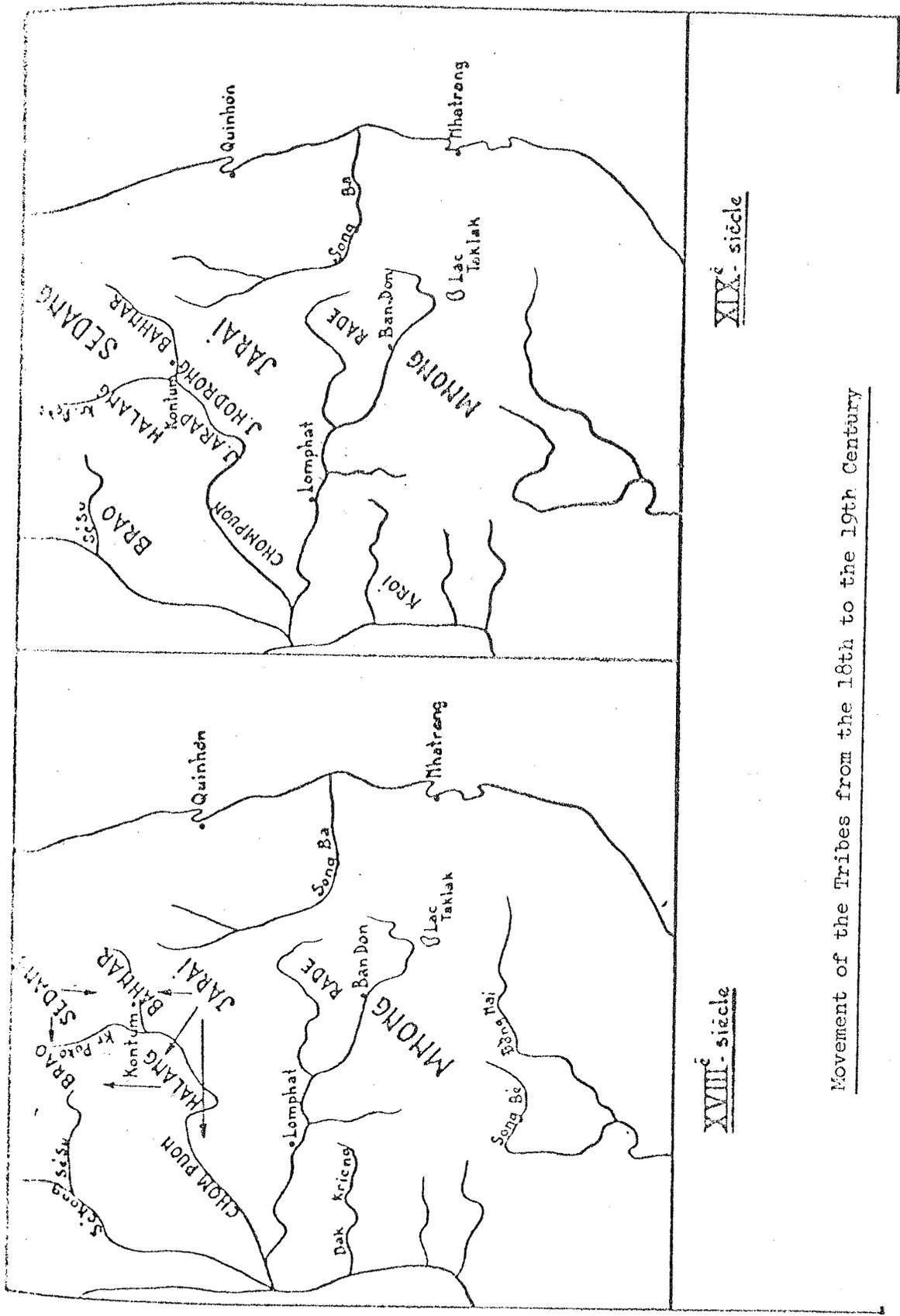
As everywhere else in the hinterland, the pedlars imported salt, earthenware, glass beads and trinkets, cotton goods, etc., but also gongs, since only the Moi, who were unable to make them, knew how to tune them.

The highlands yielded eagle-wood, ivory tusks and rhinoceros horns, but above all cinnamon from Quang Ngai and Tra My. The Ta Kua of Son Tho, Son Thuan, and Son Bong, who spoke a different language, lived in houses of an unusual shape and had specialized in gathering cinnamon. The Ka Giong (Sedang) also grew it, although they preferred to raid the Ta Kua villages once the latter had garnered their harvest.

Trade in cinnamon, which had been free under Gia Long, became the monopoly of the royal family (42). Minh Mang placed his brother Kien An

(41) F. Durand, "Le Son-Phong," R.I., 1907.

(42) The province of Quang Ngai and the district of Tra My (Quang Nam) produce almost all the cinnamon exported to China.



XVIIIe siècle

XIXe siècle

Movement of the Tribes from the 18th to the 19th Century

in charge of it, and the latter's agents, or lanh mai, passed on their trust to their descendants. In the early years, these lanh mai grew rich without resorting to dishonesty in their trading. But their roving agents, the lai buon, fell badly into debt to the Chinese buyers, who then quickly cornered the market. After that, the cinnamon trade gave rise to such abuses as the following: After a copious meal, the crop was generally purchased prior to cutting. While the villagers caroused, the coolies, acting on orders from the collectors, set about stripping the bark at random from the reserve plots as well, without keeping within the boundary lines that had been marked out. The mountain people, who had often received nothing but an advance against the harvest, then discovered the fraud. Skirmishes were therefore frequent at Tra My and Phuoc Son, the main cinnamon markets, and at Tinh Son, Phu Thanh Gia and Lo Dong, the secondary markets.

In summary, the most realistic estimates put the traders' profit on exports at 25 to 30 percent, but the profit they extorted from imports was three times as large. Salt, which in terms of volume accounted for the bulk of sales to the mountain people, was sold to them for at least twice the price paid for it at the coast.

Within the boundaries of the district of the Son Phong, slavery was prohibited, as were also the ray system (food gathering) and the transmission of messages by beacons and gong-beating (43).

Henri Maitre deplored the fact that "the most enchanting of Indochina's wild regions was ruined by the Son Phong."

4. THE TRIBES OF THE HIGHLAND PLATEAUS: SEDANG, BAHNAR, JARI, RHADE, ETC.

From 1827 onward, the Siamese invasion favored anarchy among the mountain people and the dispersion of the tribes. The more belligerent among them took advantage of this state of affairs to step up their raids and slave-trading activities. Some of them, in particular the Sedang and Jarai, drove back their neighboring tribes and seized what good land they could. The two sketches attached (see facing page 46 of the original) show how the Jarai and Arap and some of the Hodrung set upon the Bahnar,

(43) F. Durand, "Les Moi du Son-Phong," R.I., 1907.

who were forced to abandon the left bank of the Krong Bla and withdraw onto the right bank, giving up the southern part of the lush plain watered by the middle reaches of the Krong Bla and by the Mo Tung.

Father Dourisboure depicts (44) the Jarai Hodrung as being particularly warlike and more given to cruelty than the other mountain tribes. Controlling rich valleys, they left their womenfolk to cultivate them and concentrated on what seemed to them the only occupations truly worthy of warriors: raiding the Bahnar, keeping their prisoners as slaves, or selling them on to the Laotians. Their incursions nevertheless had one beneficial side-effect: the Bahnar admittedly lost excellent land as a result, which was then left idle, but after always leading a scattered existence they came to recognize the advantages of uniting for their common defense; they settled down together in villages along the right bank of the Bla. The Bahnar tribe thus acquired cohesion.

After being set upon by their former allies, the Hodrung, the Jaria-Arap turned against the Halang (who worked iron, but principally panned the riverbeds for gold) and the Chom Puon, who receded--the first northward beyond the Mang Mrai Mts., and the others between the Se San and Srepok rivers, indeed even as far as the lower Dak Krieng north of Sambor (the Kroï are an offshoot of the Chom Puon, although their dialect has since undergone Khmer influence).

Finally, just at the time the Jarai-Arap were fighting against the Bahnar, the latter were attacked from the north by the redoubtable Sedang, and it was only thanks to the help of the French missionaries that they were able to ward off the invasion. The Sedang then turned against the Brao, who were forced to emigrate westward, south of the Se Su river.

Raids by the Jarai compelled the Biet to leave the area they occupied, after which they settled some 50 km. east of Kratie.

Through Lomphat and Ban Don, the Jarai maintained trading relations with Mngong of Prek Te.

(44) F. Dourisboure, "Les Sauvages Bahnar," Paris, 1875.

The Jarai push westward was still in progress just before the second world war broke out. Jarai still occupy the eastern fringe of the Veun Sai district, but some groups have worked their way forward to reach as far as the approaches to the provincial capital itself, e.g. the village of Ban Huoi Lay, 5 km. northeast of the city (45).

Though the Jarai showed considerable aggressiveness toward the end of the 18th century, their Sadets were no longer powerful enough to have played the influential role which some writers have attributed to them during the Jarai's campaign against the Cham.

However, in 1858 the Sadets won independence from the authority of Hue. They even supported the king of Cambodia, Ang Duong, who was leading the war in Khmer country against the Annamite troops. The Sadet of Fire sent nine elephants with their Jarai mahouts, along with his wishes for a Cambodian victory. The accession of Norodom in 1860, however, put an end to the exchange of gifts with the Court of Oudong. Norodom took the initiative in this break with tradition, and the half-hearted remonstrations by the Sadet failed to elicit any response. Decadence was also to strike at one of the mountain tribes which could in 1945 [sic 1845?] be regarded as among the most highly evolved: the Rhade.

It is on record that the kings of Cambodia sent caravans to the Darlac plateau, while the Vietnamese from Song Ca or Tuy Hoa, traders in search of horses, made their way toward Rhade country via the M'Drac pass.

The Rhade sent the authorities in Khanh Hoa an annual tribute of 800 pounds of wax. About half-way through the 19th century, according to Moura, the Annamites invaded the Darlac region. Thereafter, the annals of the area are filled with little else but raids, vendettas, and wars between villages. Sabatier, the enthusiastic champion of the Darlac area, planned to organize a commemoration for a victory which the Rhade had won over the Jarai, but too few details are known of this event. On the other hand, we know for sure that the Rhade villages, at that time still averse to any form of authority, were tyrannized by the M'tau (potau). These

(45) See the very fine ethnic and linguistic map of the Veun Sai region by F. Bitard, B.S.E.I., XXVII, No. 1, 1952.

adventurers, many of whom owed their fortunes to the slave trade, inspired sufficient fear to instil obedience into a number of villages, which they then led in attacks on peace-loving tribes or surprise raids on Annamite traders. In this way, one party of Rhade-Kpa tribesmen was forced to flee from the southeastern part of the Darlac plateau and take refuge among the mountains that rise south of Lake Tak Lak.

These roving parasites of the plateaus included the Jau and the Hiau, who lived in the urban area we now know as Ban Don. They raided and pillaged the middle reaches of the Srepok to such an extent that they have been barren ever since (46). Thu, a descendant of mixed Mngong and Laotian stock, continued this plundering. After showing extreme hostility initially to Captain Cupet, who had been sent to make the Siamese evacuate the country, Thu later became, under the name Kun Yu Nob, one of the most remarkable chiefs of the hinterland, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, etc. From a slave trader, he became an elephant hunter.

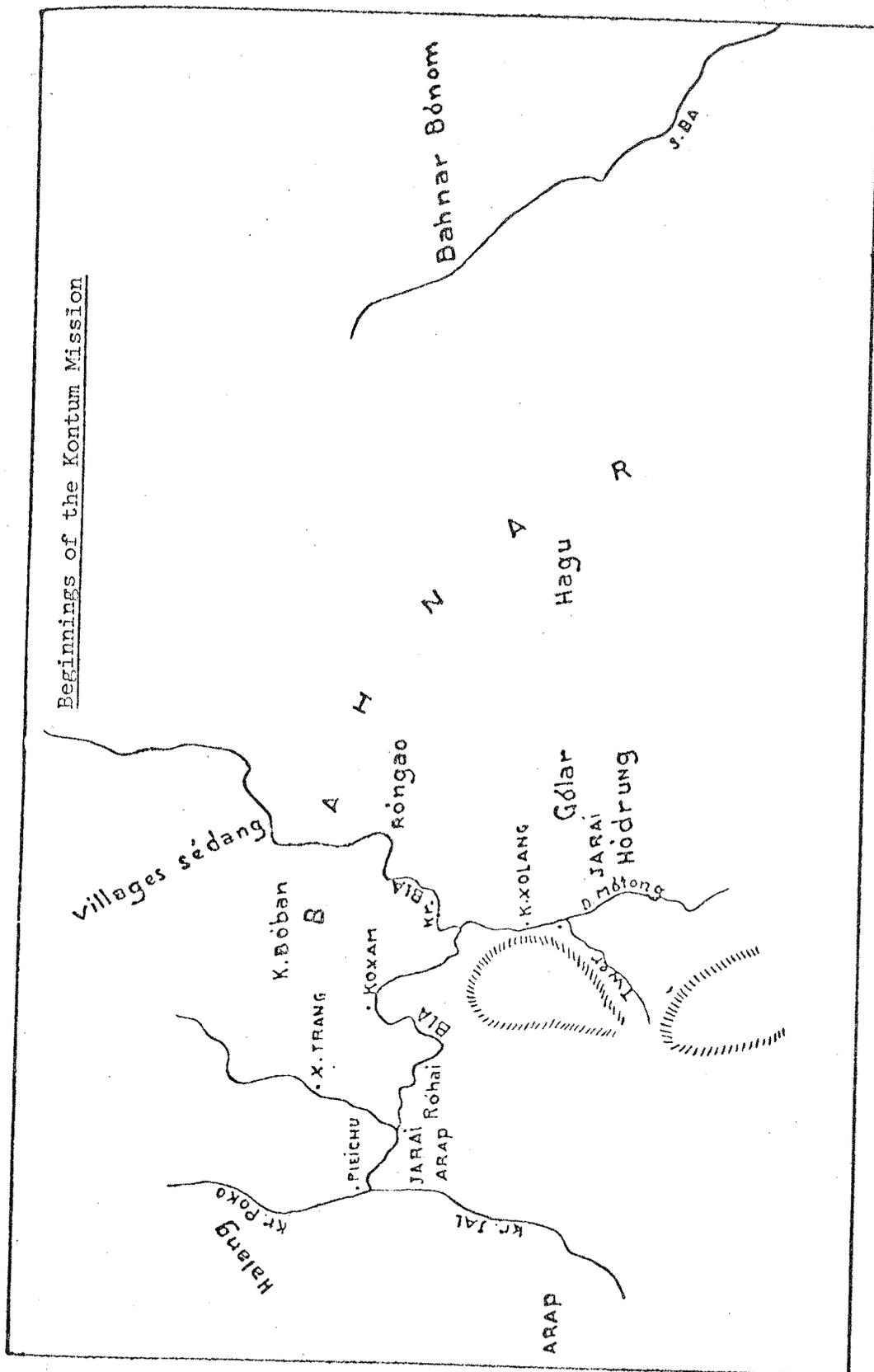
Another notorious band was that of Kham Lu. He was reputed to be invulnerable. With some fifty fellow Burmese, twenty Laotians and a hundred Mngong Preng recruited by Thu, Kham Lu set out to attack the Bih. However, 800 Bih tribesmen, led by Ngeuh, lay in wait for him at Ban Phok, near Ban Tur. Kham Lu was slain, and thirty Burmese with him. The Mngong Preng, fearful of reprisals, scattered, some toward the Se Kong in the northwest, and the rest among the Stieng in the inhospitable mountains of the south. Ngeuh turns up again on the occasion of the Bih revolt from 1900 to 1903.

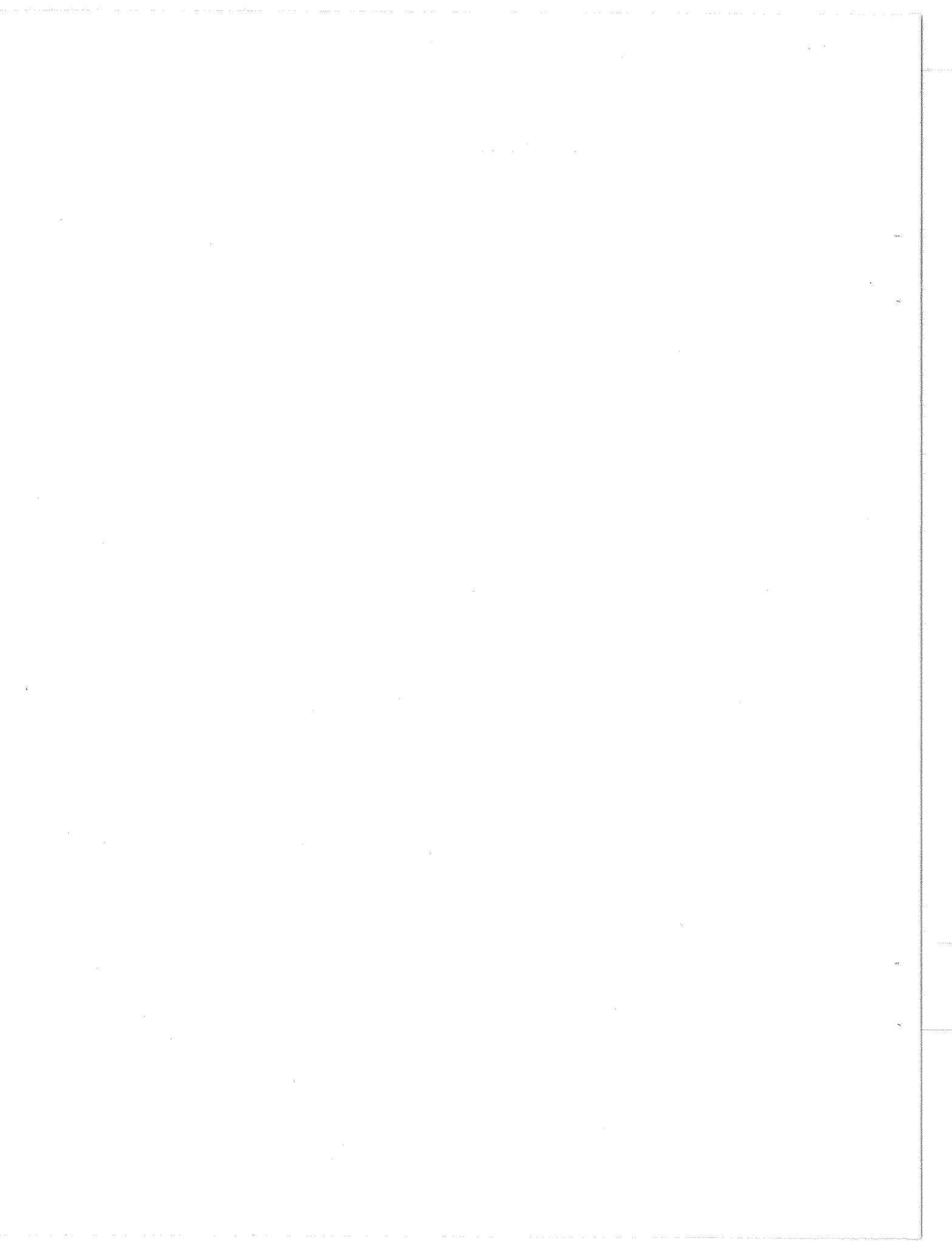
Descending from the upper reaches of the Srepok by way of Ban Don, Lomphat and the Chhlong, the Mngong or the Stieng would bring elephants, lac, wax and slaves for sale to the Khmers or Chinese living on the Mekong. The market at Sambor prospered. The Siamese burned it down, but the Cambodians built another farther south at Roka Kandal; from it, Kratie grew.

The Mngong hamlets paid the chiefs appointed by the Cambodian authorities a due of 4,000 kilograms of wax and sticklac, every three years.

(46) H. Maitre, "Jungles Moi," p. 71: "The Mngong did not return to this area until after the French had established themselves in the Highlands."

FIG. 8





To return to the Stieng, the occupation of the upper Chhlong by the Cambodians between 1868 and 1875 constrained them to withdraw eastward beyond the source of the Chhlong river.

5. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLIC MISSION IN KONTUM

The early years of the 19th century, so rich in upheavals for the mountain tribes, were to witness the appearance of a new force so dynamic that even today the disruptions brought about by the second world war are not enough to impede its development. That force was the Mission at Kontum.

It was Mgr. Cuénot's idea to establish christendom in the very heart of the hinterland. The prelate, upset by the persecutions that marked the reigns of Minh Mang and Thieu Tri, planned to found a refuge for the faithful, if they should need it, and for the clergy in the event that life became intolerable for them on the coast.

In 1842, on the instructions of the bishop, Fathers Miche and Duclos set out from Phu Yen bound for the interior. Their access to Moi country was barred and the frontier well guarded. Arrested by cac lai, the two missionaries were handed over to the mandarins and were only released from prison thanks to the arrival of the Héroïne at Da Nang in 1843. Once freed, the two priests again endeavored to carry out the order they had received from the bishop. They did not succeed either this second time, when they left from Quang Ngai, nor the third time, when they departed from Quang Nam.

It was a Vietnamese deacon, Father Do, who enabled them to succeed. He discovered an almost impassable path that was little traveled. Along this, he led F. Combes and later F. Fontaine into the Kontum region, where, as chance would have it, Kiem, a Bahnar chief and a friend of the deacon, had been the appointed representative of the Court of Hue since 1840. Though very devoted to the Annamites, Kiem nonetheless struck an agreement with the missionaries and allowed them to build a hut in the middle of the forest at Kelang.

Such were the beginnings of the Kontum Mission. The territory of the Bahnar extended for about 60 to 80 kilometers from north to south and from east to west. The early missionaries estimated the strength of the tribe at some 25,000 souls, scattered among villages consisting of ten to one hundred houses each. Naturally, these villages were constantly warring with each other, which was hardly conducive to evangelization, especially as the conversion of one group aroused religious hostility in its neighbors.

The Bahnar-Rongao, who readily band together with the Sedang, Hagu and Halong of the Pleiku region, who are rather fierce and prone to forming federations, which gave them the reputation of being formidable opponents, the Jolong, and, closer to Quang Ngai, the Bonom, farmers and exploiters of the forest, who were depicted as relatively gentle by nature, and finally the Da Vach--all these Bahnar tribes, except for a few scattered groups farther to the east, were reputed to be more peace-loving than their neighbors: the Sedang in the north and the Jarai in the south. A small Annamite christian colony lived by trading. Long years of Cambodian occupation had left their impression on the dialect spoken by the Bahnar.

Cut off from the excellent plain of the Mo Tong river by the Jarai, the Bahnar practiced their crude farming methods between the moderately fertile hills that undulate north of the Bla river; their crops included rice, tobacco, cotton, and a very small amount of sugar cane. To the east, the Bonom had specialized in raising and cutting a choice grade of cinnamon.

Their industry was limited to making crossbows, canoes, and above all gray or white cotton blankets. Even though the dwelling houses may have been dirty, each village boasted a community house with a braided roof that was not without elegance. According to Father Combes, trading was inhibited by their fear of debts and the slavery which resulted. From the Annamite merchants who came from Quang Ngai or Binh Dinh they bought salt, iron implements or copperware, gongs and earthenware pots.

The Mission was founded in 1849. It is perhaps worth dwelling for a moment on the choice of Ko Lang, then of Ko Xam, when Fathers Dourisboure and Desgouts arrived, and finally of Rohai for the early establishments. The missionaries did not settle in the heart of Bahnar country, but on the southern fringe of the tribe, between it and the aggressive Jarai-Hodrung, so as to form a barrier. The fathers did their own clearing and then, after their first baptism services, in 1853, encouraged their Christian followers to take to the plow. Oxen and buffalo purchased from the Hagu were harnessed before the plows. This method of cultivation was a victory over superstition (47). It gave the converts the advantage of a technical superiority and guaranteed them better harvests than those of the "pagans," which, in a country where famine is an ever-present threat, could not fail to draw the people. By the end of 1851, the four missionaries (three French and one Vietnamese) were firmly established in four villages, all very close to the confluence of the Bla and the Poko rivers.

Some Annamite fathers from Binh Dinh and Phu Yen did succeed in reaching the upper Srepok, where they found a Christian settlement at Tinh Ju, which is believed to have been near present-day Bu Jen Drom, in Mngong country (48). Father Bouillevaux (49), setting out from Sombor, paid a visit to this short-lived mission. Ultimately, only Kontum remained habitable by the missionaries. It was here that in 1854, when the authorities in Binh Dinh, where a new persecution was rampant, sent soldiers out to arrest the priests of the hinterland, the mountain people--even the Jarai--

(47) From as early as 1856-58 plowing was taught in the Catholic villages: this was a tremendous success, especially in view of the terror it inspired in the Bahnar. According to their fetishistic beliefs, the god of thunder was certain to show his wrath at seeing buffaloes thus diverted from the purpose for which they were created; the Moi believed these animals were placed on earth for the specific purpose of being eaten in ritual sacrifices, and not to be used for work at all. Therefore, only converted villages agreed (and then only very reluctantly) to use the plow; the paddyfields made in this fashion made a singular contribution to developing agriculture among the tribes, which had up to then been only very rudimentary (H. Maitre, "Jungles Moi," p. 214).

(48) The Mngong had unplied huts resting directly on the ground (ibid., p. 91).

(49) For a biography of F. Bouillevaux who discovered Angkor before Mouhot and who, after two adventurous tours in Indochina, remained a humble canon in Montier-en-Der (tiny French village) for some forty years, see B.S.E.I., 1949, No. 4, pp. 59-62.

threw the detachment off the scent and refused to supply guides; the party grew weary and pulled out.

The Annamites, on the other hand, piqued by the capture of Saigon (1859), cut the fathers off from all relations with the coastal areas and from their sources of provisions. In 1862, therefore, when appeasement came, Fathers Combes, Verdier, Besombes and Suchet were dead, exhausted by deprivation and disease. Father Besombes, a man of great courage--he had actually been seen to out-wrestle a tiger--had settled at Kon Solang in an area apparently occupied at the time by the Jarai, later moving on to Tower, on the river of the same name. In addition to the difficulties stemming from an unknown language, he was faced with a tribe that was more hostile and more redoubtable even than the Bahnar. The Jarai were smiths, and knew how to temper iron and cast copper. Quite a brisk trade was done in their white, red, blue, and checkered fabrics, but for the menfolk war took pride of place over any other occupation. On Father Besombes' death, his place was taken by F. Dourisboure (50), who continued the work of the mission in Jarai country.

The end of the persecution in Binh Dinh seemed all set to bring Christianity a period of tranquility. The Court of Hue recognized its existence in 1862. In that same year, however, the Bahnar were decimated by smallpox and the witch-doctors blamed the mission for the epidemic. It was also in 1862 that a party of 400 Sedang came down from the north and set upon the Bahnar, who were already under attack from the invading Jarai-Hodrung in the south. By chance, the birds, tigers and elephants which the Sedang column came across all presaged disaster, and the aggressors halted.

The advantages of the protection afforded by the missionaries appeared indisputable. It is certain that the Christian villages, held together by their presence, had displayed resistance instead of scattering into the forest.

(50) Dourisboure, "Les Sauvages Bahnar," Paris, Téqui.

These Sedang, also a metalworking people (it will be recalled that the Laotians had initiated them in the art of working iron and using bellows), were if anything more formidable than the Jarai. The latter savored the excitement that war brought, but the Sedang relied on it above all for their supply of slaves. They consequently preferred to attack isolated groups. On the whole, they did not maltreat their slaves, for fear of reducing the value of their chattels. However, they ate the livers of their enemies and, when they built a house, the base of the master pillar had to crush a slave alive--to them, this was the price of durable construction.

They could easily have done a brisk trade in the axes, weapons and farming implements they fashioned, but, stubbornly insisting on using stones as hammers and anvils, they failed to produce any articles likely to tempt prospective buyers.

According to the missionaries, the Sedang showed them no hostility; but they raided the Christians all the same, not because of their religion but because they were Bahnar. The Jarai, too, rarely passed up a chance to plunder convoys bound for the Christians in Kontum as they passed by.

The Kontum settlement thrived. On his arrival there in 1883, Father Guerlach found 1,500 Annamite Catholics and four villages where the majority of the people were Bahnar converts. In deference to the memory of those first nights and the early weeks that these pioneers lived through, lost in the forest among wild beasts, enemies and strange tribes, this outline ought perhaps to have been less matter-of-fact.

CHAPTER IX

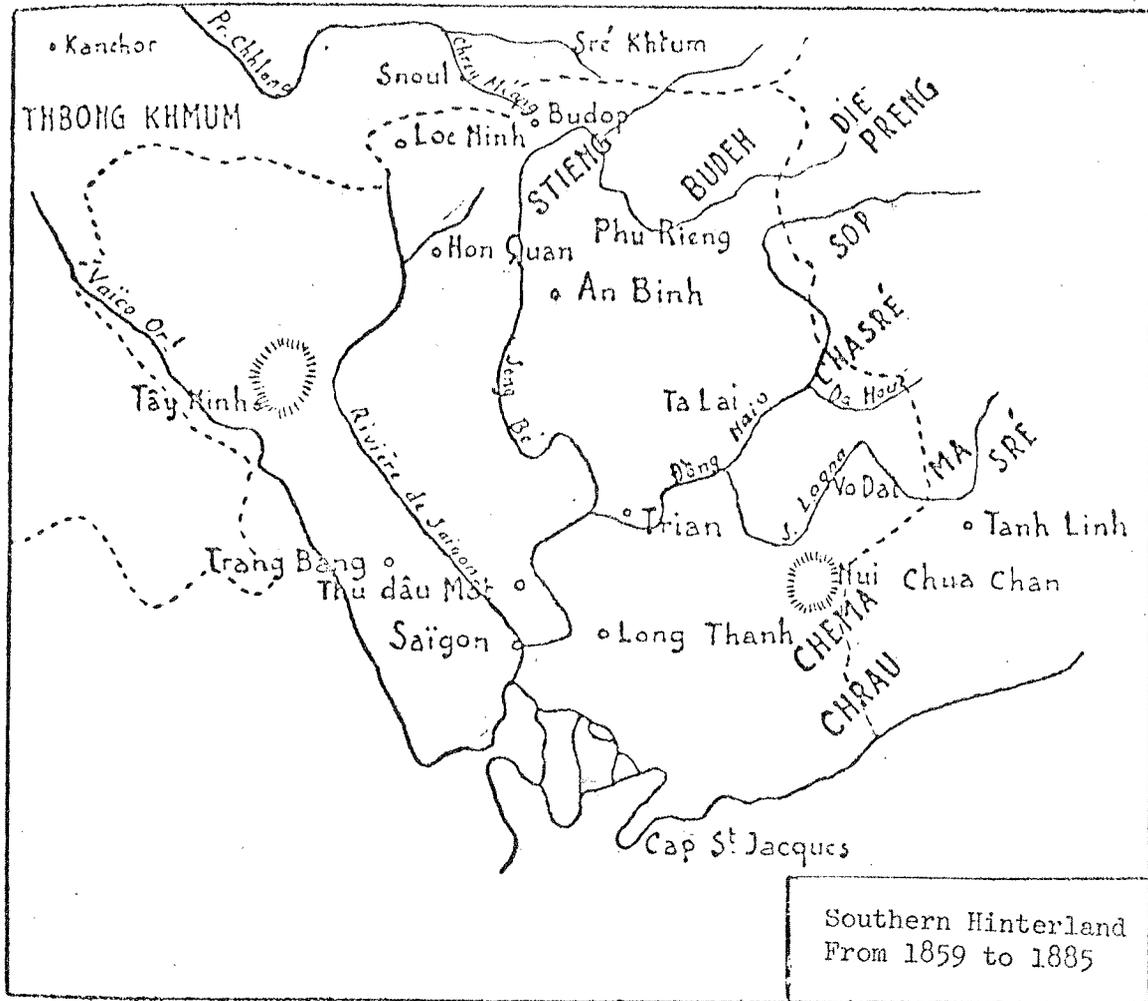
THE HINTERLAND FROM 1859 TO 1885

In 1859 the capture of Saigon brought the French into lower Cochin-China; in 1863 Cambodia placed itself under their protectorate, and, in 1867, with the addition of western Cochin-China, the troops of the expeditionary force occupied the lower reaches and the delta of the Mekong River. Up to 1885, however, the wavering and contradictory attitude of Parliament in Paris made any occupation of the hinterland out of the question. The blow which the advent of the French struck against the Courts of Hue and Oudong, combined with the trouble which then ensued and the resulting weakening of Annam and Cambodia, and the fact that Siam endeavored in the meantime to extend its boundaries across the Se Bang Hieng and the Se Don rivers, merely served to accentuate the particularism and anarchy of the mountain tribes. The predatory Sedang, Ta Hoi, Jarai, Rhade and Stieng bandits took advantage of this situation to intensify their raids and slave hunting excursions at the expense of the less warlike tribes. In 1887, after the affairs of Tonkin and Annam, encroachment by the Siamese threatened the entire hinterland and, from south of the Black River to the southern part of the peninsula, their advance posts rapidly began to occupy the line of peaks which form the western border of the Annamite plains.

1. THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF COCHIN-CHINA

The popular dissatisfaction which followed the occupation of eastern Cochin-China after 1859 was exploited by the Court of Hue, which organized a violent anti-French reaction and heightened the persecution of the Christians which had been raging since 1847. By intensifying the brigandage, the Annamite mandarins were out to make the country ungovernable for the French and their supporters. The agitation even spread to some of the mountain tribes. Some groups of Stieng from the north of Thu Dau Mot and Bien Hoa and of Chrau from the east of Ba Ria joined in the general revolt of 1862. All the frontier posts in the north and northeast of Cochin-China

FIG. 9



Southern Hinterland
From 1859 to 1885



were thus blocked. "It was chiefly in the forests that separate us from Binh Thuan that the insurgents attempted to reorganize themselves" (51).

In the province of Ba Ria Colonel Coquet, after receiving a few reinforcements, repulsed the attackers as far as the borders of Annam, while Col. Loubère won a similar success in the north of Bien Hoa and Thu Dau Mot.

Throughout the following year, 1863, the enemy tried every imaginable ruse to unnerve the occupation forces: "Vietnamese troops, charging out of the Moi jungles, would come swooping down on the French positions and clean them out" (52). For the mountain people, these aggressive measures on the part of the rebels brought nothing but forced labor; in the case of the Stieng, too many forced tasks of this kind led to outbursts of anger against the Annamites. This explains how the quan (outlaw chieftain) Su, "the feared assassin and bandit," came to be handed over to the French by the "savages." He was executed near Ba Ria on May 9 (53). Other bandit leaders met the same fate. After they had slain more than 200 of the rebels, the Che Ma paraded their heads on the ends of their pikes. Such acts of violence effectively put an end to the agitation from this quarter.

2. TAY NINH

In 1869 the trouble began afresh, this time in the north of the province of Tay Ninh. Inspector Reinhart--who had so energetically cleaned out the region of Trang Bang in 1866 and was later to become the first French chargé d'affaires in Hue--and the warlord Tân, celebrated an account of the leading role he had played in the struggle against his counterpart Dinh, pursued the Stieng. The latter were intercepting the cattle from Cambodia destined for the expeditionary force, and their inroads into the plains were growing increasingly frequent. Hunted down, the Stieng poured back into the forest. Reinhart's men did not give up the pursuit until they had passed through the area where the agitators had been. The villages surrendered. Covering their retreat by erecting abatis and showing

(51) Vial, "Les premières années de la Cochinchine," I, p. 234.

(52) Ibid, p. 236.

(53) Ibid., p. 277

ferocious resistance, the indomitable Stieng retired to join the remnants of Pou Combo's forces.

As things turned out, the Cochinchinese revolt in Tay Ninh was complicated by another series of incidents rooted in Cambodia's history.

3. POU COMBO

Norodom, as mentioned earlier, succeeded his father in 1860 and, seeing his kingdom threatened simultaneously by the Annamites and the Siamese, placed it under the protection of the French.

A bonze by the name of Pou Combo, who some say was a native of the Kuy region, spread the word that he was the grandson of King Ang Chan III (1806-34). In 1865 he laid claim to the crown and revolted. Having established his authority over the right bank of the southern Mekong, except for Thbong Khmum, he formed an army of 2,000 men composed of Khmers, Annamites, Tagals and Stieng (54). His principal retreat was at Chhrey Meang, on the river of this name, some 15 km. southeast of Snoul. After his defeat at Kan Chor, he took refuge among the Mnong.

On June 7, 1866 his roving bands massacred the inspector of Tay Ninh province, De Larclauze (55), as well as the colonel sent to relieve the provincial capital. They also wiped out the mission at Brolam. Later, Pou Combo threatened Phnom Penh and was slain along with 34 of his followers in Kien Svai province, Cambodia, in 1875.

4. THE CAMBODIANS AT SREK THUM

These events were to have repercussions on the tribes of the hinterland. The Khmers, as we have already seen, had evacuated the approaches to the Central Plateau of Indochina. As calm was gradually restored to the interior, in an effort to pacify the Stieng and the Mnong and prevent them from resuming their inroads into Thbong Khmum they reoccupied the mountain

(54) That the Stieng took part in this uprising is allegedly due to the ill feeling aroused by Inspector Reinhart when he was in charge of the province. The existence of such a grievance, which was referred to by certain missionaries, has been questioned. It is strangely at odds with what we know of Reinhart and of his patience and understanding of the country, both of which qualities brought him success in the delicate, top-level assignments entrusted to him in Tonkin in 1874 and later in Annam (see Sogny, M., "Reinhart," B.A.V.H., 1943, Nos. 1-2.

(55) See B.S.E.I., 1939, Nos. 3 and 4, p. 185.

region as far as the middle reaches of the Tio Ba' and colonized the valley of the middle Chhlong between 1866 and 1875. In 1884, they installed a governor at Srek Thum, which for many years was to remain the easternmost post held by the Cambodians. Those of the Mngong and Stieng who were still unsubdued yielded ground before them and found themselves cut off from each other by a zone that was thereafter subject to the authority of Phnom Penh.

5. THE MISSION OF A. GAUTIER

Before ending this account of Cochin-China's neighboring tribes, it must be mentioned that Le Myre de Vilers was the first governor to conceive what was then termed a *Moi* policy. (56) It is to him that the credit belongs, among other things, for the mission entrusted to Lt. Amédée Gautier from 1881 to 1885 (57).

Along the northeast frontier of Cochin-China, still virtually unexplored, agitation was still seething. Gautier was instructed to reconnoitre and cross this frontier. From Bien Hoa he was to advance to Hue, passing west of the Donnai. He expected to come across the Stieng, Mngong and Bahnar. He was also to seek out one of the Sadet who had a hold over the Jarai. In 1880 the Sadet had visited the governor in Saigon. Le Myre de Vilers had warned Gautier that he would find tribes being hunted down by the Annamites, Laotians and Cambodians, who were trying to reduce them to slavery.

In fact, Gautier advanced up the Donnai from Trian as far as the confluence with the Da Houe. There he found traces of the military roads and camps laid out by the Vietnamese just after 1471 (58), but his guides refused to lead him northward and always brought him back to familiar ground again, following the itinerary already taken by Néis in 1880.

(56) Dubourg, "Georges Bloy" (brother of Léon Bloy), Peyronnet, 1950, p. 58.

(57) "La Mission d'Amédée Gautier: Une tentative de colonisation en pays *Moi*," Rev. d'Hist. des Colonies, XXXVII, 2nd quarter, 1950.

(58) See above, Chapter VI, 4.

During the months that followed, the explorer made a reconnaissance of the Da Glun, a tributary of the Song Be. The interest of this survey does not lie merely in the fact that Gautier was able to move around freely in a region which a few years later, when pacification was far more widespread, neither Lt. Génin nor the Marquis of Barthélemy was able to cross; we also owe him many particulars regarding these Stieng tribes which Le Myre de Vilers had described to him as being unshakably hostile.

Gautier's opinion of these tribes agrees closely with that of Father Azémar. He depicts them as placid, courageous, honest and hard-working, but adds that this picture applied only to the people of the villages that lay deep in the forest, cut off from all dealings with the outside world. Farther to the south and closer to the plains, when these people mixed with the Cambodians and even more so with the Annamites, they lost their sterling qualities and became little better than a rabble of "degenerate and superstitious drunkards, liars and thieves." They got into debt and fell into the grasp of their creditors, whom they were forced to keep supplied with dug-outs, torches and carts, which they excelled in making. They tended their masters' gardens and surrendered to them the rice they harvested. This rice was then resold to the free Stieng at an exorbitant profit when the annual famine period was at its height and the gap between harvests had to be bridged.

Gautier gave us a portrait of one of these exploiters. His name was Tong Hen. He was a patriarch, 75 years old, and known throughout the region as the "King of the Moi." His knack of approaching the right people, his skillful relations with the mandarins, and the precaution he took of reserving for himself the most beautiful girls in those parts--which had earlier assured him of the devotion of the village chiefs, his fathers-in-law--together with his undeniable personal prestige, were the factors that accounted for these attributes of "royalty." His influence extended from Trian to the Nui Ong and to the upper Lagna. For slaves, the subjects of Tong Hen were not too badly off; their labor brought them, first and foremost, food and salt, but also tools, fabrics and ornaments, all of which were beyond the reach of the other Stieng.

Later, when he was sent to Lang Bian on a topographical mission and charged with mapping the route of a trans-Indochina railroad (from Lang Bian to Cung Xom (Song Darang)), Gautier left the army. He took up residence as a settler and died suddenly one night from an attack of malaria.

6. THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES IN THE ANNAMITE REGIONS

Annam (now Central Vietnam) in due course felt the backwash of the events that were disrupting Cochin-China.

On the plateaus, the Ta Hoi, Sedang and Jarai stepped up their wars, pillaging and rape of young girls, acts which in turn provided pretexts for fresh wars. All this merely added to the profit of the slave traders.

In regard to the Moi, the Court of Hue stuck faithfully to the policy it had first devised in the Son Phong, extending it southward to the frontiers with Cochin-China. The Annamite leaders were out to establish a barrier (symbolized by the truong luy in Quang Ngai) between the world of the Moi and that of the Vietnamese, but this barrier could, of course, always be pushed back at the expense of the mountain people, especially if the covetousness of the inhabitants of the coastal plains was justified by fertile land that could be made into paddyfields. Pedlars and tax collectors acting on the mandarins' instructions spearheaded the penetration; later, military settlers were established along the demarcation line. They could be relied upon to extend their territory in the desired direction.

7. THUAN KHANH

In Thuan Khanh, the system of don dien, or military colonies, grew more oppressive and eventually spawned the Homos. In 1887, taking as his pretext the recent conquest of the country and the insecurity of the Annamite subjects, one of the latter had organized bodies of "so-called clearers of fields, sworn defenders of the empire, and self-styled permanent militiamen." The pioneers of the don dien themselves hardly represented the élite of the Vietnamese, but the Homos were the scum of

the don dien. Unquestionably adventurers, yet entirely without scruples, these men were ready for anything, and it must not be forgotten that they were armed. One of the relatives of the founder took over command of all the Homos and became the warlord Tuong. He set up camp in the mountainous area west of Phan Rang in the villages of Tavek and Hamoeu Barau. As the sole supplier of salt, Tuong had the mountain people under his thumb, and forced them to return every two months to replenish their supplies from his own reserve; he never sold enough to enable them to build up a stock of their own, however small. He began by expropriating the land of the defenseless Cham and the Roglai, and then compelled them to work "his" ricefields. Slackness was punished mercilessly: herds and farmyards would be confiscated and barns burned to the ground. In 1884, an epizootic disease struck the buffaloes, leaving the mountain people with nothing but the skins of the dead animals. The bandit leader Tuong confiscated everything. Aymonier (59) has furnished us with copious documentation on the misdoings of Tuong. Undoubtedly, the most grisly episode was the terrible fate of the village chief of Darui in 1883. For failing to supply all the laborers demanded by the Homo, he and his wife were beaten for five days on end. By the sixth day his wife was dead; the man was burned alive. The grievances of the mountain people--and there were many--were therefore directed toward seeking protection from the misdeeds of Tuong. However, the plaintiffs were cast into prison and later forced to supply gongs and slaves. Visiting the area in 1893, Yersin still heard talk of these grievances.

The Cham and the Koho (Sre) wore themselves out supplying the families of officials with rhinoceros horns, cattle and forest products. Some years, the mandarins sold for as much as 1,000^{bars}/of silver the surplus they had extorted by the methods described earlier. With the choice of being beaten or sold into slavery, the Roglai of Nhao took the course of leaving their lands and seeking refuge in the mountains of the upper Donnai, of Binh Dinh and of Phu Yen. These areas were feeling the effects of the blockade of

(59) Aymonier, "Notes sur l'Annam: le Binh-thuan," E. et R., 1885, No. 24.

the coast by the French vessels, and the mountain people took advantage of the resulting famine to attack the tribes living on the plains. From Ninh Hoa, the Annamite pedlars reached the Darlac plateau via M'Drac. Those from Phu Yen followed the Song Darang upstream toward Cheo Reo; still others traveled up the Song Nang valley to rejoin the road to the Darlac plateau.

8. QUANG NGAI

In Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai the institution of the Son Phong had been in operation since 1863, and business was thriving from this situation.

The Ka Lu of Quang Nam were, as always, responding to that strange compulsion that drives them continually toward the south.

9. SE BANG HIENG

Finally, in the region of the Se Bang Hieng river, the Siamese continued to expand their influence. In 1885, the So and the Kha Lung of the Se Bang Hieng stopped paying tribute to and trading with Annam. This region, like that of the Se Don river, was to be used as the starting point for the Siamese advance of 1886.

During this period, the Ta Hoi, Sedang and Jarai continually carried off women and children from neighboring tribes and killed anyone who resisted them. Even the Annamites on the plains were not immune from these raids. On the contrary, the captives from Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, etc., were even treated with a special severity. According to Maitre, they were being made to atone for the crimes of the bandit leader Tuong, whom, as it happened, they did not know any more than did their abductors.

10. THE MISSION

In the midst of all these different dramas, the Mission at Kontum performed the miracle of surviving. It was even enlarged with an influx of immigrants from Quang Nam and Binh Dinh in Annam. Isolated in the middle of the plateaus, which were being scoured and plundered by the Jarai and the Sedang, their communications with the coast frequently cut by the

Jarai, the Catholic fathers, even if they were never actually attacked by the surrounding tribes, were nonetheless left to fend entirely for themselves. Despite this, they undertook the task of teaching the children in the vicinity. The compilation of a method for transcribing the Bahnar language, based on the principles underlying the quốc ngữ system, dates from 1861. The Bahnar pupils were taught to write and to do simple arithmetic.

The immunity which the missionaries owed to their prestige and good works did not, however, extend to strangers. Mr. Navelle, the resident in Qui Nhon, paid a visit to the establishment at Kontum. On his way back, the Jarai attacked him at Plei Chu near the confluence of the Bla and the Peko. One member of his escort was killed and nine others wounded. Mr. Navelle was able to scatter his assailants, but neither he nor his successors in Qui Nhon were to return to Kontum before 1889.

In 1883 the ranks of the small group of missionaries were considerably strengthened by the arrival of Father Guerlach. He was then a young priest, and his state of health often delicate. His photograph can be seen on page 17 of the third volume published by the Pavie mission. His charity, courage, spirit of determination and patriotism made him a truly exceptional personality. Both France and the propagation of the faith owe him a great deal. The lives of many adventurers is less fascinating than that of this cleric. We shall have occasion to see his achievements later.

Father Guerlach described the status of the Christian church in Kontum when he took up his position there: "four Christian villages and a small Annamite colony. 1,500 Christians hemmed in by the Bahnar and the Rongao. The entire remainder of the population was fetishistic. Socially speaking, there was no cohesion; it was every man for himself, and there was no single chief whose authority extended to all the villages belonging to the same clan. In a word, the situation was but one step away from anarchy" (60).

Kiem, the Bahnar chief whose sons had been taught to read at the Mission, had been appointed Annamite delegate to the region; his assignment appears to have consisted chiefly in stimulating Annamite trading in the area and improving conditions of access.

(60) F. Guerlach, "L'oeuvre néfaste," Saigon, 1906.

CHAPTER X

1885 AND AFTER

The events that took place in Tonkin and Annam between 1882 and 1885 were sanctioned by the treaty of 1884, by which France was charged with maintaining Annamite territory intact.

In Annam the establishment of the French protectorate led first to the revolt by the Scholars. Moreover, Siam seized upon the opportunity afforded by this trouble to sweep along the left bank of the Mekong as far as the mountains dominating the coastal plains of Annam.

1. REVOLT OF THE SCHOLARS

This movement was directed against King Dong Khanh and the French; it also took up issue with the Catholics.

The insurgents had had themselves made hideouts by the mountain people of the Nhatrang and Ninh Hoa region.

In 1887, in Ninh Hoa, the uprising organized and led by Gia broke out; the principal base and refuge of Gia and his followers lay deep in Biao country on the "la Mère et l'Enfant" (Mother and Child) massif. Caches of arms were frequently left on the plateaus. A cache of rifles from Laos had been made at a point eight days' march from Ninh Hoa in a westerly direction.

Mai Xuan Thuong, claiming to be a descendant of the Tay Son, had established his concealed headquarters in the vicinity of Cheo Reo. From there, he would sweep down on Phu Yen. After being pursued by Tran Ba Loc, he was captured and executed in 1887.

Thuan Khanh, where the Homos abetted the rebels, was also pacified by Tran Ba Loc between July and late September 1886. This energetic chief also subdued Phu Yen and Binh Dinh in March and April 1887. Before relinquishing his command, the phu Loc made arrangements not only for the appeasement of the mountain people, but especially for their protection against their traditional exploiters. It has also been mentioned that in 1887 the Bih of southern Darlac were threatened by Kham Leu and that the Preng, fearful of reprisals by the Bih, left the area.

Later, Dr. Yersin and the resident Bourgeois were to have dealings with the Bih, who had finally won the day, and with their chief, Ngeuh.

Farther to the north, this period was characterized by King Ham Nghi, after abandoning his capital after the failure of the ambush in Hue (July 5, 1885), taking refuge north of the Se Bang Hieng; the Sek and the So showed him the most lasting faithfulness (61).

Later, Ham Nghi set out emissaries across the southern part of the hinterland, bound for Siam. There, they were to ask for help. The officers of the Pavie mission met with several of these emissaries. At the end of January 1887, the resident at Qui Nhon managed to arrest three of them. The most celebrated, Ang Chanh, lived among the Rhade and owned a cannon. Kun Yu Nob refused to let him have the guides he wanted to carry to Siam the gifts which the fugitive king was sending to that country.

2. SIAMESE ENCROACHMENT

Following the failure of the rather gauche mission of Montigny in 1856, Siam won support from the English. Determined to wrest from Bangkok whatever territorial gains it could in the Malay provinces, England suggested the king might seek compensation for this loss by looking eastward. However, the Franco-Siamese pact of 1867 precluded annexation at the expense of Cambodia, so that King Chu La Long Korn, still on the advice of the English, once more set his sights on the left bank of the Mekong. He claimed the entire territory bordered to the east by the mountain scarp of Annam, north of the 14th parallel. Their frontier would thus join/^{up}with the Mekong near Sambor. Encroachment by Siam would thus encompass Kontum and the Se San region.

These ambitious claims violated the territorial rights acquired by Annam. Although the Court of Hue had exerted only token authority over the Se Bang Hieng valley since the Siamese advance of 1828, it is nevertheless true that ever since the 17th century the subjects of Laos living in the valley of the Se Bang Hieng had insistently demanded reunification with Annam, initially because the Annamite regime suited them better and,

(61) Gosselin, "Le Laos et le Protectorat français," p. 133. The So did not swear allegiance to France until 1897.

later, in order to obtain protection against occupation by the Siamese. The people of this region had paid tribute to Annam regularly since the 17th century.

Siam, on the other hand, was intending to take advantage of the unrest that was brewing in Annam. Taking the Se Bang Hieng and Se Don valleys as starting point, it had resolved to push forward its advance stations as far as the divide and thus confront France and Annam with a fait accompli.

As it happened, an invasion by Chinese bandits into Laos provided an "honorable" pretext for the operation: Siam, a Thai power, claimed it was occupying the country only in order to protect the Laotian Thai.

The orders from Bangkok were passed on via Bassac and, east of the Mekong, via Attopeu. Saravane, on the Se Don river, was administered by a chau muong controlled by the Siamese. In 1885, the tribes of the Se Bang Hieng who were still paying tribute to Annam were forbidden to continue this act of vassalage. It was then that, at Bangkok's behest, Moulapoumok (present-day Veun Sai) was founded on the Se San. A Siamese force was garrisoned at Siem Pang, the former trading center of Cambodia, on the Se Kong.

However, immediately following the conflict that had brought it up against Annam in 1885, France declared its willingness to enforce the treaty of August 28, 1883, whereby it had undertaken to ensure that both the rights and the frontiers of Annam were respected. A French Vice-Consulate was established in Luan Prabang in 1895. Auguste Pavie was the first holder of this new position. He and the French officers of the mission under his direction, not forgetting the ten Cambodians or so who from the outset proved such valuable assistants to Pavie, set about mapping the contested areas and establishing the frontiers on the basis of the resulting maps.

3. THE KONTUM MISSION

In opposing the Siamese claims in the hinterland of Indochina France was fortunate to be able to count on the support of the Kontum mission,

which was still in alliance with the Bahnar of Kiem. The officers of the Pavie mission found it a center that formed a convenient counterweight for Attopeu, which was in Siamese hands. From this center they obtained the most effective and devoted help.

It may be recalled that while the mountain people, during the revolt of the Scholars, steadfastly refused to supply guides for the Annamites who had been ordered to seize the missionaries at Kontum, the latter were the victims of a strenuous blockade by the Vietnamese, as well as by the Jarai bandits, that was to last until 1897. Father Guerlach, leading 200 Christians, routed a detachment of Annamites at Kon Chorah, near An Khe, and imprisoned a mandarin and his servant.

The occupation of An Khe by French troops put an end to the isolation of the missionaries.

The latter had not spent their long years of seclusion without protecting their northern side from attack by signing a pact of alliance in December 1885 with the redoubtable Sedang. They thus safeguarded themselves against any recurrence of the attack of 1862. In addition, they kept open the path that led to the banks of the Bla, which was used to evacuate Christians fleeing the persecution in Quang Nam.

With the Annamite threat disposed of, there remained the Jarai, and the Hodrung in particular. Although the latter had refused to lead the Annamites to Kontum, they were nevertheless incapable of forgoing a chance of pillaging. They came down and sacked an important convoy bound for the Mission. At once Father Guerlach called to arms all the Bahnar who were nursing grievances against the Jarai. 1,200 answered his call. Never, in all the history of the mountain region, had such a large force been seen responding to the commands of a single man. The battle took place in mid-February and the vanquished Jarai were forced to beat a retreat. It was from this victory that Father Guerlach's prestige stemmed; later the mountain people were to confer the special name Boc Canh on him.

Seeing that his warriors from Kon Mouey had captured a Jarai woman, F. Guerlach sent her back to her people with some rice and a message

fixing the date for a meeting. Seven days later, a Jarai delegation came to the appointed place. Peace was concluded with the Jarai. No further incidents occurred to disturb it. From then on, the road to Binh Dinh was safe.

4. THE BAHNAR-RONGAO CONFEDERATION

The Mission's sphere of political influence was later extended still further. Kiem, now advanced in years, was succeeded by his son Pim. On the advice of the fathers and an officer from Binh Dinh, Pim brought about the confederation so desired by Navelle, the governor in Qui Nhon. The Bahnar of Kontum reached an agreement with the Rongao and the Bonom. The object of this league was to hold the Jarai in check. It was officially recognized two years later by Reinhart, the governor-general in Hue.

5. MAYRENA

Marie I, King of the Sedang! There was not a tourist at the time who did not devote a paragraph in his travel notes to this Belgian adventurer--handsome, unerring marksman, and "King of the Moi." A man of intelligence and energy, he unfortunately became notorious for his crooked dealings, which discredited him. His death was as pitiful as it was mysterious.

The episode nonetheless merits serious study. The Mayréna marked the first occasion on which the Siamese encroachment was effectively halted; this was in 1888.

Having come in theory to survey gold mines in the area around Attopeu, Mayréna had been assigned an unofficial mission by the French Government: Siam was out to unite the tribes of the hinterland under its own control, despite the fact that some of them, by virtue of the historical suzerainty of Annam, were demanding reunification with the Court of Hue. Mayréna's task was to cross the disputed territories, divide them into groups, and protect them against the intrigues of Siam. If he was successful, France, taking over from Mayréna, was to continue the undertaking and enforce the observance of Annam's rights.

To start with, everything went miraculously well. At the request of the governor of Qui Nhon, Lemire, the Kontum fathers and F. Guerlach in particular had agreed to assist Mayréna in his efforts, so that in this was he had the benefit of the undeniable prestige that the missionaries enjoyed in the highlands.

On May 23, Mayréna was at Kontum, where he was assured of the goodwill of the Christian Bahnar. He rallied together a number of groups: the Kamrang, who are the Sedang of the jungle, and the Hamong, who lived along the right bank of the Peko River, opposite the confluence with the Bla. On June 3, these different Sedang units formed a confederation which they termed the Kingdom of the Sedang, and Marie I was proclaimed its king.

An alliance was then struck between this federation and the union of the Bahnar and the Rongao, which had been formed to contain the Jarai. The entire assembly was placed under the general chairmanship of Krui, who was appointed by the combined council of elders.

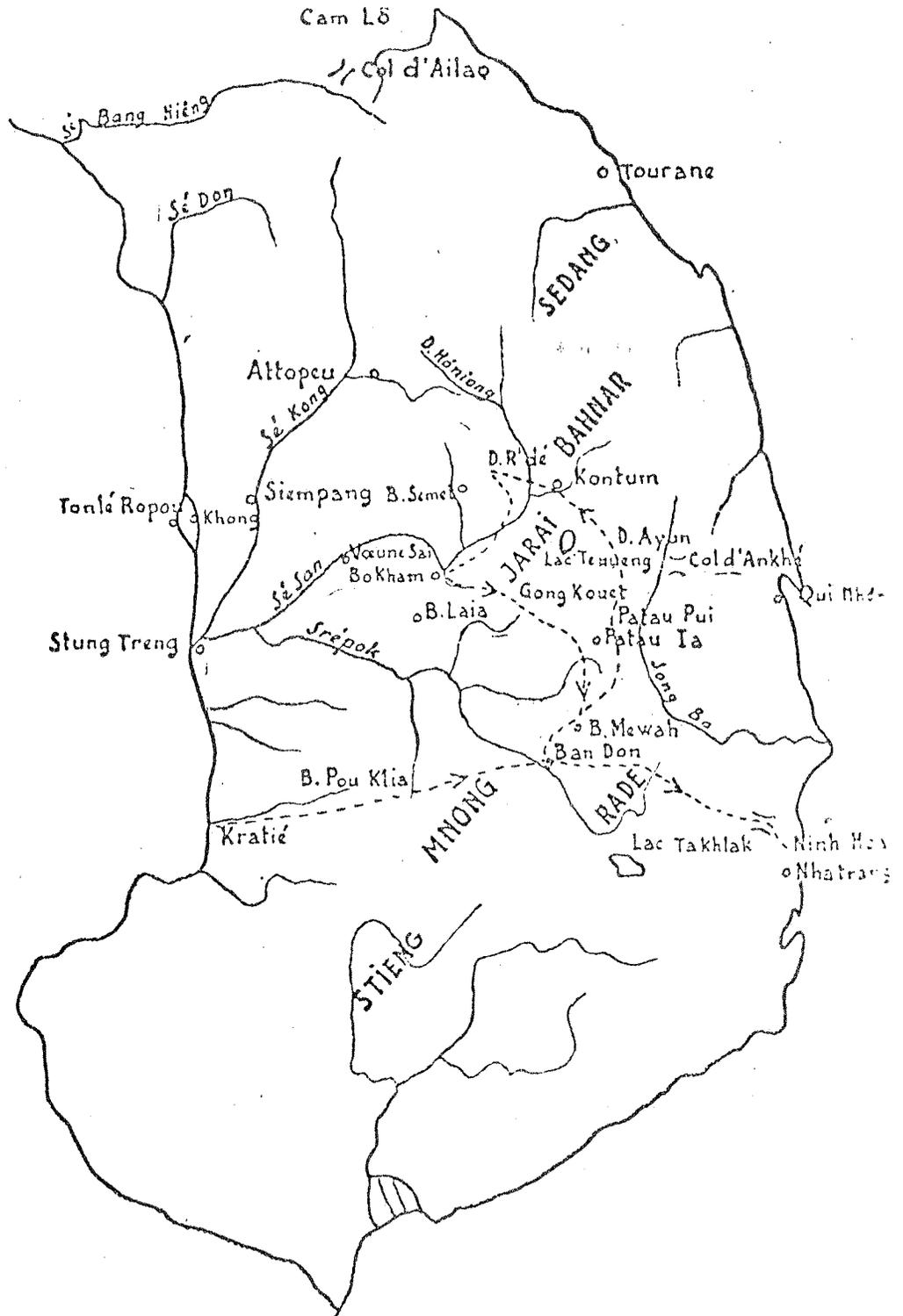
The Siamese naturally found these activities little to their liking. A chief of the Koyon (between the Halang and the Ka Seng) arrived at the invitation of Mayréna; he was hauled over the coals by the Siamese official in Attopeu and the gifts he had received from the French envoy were confiscated.

Mayréna also was to jeopardize the success of the work that had started off so well. Casting aside the agreements, he endeavored to keep for himself "his territories" or else sell them. There was talk of a German group that had supposedly come forward as a prospective buyer. The king of the Sedang was short of money, and he attempted to raise some along the coast by methods reminiscent of a common criminal. Arriving in Europe, he set out to do everything in royal style, and to raise the wherewithal he sold decorations, titles of nobility and estates to gullible buyers. The Sedang State was given its own flag, and up to 1945 the Khai Dinh Museum in Hue used to display the collection of postage stamps issued by this short-lived kingdom.

When Mayréna returned from Belgium in 1889, the government of Indochina forbade him to set foot in Annam or his "kingdom" again. Subpoenas were

FIG. 10

Pavie Mission. Cupet's Itinerary





awaiting him in connection with his fraudulent conduct. Mayréna was unwilling to try his luck again; he met his death suddenly on the small island of Poulo Tioman where he had taken refuge (63).

The headway made in the hinterland was by no means lost, however. In 1889, the Governor-general Reinhart, who approved of the idea of the federation and was anxious to see it expanded, entreated the priests to lend their assistance to the governor in Qui Nhon. The latter, more fortunate than Mr. Navelle, arrived in Kon Trang in March 1889. The chiefs of the mountain people were gathered there for the occasion. After it had been proclaimed that the 'king' of the Sedang was officially dethroned, the governor was elected in his stead by the two unions, that of the Sedang and that of the Bahnar and the Rongao. Krui was recognized by the government as president of the confederation, which was to last until 1895; contrary to what has sometimes been alleged, its members remained united to the end. Admittedly, the bond that tied them was not overly strong, but in a land of individualism and anarchy such an achievement at all represented a remarkable step forward.

The Siamese were the first to find out for themselves that progress had been made. The base at Kontum had materialized opposite their own at Attopeu, and, instead of a number of scattered tribes that they could have absorbed one at a time, the emissaries of Bangkok found a coherent whole which, on the strength of its experience of past annexations, dreaded nothing quite as much as Siamese "protection" or domination.

6. THE PAVIE MISSION

Siam had every intention of exploiting the temporary collapse of Laos and the trouble that was sapping the strength of Annam, in order to assume control of the left bank of the Mekong as far as the peaks overlooking the coastal plain of Annam.

France appointed Pavie to oppose the substantial forces dispatched eastward by Siam.

(63) See J. Marquet, "Un aventurier du XIXe siècle, Marie I^{er}, roi des Sedang," B.A.V.H., 1927.

So far as the plateaus are concerned, the work of the Pavie mission can be divided into three phases.

The first (1887-89) does not directly affect the regions under consideration here. Pavie performed the remarkable feat of forcing recognition of Laotian rights from the valley of the Mekong as far as the Black River. This forms the subject matter of: "A la conquête des coeurs."

But the successes of the French Vice Consul were so rapidly won and seemed so prodigious that Siam resolved to put up the most strenuous possible resistance to any further deployment of French activities. It hardened its attitude to such an extent that the tribes in the disputed regions stepped up their requests to the French to intervene and protect them from the Siamese incursions.

The objectives of Pavie's second mission (1890-91) were, among others, either to forestall the Siamese by occupying key positions in the interior or to force the Siamese to evacuate the posts they had already taken over. It can never be repeated often enough that the goal was accomplished with ludicrously small resources. At the outset of his long excursion from Kontum to Ban Don, Cupet had with him six militiamen and a reliable aide lent him by Father Guerlach. By the time contact was made with the enemy, only three men were still at his side!

The heroes of the mission were Capt. Cogniard, Lt. Dugast, the police inspector Garnier, who came down from Hue, but above all Capt. Cupet.

In the case of Garnier, it should be borne in mind that even today making the direct trip from Hue or Da Nang to Kontum is still a demanding feat. One cannot but admire the daring of men who ventured to negotiate the jungle of Kontum and of the Sedang when, behind them, the rebellion that was laying waste the lowlands made retreat out of the question.

Unfortunately, with their mission completed, the companions of Pavie were recalled to the plains. The Siamese immediately set about making up for what they had lost.

The third and final phase (1892-93) marks the resumption of French activity. It is illustrated by the occupation of Laos. The incidents in Bangkok in July 1893 led to the signature on October 3, 1893 of the treaty between France and Siam.

7. CUPET

Leaving Kratie in December 1890 with ten Cambodian militiamen, Cupet set off for Ban Don and Kontum. The Siamese "assigned" the luong sakhon to him. According to the latter, he would have needed an escort of at least 300 to 400 men and recourse to arms to have been able to entertain any hopes of success. His task was to rejoin Dugast, Cogniard and Garnier, who had also received orders to proceed to Kontum.

The captain and his small detachment met with a friendly welcome from the tribes they came across, who were fearful of the Siamese and their escort.

At Ban Don he crossed swords with Thu, later known as Kun Yu Nob, "whose face was a picture of shrewdness and guile." Cupet's requests were all uncompromisingly denied by the Mngong leader: no guides, no information, and no boats in which to cross the river. He claimed he was afraid of reprisals by the Rhade: "If I help you to cross into their territory, my village will be pillaged. There are only a few of you, but there are ten thousand Rhade. The Rhade only allow freedom of passage to those they know or to outsiders whose conduct is vouched for by someone they trust" (64).

Having found a Laotian to guide him, the senang you, Cupet wished to visit en route the Sadet of Fire, "in charge of the Annamite slope, just as the Sadet of Water kept watch over the Laotian side."

By chance, between Ban Mewan and Ban Meheng, they met the widow of a dignitary whom the Laotian knew. A village chieftain, who was a relative of the Sadet and "curiously familiar with the political situation," offered to lead the party to Ban Khasom (93 km. north of Ban Don). At Ban Khasom, they fell foul of an insolent yet picturesque one-eyed man, who claimed he was holding Cupet liable for the suppression of the gifts formerly sent by the King of Cambodia (in 1860, of course, Cupet was still a child and had

(64) "Mission Pavie," III, p. 256 et seq.

never set foot in Indochina); he rummaged through the officer's baggage and made off with practically everything. Fortunately for Cupet, the Sadet was in the village. He had come to visit a relative.

Cupet records that the Lord of Fire's retinue showed no particular respect for the aging chief: "He is nonetheless a man of imposing stature, taller than the average European. He has a cunning face."

To begin with the conversation was far from cordial, but Cupet had a way of getting what he wanted. "If the sun has been hidden since my arrival, it is because I wanted to show you that the phi (spirits) of the French are more powerful than that of the Sadet. My phi are far superior." He promptly pulled out his compass, and the onlookers were duly amazed.

The outcome of these little incidents--which are amusing to read about, but were actually tragic when viewed against the background of isolation in the midst of such forbidding country--was that Cupet won the round. He had seen the Sadet and had succeeded in winning his confidence. Many difficulties were later smoothed over thanks to the goodwill of the old magician.

Continuing through the territory of the Hadrong and Habau, members of the Jarai tribe, Cupet finally entered Kontum.

On March 2, 1890 he set off again, this time bound for Attopeu. News that a Siamese column was being formed on the lower Se San caused him to change direction. Without F. Guerlach's aide, the captain declared, his miniscule detachment could never have got the better of the Siamese forces whom it was his task to rout. Unable to leave the mission, Father Guerlach seconded Sanh, his trusted aide, to the detachment of militiamen. Sanh sported a superb red jacket with plenty of trimmings; it made a great impression on the tribes, but misfired somewhat when it came to the Jarai. All the same, Sanh saved the captain by setting off alone through the jungle, in search of reinforcements, bound for Kontum, which was several days' march away.

The situation grew more complicated. Cupet was to follow the Se San downstream and thus prevent the foreigners who had set out from Bassac

from reaching the road to Attopeu, when a message from Hue warned him that 400 Laotians, under the orders of the luong sakhon, had left Stung Treng on February 23, 1890, bound for Ban Don. These reinforcements would raise to 700 the number of men stationed on the Darlac Plateau who were in the service of Siam. Cupet set himself the task of heading off the Siamese officer and his troops. The latter had a lead of 15 days. Cupet had only six men at his disposal. At Plei R'de a request for help against the Siamese was handed him; he left for the south after asking that 60 reserve militiamen in Kontum be sent as reinforcements. Dugast, who remained behind on the Se San, was to halt the advance of another Siamese force that was on its way from Attopeu.

A band of Jarai overpowered and robbed a small detachment commanded by a Laotian in the service of the Siamese.

On the 14th, Cupet, passing via Plei Bia, reached the Srepok basin. At Gong Kouet the tribes appeared distrustful. It seemed to them that the small French detachment, which was in a hurry, must have been fleeing before the Siamese and Laotians.

To avoid the country ravaged by the misdeeds of the m'tau in the south, the captain was forced to detour to the southeast and take a longer route by describing an arc so as to follow the line of villages from which he might expect to obtain provisions. Cupet did not see the Sadet of Water (65). Neither in cash nor among his baggage could he find the wherewithal to buy the gifts required of persons wishing to appear before the Patau Ya, but he sent word to the old chief that he proffered his friendship. The Sadet accepted it. From him, the captain received a copper bracelet and a bag of sacred rice possessing magic powers, as a token of alliance.

By now, however, the luong sakhon had reached Nong Te on the Srepok River. Time was running out, and along the path of the French officer, the mistrust of the inhabitants was turning into open hostility: the Siamese and Laotian forces seemed too close to victory. Leaving behind

(65) Maitre, "Jungles Moi": "The Patau Ya has long ceased to enjoy the prestige and authority that in centuries past he shared with the Sadet of Fire. The present Patau Ya is a tall fellow, dry, placid and unruffled, who certainly has nothing royal about him; his village is not far from the one occupied by the Sadet when Cupet visited him in 1891. He accepted our authority from the very beginning and had nothing to do with Odend'hal's murder."

his baggage and the men required to guard it, Cupet continued his journey with only three men: a Cambodian, Ro, and his two boys. Finally, on the 22nd, he reached Ban Don. But the luong sakhon had beaten him to it. He had with him 370 Laotians, 22 Siamese soldiers, 14 elephants and some horses. Despite all this, he was to give up. Assured by Cupet that there was not a village in the entire region that would pay tribute to the Siamese authorities, the luong sakhon ordered his detachment to retreat. The effect on the mountain people was tremendous: "The news of the arrival of the King of Bassac and the number of troops involved had caused widespread unrest and, in many places, an atmosphere bordering on rebellion." "Cupet's moral victory was all the greater because people found it incredible. It was then that the Kun Yu Nob, suddenly thawing out, came over to the French side" (66).

It was Kun Yu Nob who informed Capt. Cupet of what Ong Chanh was up to; Ong, a supporter of Ham Nghi, was entreating, from Méhoum where he was based, the King of Siam come to assist his prince.

Cupet, carrying out his orders, returned to the coast of Annam with the reinforcements who had arrived, his mission accomplished.

The luong sakhon, however, though he had left the Darlac Plateau, advanced up the Se San again with his forces.

At Semet, after being begged by the inhabitants of all the villages along the Nam Sathay to halt the Siamese invasion, Lt. Dugast, too, succeeded in causing the invaders to retreat (March 2, 1891).

Another detachment of the enemy, advancing from Attopeu, did not even wait for Inspector Garnier to show up at Dak R'de.

Before the threat of the militiamen of Delingette, the Siamese had abandoned the "Gate of Siam," a monumental frontier stockade built on the banks of the Dak Honlong, among the Koyon.

The attitude of the people, their aversion to the troops controlled by Bangkok, and their refusal to pay them taxes had all made a powerful contribution toward our officers' success.

(66) Maitre, op, cit., p. 529.

It would be unforgivable not to mention the others who helped to bring about the 'happy ending' of the drama of the plateaus: Capt. Cogniard, who had explored the territory of the Golar, Bricourt, De Malglaive, Delingette, and Odend'hal, who was later to play a very import rôle before succumbing in 1904 to an attack by the men of the Sadet of Fire.

The tables had thus been turned. The initiative no longer lay with Bassac or Attopeu, but with Kontum and Ban Don. The Siamese threat had apparently been staved off.

However, now that their praiseworthy tour was at an end, the officers of the Pavie mission, too few in number, were posted elsewhere. Their adversaries set about taking advantage of this to make good their setbacks. Father Guerlach still had occasion to hold back the Halang to prevent them from attacking the Siamese, but, believing themselves freed from all danger, the tribes fell apart again; in 1893, the Jarai and Rhade, who for a long time had obstructed our detachments, returned to their former isolation. The Siamese sent out the luong sakhet "to map" the land invaded by the Siamese; the situation had once more grown threatening.

It was not until 1893 that France finally decided to act; De Lanessan was governor-general at the time. It was he who ordered the occupation of southern Laos. Garnier liberated Tchepone and the valley of the Se Bang Hieng as far as the Mekong. Setting out from Cambodia, Captains Bastard and Thoreux established positions at Stung Treng and later at Khong. Inspector Groscurin, who in 1892 had planted the French flag along the Song Ba, Ayun, Bla, Peko and Nam Sathay rivers, left from Vinh and took control of the Cammon. He was assassinated at Keng Kiec along with 20 militiamen on the orders of the Kha-luong Phrayot, despite the fact that the latter had just agreed to evacuate the area.

Siam deliberately delayed the negotiations designed to establish the compensation to be paid to the families of victims and settle other outstanding issues, which prompted France to send Le Myre de Vilers as plenipotentiary to Bangkok. The Siamese remained hostile; two French gunboats were bombarded in the Menam estuary, but later sailed up to Bangkok and kept

their cannons trained on the royal palace. Siam signed the treaty of Bangkok on October 3, 1893: "The Moi hinterland of Annam and Cambodia became French."

8. SE DON AND SE BANG HIENG

Despite the insistence with which the people pleaded to be reunited with Vietnam, in the years that followed 1828 the Annamites evacuated the region that had been depopulated by the troops of Bangkok.

In 1888, Siam occupied Nong and Phin, in 1889 Muong Chanh, Tabang and Lang Trinh, and later Nabon. It was from these positions that the Siamese launched their offensive aimed at occupying the interior as far as the approaches to the Cam Lo pass. In the beginning the Ta Hoi assisted the invaders in their efforts. For a few months an excursion led by two French officers managed to hold this advance in check, but Bangkok, early in 1890, ordered a new push eastward. The Siamese took up positions along the lower Tchepone and at the approaches to Ai Lao pass, which had been fortified by the Vietnamese in 1837 but evacuated when their adversaries advanced. Groscurin, the future victim of Phra Yot, forced the Siamese to relinquish this position, in addition to pulling out of Nabon and Thuong Khe. In the meantime, De Malglaive, a member of the Pavie mission, arrived from the source of the Se Kong where, initially, the hostility shown by the Veh had obliged him to seek the support of reinforcements commanded by Odend'hal. In November 1890, De Malglaive reoccupied Ai Lao and then returned southward to confront the Siamese from Saravane, who were endeavoring to gain control of the source of the Se Kong. With the aid of the Kontu, he forestalled his adversaries and occupied A Roc before them.

The failure of their columns at Ban Don and in the Kontum region had exasperated the Siamese, who proceeded to reoccupy all their former positions along the Se Bang Hieng. After the succession of advances and retreats that have been outlined, they were finally dislodged for good by Lemire, the governor in Dong Hoi, and above all by the treaty of October 3, 1893.

CHAPTER XI

1893-1925

HESITANCY - CONFUSION - RETREATS

THE APOSTLES AND THE VICTIMS

The period that followed witnessed a repetition, in more severe form, of the vacillation, contradiction and relinquishment that had prevailed during the Pavie mission. The work, which seemed well under way, was suddenly cut short, and erstwhile heroes were forgotten or vilified. Take Bourgeois, for example, the first pacifier of the Darlac. Who has heard of him today? Sabatier had the exceptional good fortune to make his dream -- the revival of an entire people -- a reality. How infamously he was repaid for his pains by those who benefited from his achievements, including the Rhade and the Muong (though the French outdid even them)!

Other great names stand out beside those of the missionaries (F. Guerlach, F. Kemlin): Odend'hal, Yersin, H. Maitre, Sabatier (67), Odéra. The highlands attracted men of caliber. Of those just mentioned, the Jarai assassinated Odend'hal and the Nong Henri Maitre. For attempting to keep the Darlac plateau free from the swindlers who descended on it from all sides, Sabatier died in utter neglect, forcibly removed from the country he had single-handedly given a new lease of life. Yersin, for his part, was a scholar and, after the flush of his youth had passed, he lived on at Nha Trang to gather the laurels and homage that were his rightful due. But who knows today that Yersin was one of the great explorers of the plateaus? "The pity of it is that the enthusiasm of such champions drives them to excessive trust and generosity, which in such an environment are actually a threat

(67) There is a young abbot currently making the acquaintance of the mountain people and writing about them, who does not know about Sabatier. In the "Chanson de Damsan" the name of the Father of the Rhade is not mentioned once in this otherwise pleasing volume on the tribes of the hinterland.

to survival" (68).

Indochinese policy rested with the governors. Le Myre de Vilers, De Lanessan, Doumer and Paul Beau, with his disciple F. Pasquier, all showed concern for the mountain people and each drew up a charter for their protection. But governors of Indochina did not stay put for long.

The French effort tended to peter out as soon as Parliament ceased berating the pioneers.

The unpredictable changes in the political status of the mountain regions were at once a cause and reflection of this instability. Following the treaty of October 3, 1893, the highlands were first attached to southern Laos (Khong). Then came the dissolution of the confederation of the Bahnar and Rongao in 1895. The territories involved were first placed under the control of the governor in Qui Nhon, Guimar. But the hinterland of Binh Dinh was then brought under the commissioner of Attopeu, who delegated his powers to Father Viallet, the father superior of the Kontum Mission. The south, including the Darlac plateau, was governed from Stung Treng, but, as the Laotian officials had supported several of the revolts that took place just after the turn of the century, Kontum and Ban Don were transferred to Annam on July 4, 1905.

After 1893 the general course followed was to ignore all but the Laotian Bahnar and Kha, that is, the less refractory elements. At the outset no attempt whatever was made to approach the tribes that had remained independent of the Siamese, Laotian or Annamite authorities; thus, the Ta Hoi, Jarai, Sedang, Rhade and Mngong were left free to live as they wished in the mountains.

Slavery then underwent a shocking resurgence. From 1900 onward, when columns of militiamen penetrated the interior to suppress banditry or quell revolts, they constructed fortified posts. To begin with, they were content merely to occupy them, and did not seek to probe

(68) Gravelle, R.I., 1925.

farther into unsubdued areas. But later, attacks on these stations or against convoys of the Indochinese Guard, coupled with the audacity of the bandits, were to lead to the expansion of the French occupation.

1. REVOLT OF PHU YEN (1900)

This episode, which is more a matter of Vietnamese history, could perhaps have been omitted altogether were it not for the fact that the forces of Le Vo Tru, "the king of the Moi," bonze and sorcerer, included some 200 "montagnards" rigged out in uniforms.

Entrenched in the Dong Xuan massif (immediately west of that delightful palm-fringed beach known as Vung Lam), Le Vo Tru set off one day in May 1900 to attack Song Cau. The idea was to take everyone by surprise -- the governor, his wife and the main guard -- and massacre them. The attack came that much closer to succeeding because the bulk of the Indochinese Guard, with its leader, had left for Cung Son in the south. The fifty militiamen left behind in the provincial capital were enough to stop the "king of the Moi" during the night of April 14-15, although he and his 900-man force did advance to within a kilometer of Song Cau. Fifteen days later, Le Vo Tru fell into the hands of a punitive column. The rebels were forced to pay a "war tax."

This movement may be regarded as symptomatic of the renewed agitation that had ravaged central Annam since 1885. The revolt of the Bolovens, which was contemporaneous with it, was of an altogether different nature and infinitely more serious.

2. THE BOLOVENS (1901-07)

The origins of this mysterious uprising must be sought in Siam, where the treaty of 1893 had not been accepted without some resistance. Oubon and Bassac were the centers of the revolt, and the phou my boun were its agents. The phou my boun were magicians. They claimed that they alone were worthy to govern men and usher in a reign of justice.

In proof of this, they slaughtered anyone brash enough to refuse to join their movement. The Bolovens and the Brao regarded them as if they were messiahs of the type exemplified by the ia pu.

The Lord of Bassac, a devoted follower of the Siamese, saw in this agitation a chance to regain the importance which Bangkok had denied him by signing the treaty of 1893, under which he had forfeited his former ascendancy over the authorities of Attopeu and Saravane. Besides, the phou my boun had promised to sweep aside all outside powers, beginning with that of the French commissioners.

Worried by the abolition of slavery, proclaimed by H.M. Chu La Long Korn of Siam, and by the prosecution of slave-traders being organized by the French governors, the Laotian officials were ready to support "tradition" and thereby safeguard the profits which the sale of their captives brought them; the Alak, Nia Heun and Bolovens, whose interests in the resale of slaves had been dealt a severe blow, thus formed a ready-made audience for the plans of the phou my boun.

The commissioner of Saravane, Rémy, was the first to be attacked, when he was assaulted by 1,500 "montagnards," some of whom were armed with flint-guns. Trapped in Tha Theng pagoda, Rémy withstood the assault with fifteen militiamen, but within a few days the whole of the Bolovens Plateau had joined in the revolt. A very dynamic man, Rémy managed to hold his own. Despite the promises made by the phou my boun, the stones failed to turn into gold and the bullets shot by the French rifles did not blossom into jasmine flowers. When it became known that the phou my boun were entirely unable to perform the miracles they had claimed, their supporters renounced them and, one by one, surrendered. However, in April 1902, the rebellion flared up again at Savannekhet, farther to the north.

The commissioners were unable to agree on what policy to pursue, but when, by dint of courageous resistance, the French had, one after the other, succeeded in staving off the threat of encirclement that hung over each of them, the rebel chiefs reassembled their troops on the wooded heights that flank the Se Kong north of Attopeu. There they remained until 1907, when, disunited, famished, and hounded by the French, who still had plenty of dash (outstanding among whom was Mr. Dauplay), the insurgents finally surrendered.

3. ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT AT THE RIVER PSI POST (1901)

The phou my boun were also responsible for instigating the attack on the Psi River post in June 1901.

As early as 1894, much farther south in the valley of the Krong Kno, Dr. Yersin had been set upon by the Bih at Peko. After a hostile reception from the Mdhur in the valley of the Song Nang, tributary of the Song Darang, two French columns returned carrying wounded soldiers. The plateaus were far from pacified as yet (69).

At the confluence of the rivers Psi and Peko, northwest of Kontum, the commissioner of Attopeu, Castanier, had founded a post and placed the militia officer Robert in command. His assignment was principally

(69) The general unrest was effectively prolonged by the spate of messiahs, who included, in this order:

In 1880, a French warrant officer who deserted and settled in Kon Hering.

In 1890, Kham and Khun, two Laotians who claimed they could fly. Out of admiration for such extraordinary powers, the Moi showered them with gifts of chickens and pigs. When an Annamite challenged Kham to fly just onto the verandah of a house on piles, the imposture was unmasked.

In 1901, an Annamite cretin had a temple built in his honor and dedicated to him at Dak Uang. Father Vialleton destroyed his prestige.

In 1908, a tame civet-cat from Robert's post was proclaimed a messiah. That same year, the Bahnar and Jarai paid homage to a self-styled ya who claimed to have instigated the revolt of the shorn hair in the plains of Central Annam.

In 1910, the people worshipped a dwarf; in 1916, a giant.

In 1924, the airplanes that flew over Kontum for the land survey were seen as "white-winged heroes," destined to restore the golden age and expel the French.

In 1939, a two-year-old child attracted faithful followers, and, in 1941, a European employee of the Water and Forestry Board was believed to be a magician.

Maitre, "Jungles Moï," p. 477, notes.

F. Guilleminet, "Recherches sur les croyances des tribus du Haut-pays d'Annam," B.I.I.E.H., 1941, pp. 10-33.

to bar the road leading south to the territory of the Halang and the Jarai; this road was used by the Sedang when they set out to sell as slaves the Annamites they had managed to capture inside the Provinces of Quang Nam or Quang Ngai.

The attack took place at about nine o'clock in the morning, shortly after Robert -- who although alerted believed there would be no danger during the day -- had dismissed the sentries who had been keeping watch all night. The garrison consisted of Annamite volunteers. The attackers stormed through the wide-open gate and speared the station commander twenty times with their lances. Thereupon the Sedang retreated, taking with them neither the tax money which Robert kept in his chest nor the boxes of cartridges.

The militiamen, for their part, evacuated the station, taking to Kontum their fatally wounded commander; the latter was taken in by a missionary, who then went back to recover the money and the ammunition. The following night the Sedang returned and set fire to the deserted post. It was rebuilt later in 1901.

Five months later, at the end of 1902, after the revolt had claimed the lives of two more Frenchmen, Henri and Sicre, Father Kemlin was attacked at Drei, his parish, by 450 Sedang. The assault was repulsed and the Sedang even left behind one prisoner in the hands of the Christians.

The governor in Attopeu had a new post built among the Hamong converts. In a month-long campaign of expeditions and flying columns, the guard commander Meslier restored calm between Attopeu and Kontum.

By repurchasing a large number of slaves in order to free them, the missionaries added to their popularity in the region, which Governor Fournier found quiet and prosperous. With the advantage of abundant manpower, relatively hardworking and amenable, the province boasted vast cleared areas. Use of the plow spread steadily. Distributions of rice, medicines and fabrics brought them creature comforts

which, while modest, surpassed anything they had known in the past. Things reached the point where the Bahnar, if they had occasion to venture into Sedang country, took with them the rice they needed for their meals; they could no longer stomach the gruel of millet and squash that their hosts would have offered them -- willingly, but in a dirty trough. The number and extent of the raids declined steadily (70).

The Sedang continued to tread very warily after the Mayréna incident. For a long time they opposed the construction of roads north and northeast of Kontum.

4. THE JARAI. THE SADET LOSE THEIR PRESTIGE.

In the south the 130,000 Jarai remained unreliable. It was nonetheless among them at Plei Ku Der that Plantié, the first governor, established himself after the province had been transferred to Annam (July 4, 1905).

The prestige of the Sadet was destined to be dealt a serious blow from which it would not recover.

In 1892, the governor in Stung Treng, intending to put an end to the incursions of the Jarai along the trail linking Kratié with Ban Don, set off at the head of a small expedition and reached the headwaters of the Ya Hleo and, close by, the source of the Ya Ke. The Sadet of Water thought better of waiting for him and sought refuge near the Patau Pui; the latter did not attempt to resist, either. His village was burned: "Above the hut which housed the famous sacred sword (which F. Guerlach claims was of very crude workmanship) a ball of fire was seen to rise and disappear southward. To the mountain people this was ^a sign that the magical powers of the Sadet had been taken from him."

(70) Baudenne, "Les Kha d'Attopeu," R.I., 1913, p. 258 et seq.

5. ASSASSINATION OF ODEND'HAL

The Sadet Oi At was to commit a fresh crime, however, and thus bring about the effective occupation of the highlands French troops or by militiamen. There is no doubt, moreover, that this murder was not entirely unconnected with the transfer to Annam of the hinterland of Phu Yen and Binh Dinh, which to begin with had been attached to Laos following the treaty of 1893.

Explorer, administrator, scholar, and lecturer at the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (French College of Far Eastern Studies), Odend'hal had taken part earlier in the operations of the Pavie mission. In 1904, setting out from Phan Rang, he crossed the Lang Bian and the Darlac Plateau. During a stop at Cheo Reo, he met up with Stenger, the station commander. Enthusiastic and full of vigor, and overconfident since the success of his reconnaissance surveys, the progress of which he recorded in a fascinating report, Odend'hal was intending to make the Sadet surrender. Perhaps the old sorcerer would even let him see and touch the famous magic saber so persistently coveted by the Khmers and Laotians. Every attempt by the latter to seize the relic had ended with the massacre of the presumptuous claimants. Stenger listened anxiously. The Jarai had been particularly suspicious since 1903, when the Vincillioni column, which had been charged with repressing bandit activity in the Ankhe region, began to apply a new policy and, albeit without outward violence, started to occupy the area permanently. Stenger, powerless to dissuade the administrator from his plan, did his best to persuade him at least to take along an escort of militiamen. To no avail. At the beginning of April 1904, Odend'hal set off again. If nothing else, when he had to halt a while at Plei Koueng on the Ya Pa, he did accept an elephant from F. Vialleton.

At the outset, the Sadet gave the explorer a warm welcome, so warm in fact that Odend'hal, in pain and enervated by the continual libations to which his journey had exposed him, thought it would be

all right if he refused the traditional alcohol and chicken and passed them on to the others in his party. Put on his guard by a gesture that was interpreted as a mark of disdain, the Sadet became even more distrustful when Odend'hal, with the earnest insistence of a scholar about to unmask an enigma, begged to be allowed to look at the sacred sword. In the evening the explorer wrote a note to inform and reassure Stenger. The Jarai, however, interpreted it as an appeal for reinforcements and on April 7 they took their spears and clubs and beat their guest to death in the very hut where he was, according to the assurances he had received from the Sadet, was awaiting the latter with the gifts which the aging chief claimed he wished to offer him. Three Annamite members of his escort were massacred, and the bodies of the victims were all consumed by fire in the same straw hut.

The mahout, who managed to escape, hastened to bring news of the drama to Plei Koueng; Odend'hal's Laotian servant sounded the alert in Cheo Reo. Vincillioni and his detachment soon arrived on the scene from the region of Ankhe. Bardin, the governor in Darlac, set up the station at Plei Tur, very close to the village of the Patau Pui. To begin with, the Sadet managed to elude his pursuers; after being overtaken by Inspector Reinhart, he later surrendered. The powers of Oi At were passed on to Oi Tu. "At the present time the two magician chiefs, who must in the past have enjoyed unquestioned authority, are totally inactive" (71).

At the time of Odend'hal's assassination, the mandarins in the service of Vientiane had shown neither the vigilance nor the favorable disposition expected of them by the French authorities.

6. ORGANIZATION OF THE HINTERLAND

On November 22, 1904, the Province of Darlac, administratively part of Laos since 1893, was transferred to the control of Vietnam.

(71) H. Maitre, "Les Régions Mof' du Sud Indochinois," p. 38.

Farther to the north, in Jarai country, the Province of Plei Ku was created. Abolished in 1907, this administrative district was not re-established until much later. Kontum at that time was no more than a subdistrict administered from Qui Nhon. Cheo Reo came under Song Cau.

Vincillioni's rôle in the pacification of Ankhe was a crucial one. This inspector managed not only to bring peace and order but also to inspire trust in the mountain people.

From the station at Plei Tur, which he had founded in 1905 and from which four roads soon radiated, Bardin brought a reign of peace that extended as far as the unruly tribe of the Hadrong.

At about the same time the renaissance of the Rhade of Darlac began. The principal architects of this revival were Bourgeois and Sabatier who took plundering tribes, continually at war with each other, and made them into the most sophisticated, important and best organized people in the entire hinterland.

7. THE PIONEERS

In 1899, Bourgeois founded a new Ban Don beside the Ya Limin. There he won the support of Phet Lasa, a Laotian chief, and especially that of Kun Yu Nob, the former m'tau of the Mnong who till his death remained an intelligent and invaluable right-hand man to the successive administrators of the Province of Darlac.

Bourgeois first gained the friendship of the Rhade-Kpa. After forcing Mewal to submit to his authority (Mewal's hut was 178 meters long!), and Me Kheune, too (both of whom were unscrupulous m'tau), he also planned to win over the Bih, who worked the paddyfields they had established in the valleys of the lower Krong Hana and the lower Krong Kno. Having distinguished himself by his resistance to the pillages of Kham Leu, Ngeuh, the victor of 1887, had retained his ascendancy over the Bih. Yersin, who had visited him in 1893 at Ban Treuah, had found

in Ngeuh an enemy of the redoubtable Me Sao. In 1900, when Bourgeois tried to advance among the Bih, Ngeuh himself took charge of the resistance.

On March 1, 1900, Bourgeois seized Ban Tur and, the same day, Ban Trap.

Forty-eight hours later, a fresh battle was fought at Ban Treuah. Ngeuh fled and took refuge in the mountains; Bourgeois was unable to follow.

Taking with them all their possessions, even down to the remains of their forebears, 250 Bih families followed their chief into exile. They settled in the virtually uninhabited area of the middle Srepok and forbade Europeans to enter. Ngeuh died in 1903.

The post of the Indochinese Guard established at Ban Don protected the subdued region against raids by Laotian or Khmer bands. When the governor's quarters were burned down, the provincial capital was transferred to Ban Me Thuot, where it has remained ever since.

In terms of its effectiveness, the work of Henri Maitre surpasses that of the other pacifiers. His energy and his scorn for both personal comfort and danger led him along the paths in the mountainous regions. In the extensiveness of his explorations he is the equal of Pavie, and for forty years his books have been required reading for anyone wishing to study the people of the interior. As the sole reward for this prodigious effort, Maitre was to be murdered by the Mnong Nong in 1914.

Henri Maitre landed in China in 1902 at the age of 19. After serving a spell in the Chinese Customs he was transferred to the Indochinese Civil Service and immediately embarked on a series of journeys into the unexplored regions of southern Indochina. In 1914, Ernest Outrey, who was conducting his election campaign for the seat of representative for Cochin-China, hired him as his secretary.

Setting off from Cochin-China, Maitre had first explored the land of the unsubdued Biet and Stieng. He founded the station at Pet Sa, that at Bou Mera, 30 km. southeast of the nexus of the Trois-Frontières, and that at Bou Pou Sra, the early days of which are narrated in the "Jungles Moi."

Barely had the plans for the latter station been prepared, the explorer entrusted its construction and protection to a handful of militiamen and set off himself to survey the Central Plateau which ^{he} had discovered, including the sloping land that falls away from these heights toward Cochin-China. To follow him on his travels from Kratie to Phan Thiet, from Phan Thiet on to Kontum, Veun Sai and Lang Bian, one need only copy out the titles to the chapters of the "Jungles Moi." This book, which was awarded the prize of the Société de Géographie, is crammed with observations about the Bih and the Preng, the Dip, Rehong, Hodrung, Ma, Çop and Sre, not forgetting the Sadat, those legendary lords, and even the "men with tails," the intended exposure of which was to have such an upsetting effect on the erudite collaborators of the "Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué."

But Maitre was reaching the close of his amazing career. Odend'hal had died believing that the Patau Pui was about to surrender to him. To get rid of Maitre, Pou Trang Lung decided that he, too, would cry quits. This Biet tribesman, greatly feared by the neighboring tribes, is depicted for us as a man of small stature but stentorian voice, who claimed to be able to change his large face into a stag's head. What grudge could he have borne the explorer? Pou Trang Lung had earlier put Bou Pou Sra to the flame, and, as a reprisal, Maitre had inflicted a very harsh punishment on him, almost ruining him in the process. Or perhaps the Biet was afraid of being made to atone for the assassination of the Cambodian Balat of Bou Pou Klia, the ravisher of Pou Trang Lung's wife. Or was he (as some have claimed) put up to it by German spies from Bangkok? Could he have been perturbed by the relations struck up between Maitre and R'ding, a giant Nong? Pou Trang Lung eventually formed his own alliance with R'ding, who was among the assassins. Be this as it may, on August 5, 1914, Maitre

found the gates of former Bunor closed to him and was obliged to camp outside the palissade. According to some, the administrator entered the village at the invitation of his enemy's men. The better to celebrate a "great peace sacrifice," the Nong laid down their arms and demanded that Maitre order his own pistol and the rifles of his militiamen to be placed on the pile. At that moment, Pou Trang Lung, who had been absent up to then, allegedly entered the hut and slew the defenseless Frenchman (72). Others claim that Maitre was writing when struck down from behind.

For years afterwards, the dastardly death of this pioneer, who could pride himself on having subdued the Muong of Cambodia and the Çop and Dip of the Donnai, was destined to prolong the hostility of the Nong and Rehong, who were suspected of complicity in the assassination. Pou Trang Lung, who later killed Truffot as well and wounded Coursange, was not captured until 1935, by Major Nyo. R'ding had surrendered himself the same year.

The closing pages of "Jungles Moi" are saddened by the indifference of the authorities to the fate of the people of the hinterland and by the complete inconsistency of the policy pursued on the plateaus: in Maitre's words, "Several of the posts established and the provinces founded have vanished" (73).

Only a handful of apostles--Besnard, the veteran who defeated Me Sao, and later Sabatier on the Darlac plateau, and of course the missionaries--were able to pursue the work they had undertaken, more often than not with ludicrously scant resources.

8. ME SAO

The story of Me Sao illustrates the kind of chaos and danger from which these isolated organizers protected the mountain people.

The authors of the day were lavish with their use of the title "King of the Moi." Me Sao was one of the most formidable and pernicious men to

(72) Version recounted by Y Liu, a survivor of the massacre, and recorded by Antomarchi.

(73) When it was pronounced unfeasible to construct the proposed railroad between Dalat and Cung Xom, on the Song Darang, Djiring, created in 1899, was attached to Binh Thuan in 1903. At the same time, Dalat was joined to the province of Khanh Hoa. The post at Budop on the frontier between Cochin-China and Cambodia was set up in 1906, disappeared in 1908, and was reopened in 1913.

whom it was applied. This Rhade adventurer went under the real name of Yi Yene.

During his youth Me Sao's family, relatively poor, fell foul of pillagers and the future "King of the Moi" was sold into slavery. After being ransomed, he entered the service of a m'tau, whose daughter he married. Even this protection did not save his property which he lost for a second time, and, around 1880, he took up a position on a small mountain between M'drac and Ban Me Thuot, about 35 km. east of this station. He dubbed his hideout "Me Sao"; those of his victims for whom he was unable to extort high ransoms he sold as slaves. His kinship with the mandarins of Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa facilitated this kind of business. Very soon his granaries were overflowing with rice, ivory, and forest produce. Yersin had occasion to experience the effrontery of this bandit (74). He was no ordinary outlaw; a drunkard and opium addict, he overshadowed all the other m'tau by his cruelty. His wife used to poison anyone whose property she had designs on, and between them they committed more than two hundred murders.

But what constituted a more serious problem for the public authorities was that Me Sao showed himself quite capable of combining several villages under his authority. Moreover, he managed to exploit his location on the borders of both Annam and Laos when the frontiers were altered. By his shrewd tactic of gaining the protection of the Governor of Phu Yen Province, he successfully avoided reprisals by the commissioner of Stung Treng: "The governor never failed to take up the cudgels for the brigand, who took advantage of this fact in order to step up his depredations still further" (H. Maitre).

In 1905, however, Besnard, the Governor of Darlac, unmasked the band-leader for what he was, whereupon Me Sao took to the jungle, where he proclaimed a revolution. However his atrocities had taken a heavy toll of his prestige; his slaves and supporters handed him over to the authorities, and he died in prison.

(74) Yersin, "Sept mois chez les Moi," E. et R., 1893.

9. THE END OF THE SON PHONG

The criminal acts of Bok Mao and his plundering expeditions against the cinnamon gatherers in the Tra My region were reminiscent of those of Me Sao. The Marquis of Barthélemy once became involved in a skirmish with his band, whose activities prompted reconnaissance surveys carried out by Capt. Debay in 1902 and later occupation of southeastern Quang Nam.

Although it had started out as a framework for order and appeasement, the organization of the Son Phong gradually emerged as the appanage of a single family. Governor-general Doumer, wishing to put an end to the independence of the natives in question and to their extraordinary regime, ordered that the region be penetrated. His intention was to bring the mountain people under the direct control of the French provincial authorities.

On October 10, 1898 a report submitted by Bouloche to the Comâ was approved by the emperor. The report recommended: "the elimination of any obstacles that might impede trade with the Moi, particularly the host of middlemen between the Moi and the Annamites who exploit the gullibility of the mountain people." The document further called for the abolition of the royalties payable in kind and their replacement by a fixed tax payable in cash.

Holding the issue of the Son Phong in abeyance for the time being, in view of the vested rights, Bouloche advocated immediate settlement of the status of the mountain people established between Qui Nhon and Binh Thuan.

This was how the tan thu of Binh Dinh came to be eliminated. The thu ngu, thua bien and thong dich of Thuan Khanh province could be kept on only as interpreters and thenceforward were paid a fixed salary. This marked the end of the tribute in kind which had given rise to such grave abuse. Under no circumstances were the former middlemen allowed to speak on behalf of the Moi, nor to collect the taxes.

It was stipulated that the mountain people should be made to come to the provincial capital in person to settle their administrative affairs.

Markets supervised by the station commanders would serve to familiarize the mountain people with the trading methods of the West, which were to preclude gifts, bonuses and other forms of contributions. In the case of the debts to the Annamites incurred by the mountain people, efforts would be made to reduce their number, since they were the root cause of the violence that so frequently turned the region into a bloodbath.

In short, the new organization was aimed less "at seeking resources than at promoting the spread of our administrative procedures." It was applied immediately to Lang Bian, Darlac and the hinterland of Phu Yen. Within the territory of the Son Phong itself, a station manned by fifty militiamen was established in the Tra Bong region and placed under the command of Inspector Haguët.

"The mandarins looked askance at our intervention in Moi affairs; more particularly in the feudal province of Quang Ngai, they regarded first supervision by a French official and later elimination of their administrative authority as serious threats to their interests. Through the thuoc lai they encouraged the Moi to disobedience; every time a French official went near the wall, some Annamites were kidnapped or pillaged; droves of buffaloes were stolen from the plains, particularly in the vicinity of Duc Pho, the former stronghold of the Son Phong" (75).

Incidents became increasingly frequent in the canton of Pho Triem; at the boundary between Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai, the station of An Lao, founded in April 1900, was placed under the direct control of the Governor of Qui Nhon. The Son Phong thus lost the southernmost part of its territory.

When the agitation grew even worse in 1901, a delegation was established at Tra My and a station set up at Ba To to keep the mountain people under control. Lang Ri, Minh Long and Nuoc Vong subsequently received identical treatment. The province was thus divided: purely Vietnamese affairs continued to be conducted by the provincial mandarins, whereas the resident's

(75) Trinquet, "Le Poste administratif de Lang-Ri," R.I., 1908, II, p. 346.

office and the delegations reserved to themselves the task of administering the tribes of the hinterland. In 1905, the Son Phong, stripped of its former attributes, was officially abolished (76).

10. SABATIER

In spite of its dramatic end, Sabatier's career was a remarkable success story.

This peerless man was not much to look at: he wore a mustache, looked like a floorwalker, and sported a severe, curving pince-nez behind which had striking blue eyes. For a small part of the 20th century Sabatier had the privilege of living out his personal dream. One ought really to have seen him in his province, dispensing justice in the language which he had reanimated and transcribed, just as he had codified the customs of the Rhade; traveling along the paths and roads that he had opened to Ban Don, Me Bac or Ninh Hoa; supervising the hospital; settling the day-to-day issues in a village lost in the heart of the forest. Sometime after his ignominious removal, a colleague reproached him for not making these roads wide enough, to which he replied: "My concern was to make them long." This tireless man had created everything, from the electricity plant to the schools and the syllabi taught in those schools. Before a dumb struck visitor gazing at the spectacle of 200 pupils walking in close order on their hands as a finale to a physical education session, Sabatier mused to himself, "Would they be doing this if they hadn't seen me setting the example every morning?" There was no comfort, no well-trained "boy" for him. There was no question of having an Annamite or Chinese servant brought in. Determined to keep Darlac free from all intrusions from the outside world, the head of the province was not the type to start making exceptions to suit himself: Darlac was his life. After he had been driven from it, he hung on for a few more years of aimless existence, and died.

At least he still lives on in the hearts of the Rhade, even among the young people who never knew him: "Ae Ba Tié." Of all the things he

(76) *ibid.*, p. 346 et seq.

accomplished in fifty years spent in this land, perhaps that name will alone endure. Perhaps also that of "Ae Ma Chi," the unperturbable Antomarchi, director of the schools, who left Ban Me Thuot to enter the hospital, where he died. He had edited the Bi Due, a collection of customs prepared by Sabatier. Newcomers are ignorant of the achievements of Sabatier, the poet who fell in love with his adoptive land: "La Chanson de Damsan" and the tremendously moving "Palavre du Darlac"--who today has ever heard of them?

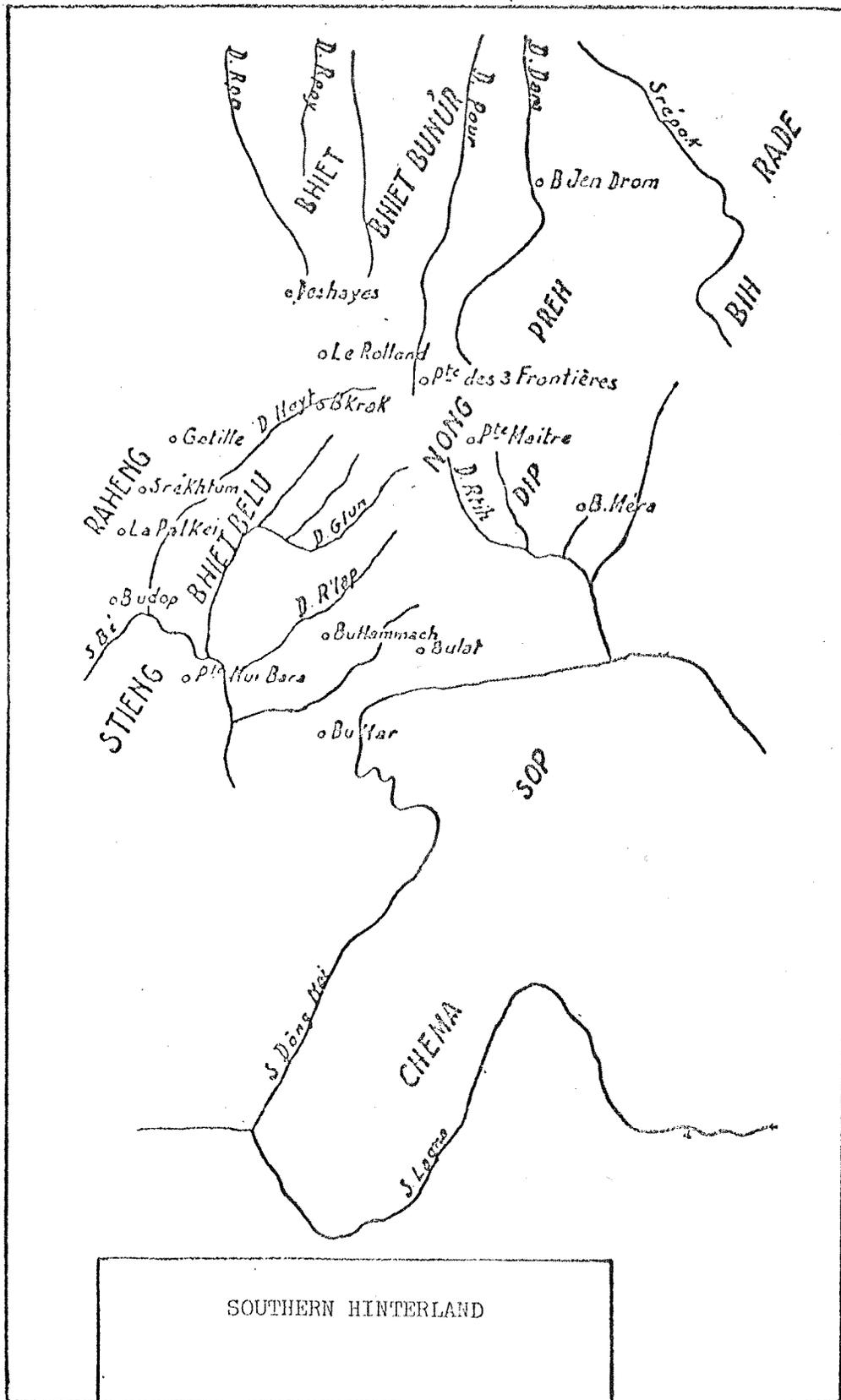
During the period when these events were taking place, people often liked to contrast Sabatier with Fournier, the resident in Kontum who continued the work of Fathers Vialleton and Guerlach. Following their example, he opened up the territory, whereas Sabatier placed a relentless guard at the gates of his. The Catholic Annamites attracted other Catholics from the banks of the Bla. To them the area owes its prosperity. With its varied and patiently trained manpower, Kontum was able to summon more easily than Darlac the strength to ride out the upheavals of 1945. Let us hope that it suffered less from them.

With possibly somewhat less brilliance or force of character, there were other Frenchmen who similarly devoted their careers to the emergence of the mountain regions of Central Annam: "Jérusalémy, Gerbinis, and Deremesse, who for many years was Sabatier's faithful assistant. They moved on or died, but their stay among the mountain tribes often brought happiness.

11. THE SOUTHERN HINTERLAND

The history of the territories of the south appears more confused. Near the frontier with Cochin-China, Patte surveyed the land of the Stieng and in 1904 founded the post at Nui Bara. At about the same time, Odéra, charged with the preparatory work for the construction of a railroad between Saigon and Nha Trang, extended his reconnaissance trips into the land of the Upper Donnai and to the Blao Pass. It is to the undying credit of this pioneer that he never once resorted to armed force, nor ever needed to for that matter. The delegation at Hon Quan to the north

FIG. 11



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of Thu Dau Mot, and the posts at Nui Chua Chang (1902), Budop (1906) and An Binh (1911) effectively marked the limits of French penetration on the eve of the 1914-18 war. At that time, only rare sorties were made into the heights bordering the Cochin-Chinese plains.

Some of the totally independent tribes did not lay down their arms. Two thirds of the territory of Bien Hoa remained unsubdued. The mountain people showed their hostility by opposing the passage of Lt. Génin, who was traveling from the north in the direction of Bien Hoa. It is recorded that in 1900 the Marquis of Barthélemy, who had left Tran Ninh and traveled to within five days' march of Thu Dau Mot, was stopped by the Stieng and forced to retrace his steps toward Kratie.

The assassination of Maitre by the Nong led by Pou Tran Lung in 1914 lay heavy on the consciences of this tribe, as well as on the Bou Neur and the Biet, and for years "any step we take in their direction they construe as heralding a punitive mission. Incited by the chiefs--Boun Jeng Chet, Xing and R'ding--who had organized the assassination at the time, all the villages in the region share the same fear" (Capt. De Crèvecoeur).

In 1915, Truffot, the Governor of Kratie, also met his death, at Sre Chi. The Central Plateau was abandoned, and Srekhtum evacuated. Fifty kilometers to the east of the Mekong, a line of stations strung out through Mil, Snoul, Sreping, Srede, and Sre Chi marked the line of retreat of the police forces. Beyond this line, the unfortunate tribesmen who had more or less welcomed the French presence were brought low, one after the other, by the rebels.

In 1922, the creation of the post at Chhoeung Plah appeared to herald a new push forward on our part, but this station had no influence at all on the tribes living at the foot of the Central Plateau.

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CHAPTER XII

PACIFICATION

In 1925, the rubber boom hastened renewed penetration. We shall be forgiven if we refrain from recalling here the sordid scheming by which the "large interests" crucified Sabatier.

1. THE CIRCULAR OF JULY 30, 1923

Pasquier, who was the governor-general in Annam at the time, had a premonition of what the effects of the rush would be: "They are going," he lamented, "to trample underfoot tribes that have just started to emerge from centuries of torpor. If it is to be made beneficial, this influx of energy and capital must be directed gradually into the proper channels. We have been caught unawares, engrossed as we are with other worries. The immediate result of the cupidity of the businessmen will be the destruction of all we have accomplished. It is very doubtful whether prosperity for the mountain people can possibly be salvaged from these ruins."

At any rate, Pasquier signed the circular of July 30, 1923, a brain-child of Sabatier. The "guiding principles for the administration of the Moi territories" appeared to constitute a guarantee of the future of the tribes. It turned out to be the signal for their mutilation.

The document survives as the expression of the government's intentions vis-à-vis the tribes of the hinterland, and of the protection which it thought it owed to the minorities who were facing the dual threat of often only half-baked capitalist ventures and of imperialist designs whose non-Western origins did nothing to mitigate their ruthlessness.

After Doumer and Father Beau, Pasquier declared the time had come to act as a "montagnard" nation and to pursue "a racial policy." The aim was to protect these tribes, whose aptitude for progress had been proved by Darlac, against all outsiders; they should be placed in a position to defend their land. Until such time as they were capable of doing so on their own, they should be preserved "from contacts that are tantamount to exploitation." Until then, the mountain people's "sole experience of French might was when they saw it used to support the claims bandied about by

Cambodians, Laotians or Annamites; they had allowed these same foreigners to inveigle them into committing murders that have served to perpetuate their dissidence ever since."

The venture was to be characterized by the utmost flexibility. For each group the approach would be adapted to its degree of development: isolation suited Darlac, which by then was capable of pursuing its development using its own resources; it was out of the question, however, in Lang Bian. In Kontum, the collaboration between the Bahnar and the Vietnamese had stood the test, but to prevent the latter from seizing control of all the land it was essential to place certain limits on such cooperation. "In some places the administration is faced with patriarchy and in others with matriarchy, while in yet others certain groups are reviving the clan system. These different forms of society will be used as the starting point, as appropriate."

Some of the zones to be pacified (beyond the Psi, the Dak Sal and the Krong Kno) would be kept strictly shut off.

The heads of provinces had instructions to codify the customs of the tribes, as had been done in Darlac. Legends, folklore and superstitions were to be gathered and recorded.

The nomadic tribes given to slow migration would be settled by the establishment of irrigated ricefields (77) and by planting fruit trees around the villages.

Trade, particularly that in salt, would be protected from the sharp practices of the foreign traders: "By dint of threats, these traders force the gullible Moi to accept outrageous deals which will eventually be settled by an abduction or by an incursion into the outlying villages of the Annamite region."

The heads of provinces were to direct the colonization effort, "avoiding friction between the settlers and the natives." Their conduct and their presence "would bring the Moi to understand that our policy

(77) One of the advantages of irrigated paddyfields is that they leave the forest intact, whereas the food-gatherers ("ray") ruin it. It is seldom easy to establish them in the valleys of the Highlands. During the rains, the watercourses turn into torrents that tear out the seedlings and wash away the land that has been prepared; this is more than enough to discourage apprentice rice growers.

toward them was not to drive them back to make room for other races."

Finally, special instruction given by the doctors and the pilot farming stations would help the men of the hinterland to acquire an awareness of their personality. The schoolchildren would study the customs of their tribes in their own language, in addition to simple arithmetic and the rudiments of agriculture. The teachers would be of the same race as their pupils. These were particularly wise precepts in regions where the children, so easily put to fright, fear nothing quite as much as the scornful irony of fellow pupils or teachers who are conscious of belonging to a superior race.

2. AT THE FRONTIERS OF COCHIN-CHINA--PROGRESS AND INCIDENTS

However, the businessmen, backed by the French Parliament, speeded the pace of penetration. The metropolis suddenly became impatient and avid to grasp this Moi country that it was barely discovering. It brooked neither discussion nor delay.

In the south new roads were opened: one, from the Nui Chua Chang to Vo Dat; another, leading from Bien Hoa to beyond the Nui Bara, was extended as far as Budop; yet another was made to An Binh.

Thiébaud, the resident of Bien Hoa, acting together with Odéra, both of them humane men, pacified the mountains of the Chrau and those of the Che Ma. Almost the entire basin of the R. Lagna was surveyed, subdued and administered. Three Stieng cantons were established between Ba Ria and the Song Be river. Major Carrier built the road to the eastern approaches of the Nui Bara river for the account of an industrial company. The villages along the middle reaches of the Donnai were won over, and the rubber plantations began to spread.

Around 1931, the accomplishments of Gerber (78), the delegate at Budop, began to attract attention. Gerber is one of the few survivors of the heroic band. To this very day, he has remained faithful to the region which, twenty years ago, he first won over. No one succeeded better than he in bringing peace into the very heart of the Stieng villages. His method was an object lesson in the right approach to adopt. He used to make very

(78) Mr. Gerber has published in BEFFO (vol. XLV, 1951-52) a really outstanding collection of Stieng customs (Coutumier Stieng).

frequent visits along the jungle paths. Before approaching an unsubdued locality, he never failed to send on ahead a number of "montagnards" known to the local tribe. Even then, he made it a rule never to set foot inside a dissident village unless first invited to do so by its inhabitants. Once accepted by them, he would tend to the sick and settle their disputes; he listened to the grievances of the mountain people whose trust he had won, and prevailed upon his militiamen to respect the weak.

Two dramatic incidents were unfortunately to make Gerber's merits both better appreciated and better understood.

On May 26, 1931, Gatille, the delegate at Snoul, who had been charged with building the road to the upper Chhlong valley, was slain by the Nong just as the construction work he was directing was reaching the upper rim of the Central Plateau.

On October 29, 1933, death also came to gendarmerie sergeant Morère, near the Nui Bara. A man of extreme kindness, Morère had to his credit the construction of 115 km. of new trails in a five-year period. The great speed of this success made the rebels uneasy. His murder was particularly heinous. Two days before his death, the gendarme had been visited by the men who were plotting to assassinate him. They asked him to visit them. A dispute between two villages made it essential he should go. On the way there, all went well, but on the way back an ambush awaited him. Overconfident, Morère had only one militiaman with him.

This time the rebellion which had been fermenting since 1914 along the approaches to the Central Highlands finally came into the open, especially as the murders of Gatille and Morère called for reprisals: "Over almost 200 km. from north to south and 50 from east to west, all the tribes are in open revolt or are unsubdued." However, the Biet, Mnong, Stieng and Nong could not make up their minds to pool their forces, although this did not prevent bamboo stakes from being planted all along the trails. Although orders from above had instructed them to deal severely with no one but the food-gatherers, the punitive columns were met by showers of arrows. The rebels were on the point of winning over the Biet and the Nong to

their side. An assault mounted against Le Rolland camp was staved off by a stroke of good fortune, but Bou Coh and Bu Nard both faced attacks that were made all the more serious by the fact that the enemy were armed with revolvers and rifles. The Mnong and the Stieng made common cause. From Cambodia the leader of the Le Rolland station, established in 1932, had reported that in the north of the districts of Bien Hoa and Thu Dau Mot the tribes were preparing to revolt. The division of the rebel region among Cambodia, Annam and Cochin-China had the effect of hampering our men in their actions. The Governor had wisely given the garrison at Bou Krak entire freedom of action, without regard for frontiers. The troops from Cochin-China also acted in combination with the garrisons of the Le Rolland and Maitre stations, which were under the control of Cambodia. These arrangements brought about a measure of relief.

Trails ran all over the country. Credit for their construction is due to Gerber, among others, as well as the militiamen of the Darlac plateau and Cambodia. All of them met at the Trois-Frontières station. The meeting at this station (1933) of detachments of Rhade, Vietnamese and Khmers, who had come from Bou Jen Drom, Budop and Le Rolland, respectively, gave the Biet, Rehong, Bou Neur and Nong food for thought. In the end, the appointment of a sole command for the three countries, coupled with the vigor of the operations conducted up to that time, brought calm to the region within three months.

A year later a surprise attack was made on the Le Rolland station. This time Pou Trang Lung had stirred up the Biet. A bare twenty-five days after the assault of March 4, 1935, the same garrison was subjected to a second attack, which also failed. April and May were marked by two offensives against Gatille station, and on April 29 its defenders stood in peril of their lives.

Unity of command was then re-established. Once again, the revolt was quashed. The death of Pou Trang Lung, who had been captured by Major Nyo, brought peace once more.

This last, and serious, crisis had the effect of shaking the authorities out of the vacillation and lack of coordination that had triggered the revolt.

After such vast expenditure of effort and so many bloody incidents, the decision was taken to act "with some vigor and with clearly defined objectives." "This renewed resolve led to the submission of the most savage, warlike and independent Moi tribes who through the centuries had eluded all outside domination and ... managed to lead a primitive life of anarchy and freedom in their mountains and forests."

The only remaining task was to penetrate and subdue a few little-known, but reputedly warlike, tribes along the western slopes of the Annamitic Chain between the Se Kong and Se Bang Hieng rivers.

From that moment on, pacification was a dead issue as far as the public was concerned. Occasionally, the mountain people found themselves dispossessed of their food-gathering grounds, since the planters preferred them to the jungle which they first had to clear. Finally, the tribes which had hitherto held aloof from all contact with the workings and doings of the outside world began to see their refuge hemmed about with Westerners and their novel techniques, so fascinating to such primitive eyes. Reactions were inevitable.

3. AGITATION IN KONTUM

There is no way of relating all these incidents in detail, but we must recall the strange fermentation that occurred between 1936 and 1938 around the territory of the Bahnar. It is a matter of record how prudently and considerately the Mission had been opening up this region for more than a century, but this did not prevent some of the Bahnar (Bonom, Alakong) from becoming involved in the events summarized below.

At the time, the governor in Kontum was Mr. P. Guilleminet, an erudite ethnologist as well as an outstanding administrator (79).

Guilleminet informs his readers that a "ya" can reappear in human form. The man in whom the spirit is incarnated is undisputedly acknowledged to be capable of superhuman feats. News of such a miracle becomes embellished

(79) Paul Guilleminet is the author of a Bahnar Dictionary and Grammar. His customary, published by E.F.E.O., has just come out. His articles in the B.I.I.E.H., of which he was secretary, and in the B.A.V.H. provide researchers with extremely reliable and invaluable information on the customs of the mountain people.

as it spreads. He also points out that "The people of the village where the prodigy was born, having seen him in his everyday life, are the only ones who do not share the universal enthusiasm." The reader will not have forgotten the different messiahs who succeeded each other on the plateaus since the time of the Ya Pu in 1820.

In 1935, a man from Phu Yen was assumed to be an incarnation of Set, the bearded one; Set is the son of Bok Glaih, the spirit of Thunder whom the Sadet had to thank for his magic sword.

It was suddenly rumored that this man's daughter-in-law had just given birth to a python. That such a phenomenon should be brought into the world signified an imminent return to the golden age. No one would have to work any more, and the Moi would once again become masters of their destinies. Obviously, Ma Wih, the father of the prodigy, had no trouble at all in retailing the news. It spread first among the Jarai and Rhade; in 1937, processions of Rhe from Quang Ngai and Bonom, peace-loving farmers who live east of Kontum, brought their offerings to the village of the python child; unable to offer them anything else in return, Ma Wih gave them some bottles of nondescript water. The pilgrims were rewarded for their pains, and handsomely at that: poised on the threshold of the momentous events that were bound to happen, holders of the miracle water, and they alone, would be protected against all disasters.

When they got back, those who owned bottles were swamped with offers and sold their vials for 2, 10 or even 100 piastres; this water showed up at Djiring, Faifoo and even Bassac, and everywhere its owners, united in their possession of the "talisman," formed a single sect, responding to the same words of command and sharing the same hopes. Then agitators took a hand, and the Sedang, Die, Rhe, Bonom and Alakong decided to wait no longer and broke off all relations with the French administration. The Sedang set the example by attacking some militiamen early in 1938. Northern Kontum, together with the mountain people of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, became disaffected and, to stifle any nagging desire they might have

for a later return to peace, they burned their villages behind them. The Jarai, assured that a life of clover was just around the corner, had not troubled to sow their fields, and famine was already rampant.

When Ma Wih stood trial, the court cleared him of responsibility for the trouble he had caused. Selling a little perfectly ordinary water to exploit the curiosity of an idle public can hardly be held a crime. The jungle mentality, always latent, had caused all the trouble. Indeed, it is far from played out even today.

4. THE KHA TU

The trouble that had flared up in Kontum spread northward to the land of the Kha Tu.

Though initiated in 1904 by Kieffer and in particular by Sogny, the penetration of this 25,000-strong tribe living at the approaches to the Ataouat was not systematically resumed until 1935. Work on the construction of road 14 (80) which was to link Kontum with Quang Nam provoked a resurgence of the attacks around the station at An Diem. The Kha Tu "murder in order to appease the evil spirits," but also to preserve their independence. Their tribe is one of those in which tiger-men appear. The murders they commit are never followed^{up} by thefts, and there appears to be no thought of vengeance in them at all: "That man is blessed with forefathers whose lances have passed a hundred times through human flesh. He is the pride of his village and the womenfolk admire him" (81).

1937 witnessed a fresh outbreak of criminal acts. The administrators of Quang Nam and the militiamen of Le Pichon accomplished the twofold feat of suppressing a rebel movement that was threatening to grow more serious and of doing so with the aid of the cac lai and the Annamite woodsmen, who had become the best auxiliaries in the entire pacification effort.

(80) Enjolras, "Reconnaissance de la région de Moi Xe et du tracé de la route coloniale 14 entre Tân-an et Dac Main," B.A.V.H., 1932, No. 4, 31 pages, 2 maps, numerous profiles.

(81) Le Pichon, "Les chasseurs de sang," B.A.V.H., 1938, No. 4, pp. 357-404.

I wanted to close this historical essay on the Moi country by describing a tribe which remained altogether independent until the eve of World War II.

The Kha Tu are distinguished not only by the diversity of the ethnic types found among them: "from the Negrito to the Indonesian type and even to the American Apache, but also by the numerous points of similiarity that ethnologists have noted between the civilization of this group and that of the peoples of the New Hebrides--their method of preserving meat, the use of common house for the men, pigs' teeth used as jewelry" (82). This brings us back to the bonds of affinity that link certain tribes of Indo-China's hinterland with the inhabitants of many islands in the Pacific. Attention was drawn to this relationship at the beginning of this unfinished study, which, to be complete, ought properly to have included a chapter on the spread of colonization in the highlands. There, many "montagnards," benefiting from conditions and goods which at one time they would never have dreamed of, learned for the first time about the West and the advantages that its presence can bring.

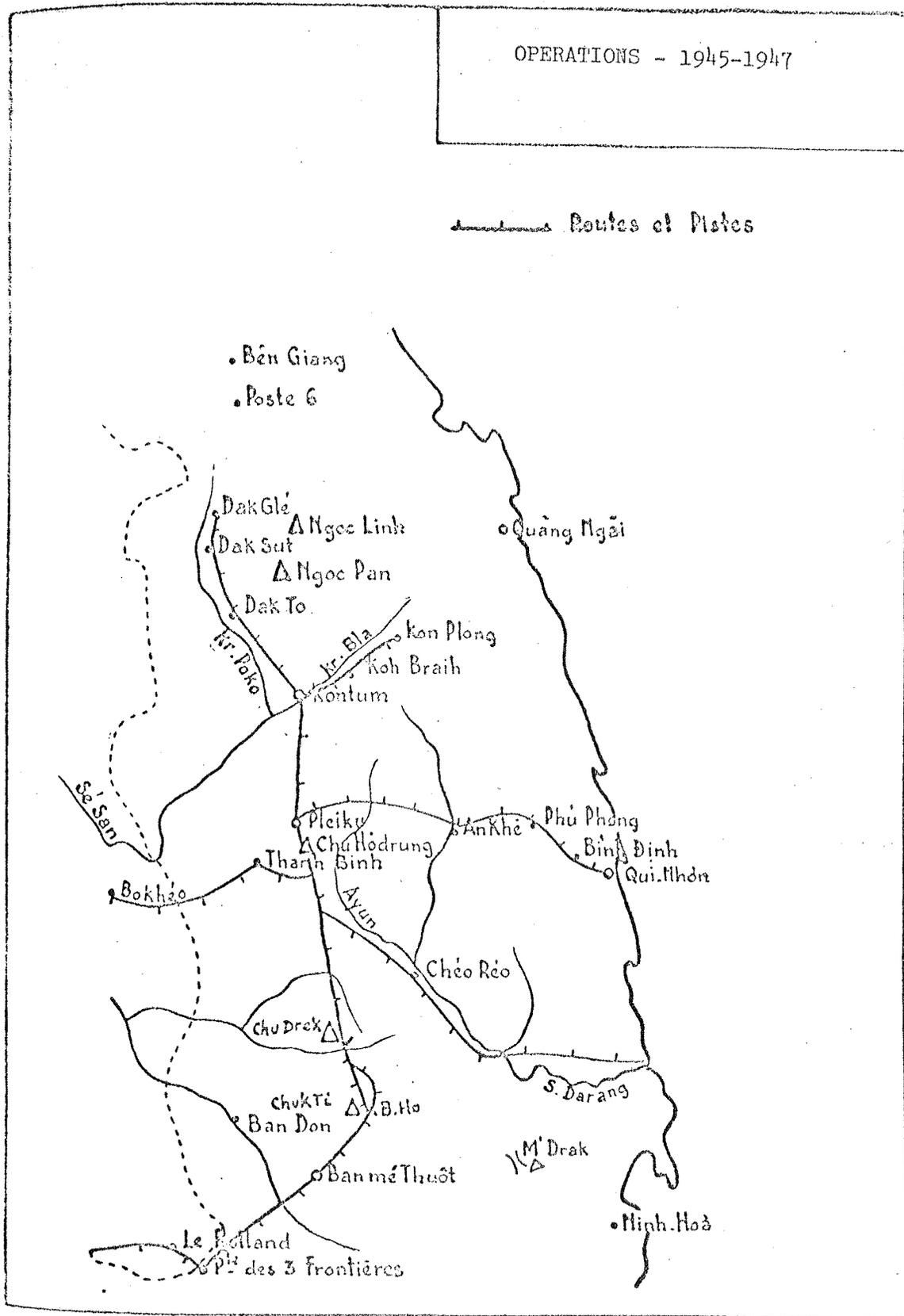
(82) loc. cit., p. 365.

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APPENDIX

The Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, was as disastrous for the mountain people as it was for the prestige of the Whites. For four years the government had been doing its utmost to stave off this disaster, the extent of which it could well foresee; there is scarcely any need to go over the events that led up to it.

For the most part, the tribes of the hinterland were thrown off balance by the ensuing upheaval. Admittedly, some villages and a few groups of militiamen, whose morale had been undermined by months of unrelenting propaganda, allowed themselves to be disarmed by the Japanese troops and their Vietnamese sympathizers, but innumerable others fought back heroically, acquitted themselves honorably, and, though they finally laid down their arms, resigned themselves to doing so only when all had been lost and when ordered to do so by the leaders to whom they had remained loyal. Those Frenchmen whom the enemy had isolated in a few of the villages heard stray reports of these fine exploits, and their memories are full of gratitude. On the plateaus, the militiamen and soldiers fought a hopeless battle. The heroism of the Rhade units stationed at Hanoi drew unstinting admiration. It was almost as if the "montagnards" had some kind of premonition that the efforts of twenty years to awaken the genius of their race were about to be wiped out.

To begin with, a sympathetic and generous welcome was extended to those Frenchmen who escaped from the internment camps to fight again in the bush. In the long run, however, heavy drawings by the resistance forces on the herds, farmyards and grain supplies of the mountain people, even in return for payment, proved too heavy a burden for the villages to bear. The Japanese and their auxiliaries promised rewards for any Frenchman handed over to them. South-west of Hue, the "montagnards" nevertheless refrained from attacking our men; all the same, when they saw them staggering in after a march, their strength sapped by fever and their feet bathed in blood, they would assure them that a large Japanese detachment was on the point of arriving on the scene and in this way would compel the

exhausted fugitives to move on again. In Kontum, "throughout the Japanese or Viet Minh occupation, in the absence of the French missionaries, the Bahnar and Annamite priests kept the faith even in the most remote Catholic villages" (83).

At last, in the closing months of 1945, the French troops reached Saigon. Their arrival had been awaited since before March 9, and particularly after the Japanese surrender. In December 1945, the 1st Far East Brigade, whose ranks also included Cambodians and two Mngong and Rhade battalions, reoccupied Ban Me Thuot. By that time the Viet Minh had infiltrated everywhere: from Ninh Hoa as far as Nam Dinh, in Tonkin, they held the entire country, deltas and plateaus. Many Jarai or Rhade chiefs, known to have favored our cause, had been removed. With an eye to the main chance, a few turncoats had gone over to the enemy, but the troops of Ho Chi Minh had been hard put to it to round up even a few "montagnards" to plant among their detachments--just enough, in fact, to spread abroad the legend of the mountain people having risen up against the "colonialist oppressors." In point of fact, the Viet Minh had failed to keep the promises it had bandied about at first; taxes, which it had proclaimed would be abolished, once again lay heavy on the people of the hinterland, who rapidly wearied of the requisitions and tasks handed out by the "liberators." From the time they re-entered Ban Me Thuot, therefore, the French troops encountered a steady flow of sharpshooters and militiamen anxious to resume their service, while young Rhade, Mngong and Jarai demanded rifles with which to fight alongside us. The smiling and eager welcome by the old Kun Yu Bon at Ban Don was a typical reflection of the disposition of the tribes toward the returning Frenchmen. For many, their return heralded a return to the policy formerly followed by Sabatier.

The first stage was to reconquer all the ground lost since March 9. The commander of the 1st Far East Brigade had only a small complement of men left. The task was now to regain control of an area far larger than the three sectors reoccupied by the bulk of the French troops in Tonkin and

(83) General J. Marchand, "Dans la Jungle moi," Peyronnet.

Central Annam. This small handful of men could never have occupied the plateaus had the people not supported the troops in their efforts.

By December 1945 our units had halted their advance some forty kilometers northeast of Ban Me Thuot, at Buon Ho, while the Chukti massif remained in enemy hands.

To the northwest, the 5th Battalion of "montagnard" riflemen, advancing from Stung Treng, had reached Bokeo; as it was the dry season, they were able to take the trail leading from Khone through Siem Pang and Veun Sai.

The agreements of March 6, 1946 did nothing to stop the Viet Minh from seizing prominent Rhade figures, nor, for that matter, from "intensifying their pressure on the Jarai tribes. One of our patrols was set upon in a surprise attack" (84). By way of reprisal, a punitive detachment was despatched westward toward the source of the river Ea H'leo (Nam Lien) and proceeded as far as Plei Tung Tang.

It was then, at Ban Me Thuot, that the French High Commissioner arrived to attend the great oath-taking ceremony (Le Grand Serment). The splendor of the event might well have been interpreted as a sign for a return to the general policies of 1923. The 1st Brigade at that time held the region bounded to the north by a line running from M'Drac Buon Ho to Plei Tung Tang, and Bokeo.

The converging, two-pronged attack of June 21 was launched simultaneously from Buon Ho in the east and Bokeo in the northwest: two Rhade companies took control of Buon Krieng, the Chukti massif and, on June 23, the Chu Dreh massif. The column from Bokeo reached Than Binh despite resistance made worse by the presence of Japanese troops. Operations proceeded in the general direction of Pleiku. At the same time another detachment, which had advanced as far as Cheo Reo, also swung round toward Pleiku and broke down the defenses of Chu Hdrung, south of this city.

On June 26, by which time the troops had reached Kontum, the Viet Minh fell back toward Quang Ngai via Kon Brai and Kon Plong.

The fact that the defenders of An Khe were stiffened with Japanese advisers failed to prevent this center from falling in due course; this

(84) General J. Marchand, loc. cit.

completed the reoccupation of the territory of the Jarai. Finally, beyond Kontum, the expeditionary force gained control of Dak To and Dak Sut, in Sedang country, and later of Dak Gle among the Die; the advance was pushed as far as the approaches to the territory of the Kha Tu.

The French teachers returned to their posts in the schools, and the missionaries went back to their parishes. Already, too, the planters were fearlessly taking up their work again, all too often, alas, amid the devastation wrought by the enemy. The country began to look as it had before.

An offensive comeback launched against An Khe on October 6 ended with the repulse of the enemy.

The situation appeared to be so well in hand that when the Viet Minh, on December 19, made their violent attack on Da Nang and Hue, both cities were relieved by troops drawn from among the forces manning stations on the plateaus. Yet another attack on An Khe by the Viet Minh was also finally beaten back on March 15.

All the same, guerrilla warfare was being stepped up behind our positions, though the increasingly frequent assassinations and attacks on convoys did not weaken the allegiance of the mountain people. The outstanding conduct of two Sedang sections garrisoned at Kon Plong will long be remembered with emotion: not only did the garrison of this small post ward off an attack by the Viet Minh, but to make things worse it was also bombed by French aircraft, which believed it to have fallen into enemy hands. When after the last bombs had fallen, the Viet Minh mounted their attack, the Sedang countered with such heavy and well directed fire that the attack was halted.

No complete list can ever be made now of these heroic exploits--the Sedang at Kon Plong; the Sedang at Ben Giang where, with the help of 60 Die tribesmen, they forced their way into the flaming post, after setting out from Dak Gle to meet up with another detachment that had left from Quang Nam with artillery support; the 3rd Battalion of "montagnards" in the area of Phu Phong and Binh Dinh, in June and July 1947, and so forth. The

brief mention of them here merely serves to show how loyally the troops of the hinterland responded to the call of the French commanders. France's credit lies in the fact that it embodied the hope of these people, who paid for that hope with their lives. No Frenchman should ever forget it.

