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





































































































































































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

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

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





























## Further Travels in Laos and in Yunnan

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

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

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



























































































































































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

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

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



























































































































































