

TRAVELS THROUGH XISHUANGBANNA

China's Subtropical Home of Many Nationalities

By Zheng Lan



TRAVELS THROUGH
XISHUANGBANNA —
*China's Subtropical Home
of Many Nationalities*

This is a book about one of China's minority nationality autonomous regions (the Dai), written in the form of travel notes. Xishuangbanna is situated in the south-western frontier area of China, bordering on Laos and Burma. Known at home and abroad for its tropical and subtropical beauty and for its many nationalities, Xishuangbanna is attracting great numbers of visitors from far and near. In the pages of this travelogue, the author, Zheng Lan, an editor at Foreign Languages Press, outlines the history of the Dai people in this area of China and tells of the changes that the policies of the People's Government towards nationalities have made in their life since liberation.

Land of thousands of exotic and valuable plants and fruits, Xishuangbanna is also the home of the famous Pu'er Tea. The golden-haired monkey is among the rare animal species that inhabit Xishuangbanna's vast expanse of primitive forest.

The control of malaria, which took an appalling death toll of village population, is described, as well as that of such epidemic diseases as smallpox and cholera.

The traditional gala Water Splashing Festival of the Dai nationality, the major grouping of the 22 living in Yunnan Province, and other aspects of Dai culture, life-style and customs are depicted.

The book has much to offer readers who are interested in knowing how China's minority-nationality people live.

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BY ZHENG LAN

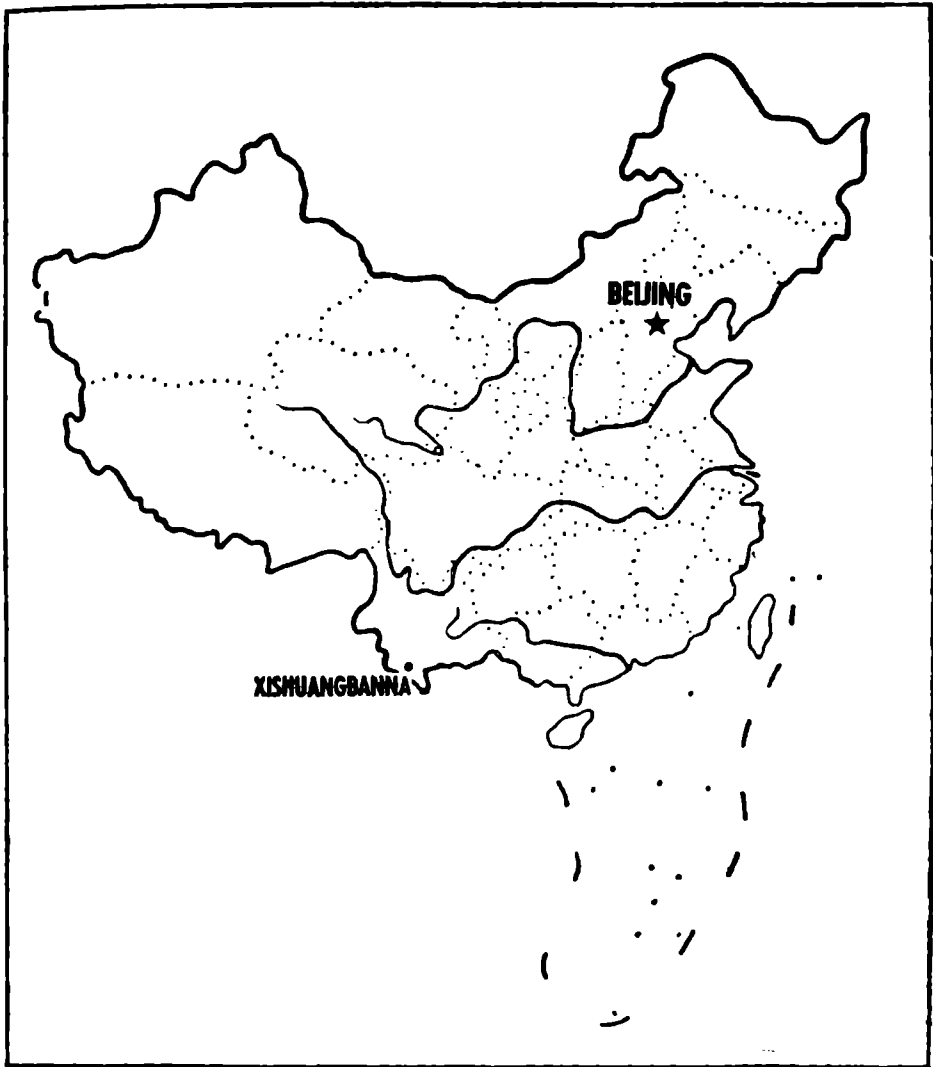
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I. AN EDITOR'S DREAM REALIZED

Xishuangbanna — what place in China has greater fascination! In my mind it meant beauty, natural wealth, a subtropical paradise. A visit there is sure to be a rare experience in anyone's life, and a traveller from north China will be asked many questions upon return. When the invitation finally came through to participate in Xishuangbanna's most elaborate holiday of the year, the Water Splashing Festival, I was very excited.

One afternoon at the end of March 1978 I received a phone call from the Beijing Central Nationalities Institute. "I've got good news for you. You're invited to attend the Water Splashing Festival at Xishuangbanna from April 13 to 15," came a familiar voice. It was that of a person I knew was working with the Dai nationality particularly, and so I cleared my desk and on the tenth of April set out for Xishuangbanna in a surge of excitement.

2. ON CHINA'S SOUTHERN BORDER

Xishuangbanna was for centuries in the past a practically inaccessible place of mystery for the northern Chinese. A year was required to travel there from Beijing — a distance greater than from Paris to Stockholm as the crow flies. It is peopled largely by China's minority nationalities whose life style and customs are fascinatingly different from those of the Han majority. It is also a place rich in legend. In 1978, with the development of communications and also of mutual understanding, distance and mystery had given way to startling beauty and abundance.

We went by plane from Beijing straight to Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, in less than three hours. Then, from Kunming a small plane landed us in Simao in less than another hour. From Simao travel was by motor vehicle — five hours to the prefectural capital, Yunninghong, where we were welcomed by our host organization and given a brief introduction.

Xishuangbanna in the Dai language means "twelve administrative areas", xishuang meaning "twelve", and banna for district. Comrades working at the hotel where we stayed created for us an atmosphere about the place by telling us the following story.

THE TALE OF THE GOLDEN DEER

The old folk of Xishuangbanna often say that this breathtaking and bountiful place was discovered by accident several thousand years ago by hunters chasing a golden deer. A forefather of the Dai people, Bayalawu, had led some youths into the forest to hunt and had come upon a golden deer, whose life they spared. Bayalawu purposely shot

an arrow into its leg to stop it so that they could take it home to raise. But the golden deer escaped with the arrow in its leg. He then led the young hunters in a chase after it, which took them over 77 peaks and 99 rivers before there suddenly appeared before their eyes a glittering golden lake into which the golden deer leapt and vanished from sight. In a twinkling the lake was filled with lotus flowers. Bayalawu and his hunting party were so delighted with this golden lake and the green forested hills around that they settled there with their families.

Soon the place, said to be the present-day Xishuangbanna, abounded in grain and the population increased.

This legend with its many variations is a popular one in the prefecture. Its theme is always of a people who love their homeland and describe it as a splendid place rich in water and soil which yields abundantly.

THERE'S NO WINTER HERE

The Xishuangbanna Dai Nationality Autonomous Prefecture, situated in China's far southwest, embraces Jinghong, Menghai and Mengla counties of Yunnan Province, an area of 20,000 square kilometres. Burma borders it on the southwest, while on the southeast its mountains and rivers link with those of Laos. The combined boundary length with these two countries is a thousand kilometres. We set out from Beijing in padded clothing, but here we were in short sleeves. There is no winter here. The two words "ice" and "snow" do not appear in any of the local chronicles.

Xishuangbanna is located between 21.1 and 23.4 degrees latitude, and between 99.55 and 101.5 degrees longitude. The Wuliangshan Mountains, which lie to its north, and part of the Nushan Mountains serve as a screen against cold north winds. To the south, the adjacent Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal from which southwest monsoons arise, and the river network and basins, none of which are high, contribute to a warm, wet climate. Temperature variations throughout the year are very small, but great within one day. Average yearly temperature is around 21° C, rainfall about 1,400 mm. in most places. There is no sharp division of the four seasons, only that between the dry season and the wet.

The monsoons usually last from May through to October; the dry season from November to the following April. But the aridity of the latter is partly compensated by damp fogs that descend over the entire region, giving rise to the term "dry season without drought".

ELEPHANT, WILD OX, LIVING FOSSILS

Especially impressive were the vast virgin forests and rolling green hills and valleys of Xishuangbanna. It is a place inhabited by the wild elephant, wild ox, deer, tiger, leopard, wild boar, bear, boa constrictor, hornbill, peacock, golden-haired monkey, gibbon, zibet, mongoose and many rare fowls and animals. As we travelled along the mountain road, we were often met by curious, quite fearless animals, which added much to the interest of the trip.

We were told that in the primitive forest on both sides of the road could be found the rare bruma toon, chittagon chickrassy, the banyan, lime and several thousand others. Among the tropical and subtropical plants growing there some remained as "living fossils" from the Glacial Age.

It was commented as our car wound round the hairpin turns that 96 per cent of Xishuangbanna's total area is mountainous. The highest peak is Kongming Mountain, 2,300 metres above sea level. Traversing the entire region is the Lancang River, which with its tributaries provides much fertile riverbank soil. Lying among the majestic mountains and rushing rivers are 34 "basins", or plains. These well-watered basins, accounting for the remaining 4 per cent of the area, are 24 in number, each with an area exceeding 10,000 mu. The Mengzhe Plain alone occupies 240,000 mu.

This rich environment is well suited to agriculture, particularly for the growing of tropical and subtropical economic crops. Between two and three rice harvests are gained a year, with generally good yields of fine quality large-kernel grain, giving the area the name of "granary of southern Yunnan". In the mountains and foothills grow the broad-leaf tea plant of high quality. This is also the home of the famous Pu'er tea. Rubber, camphor, cinchona (quinine), coffee, cocoa, coconuts, pineapple, bananas, mangoes and other cash crops are produced around the villages



Dressed for the fair.



Going to the fair.





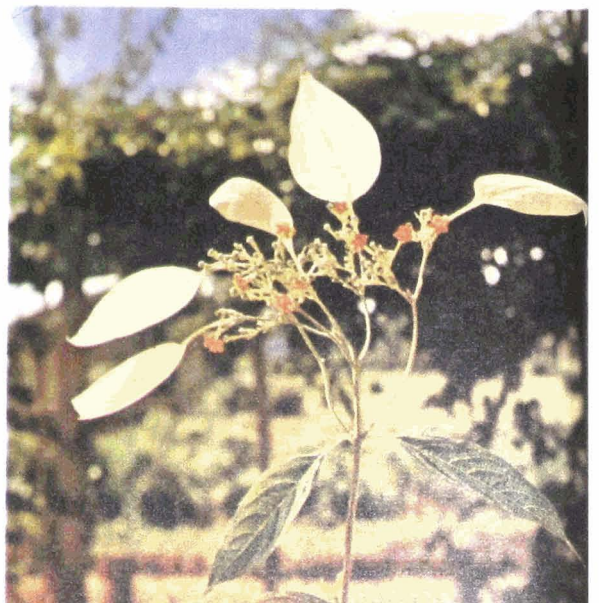
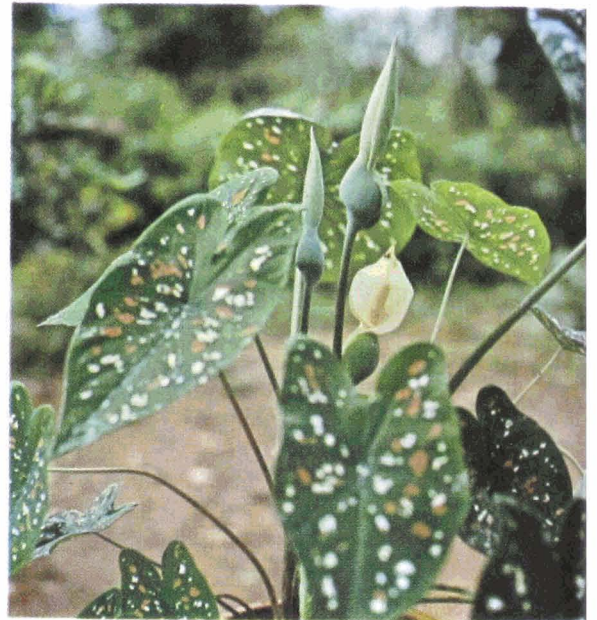
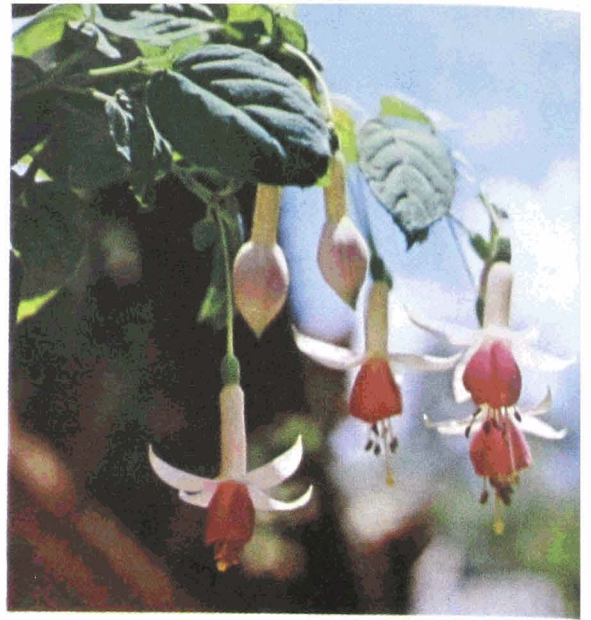
The fair draws people from near and far.

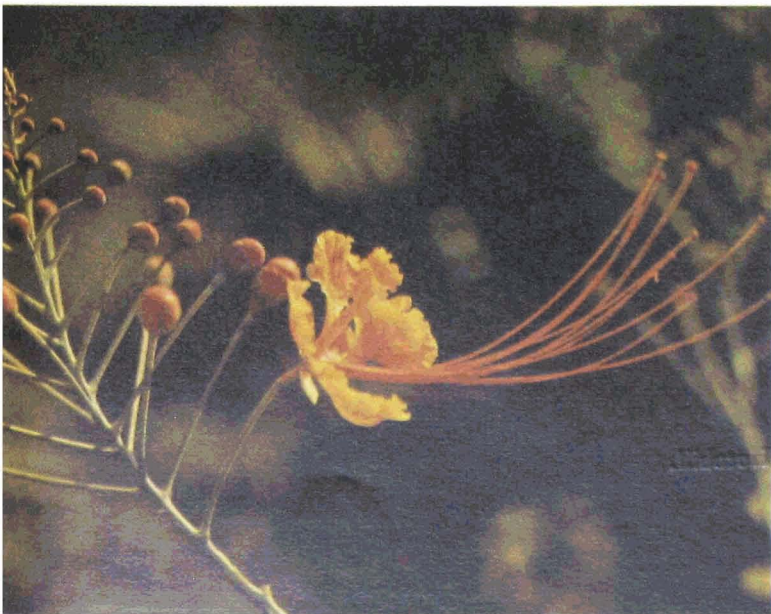
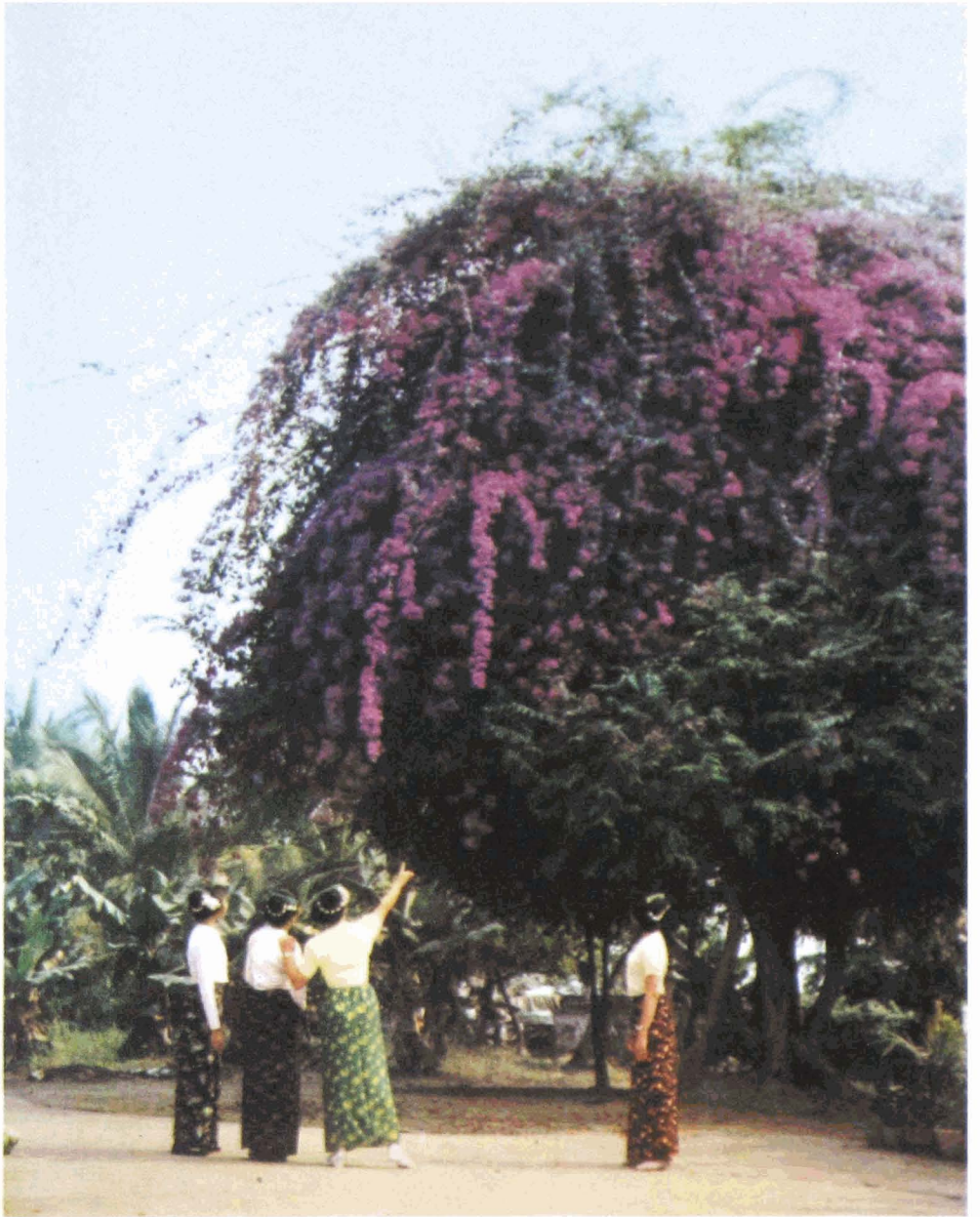


Cooling off.

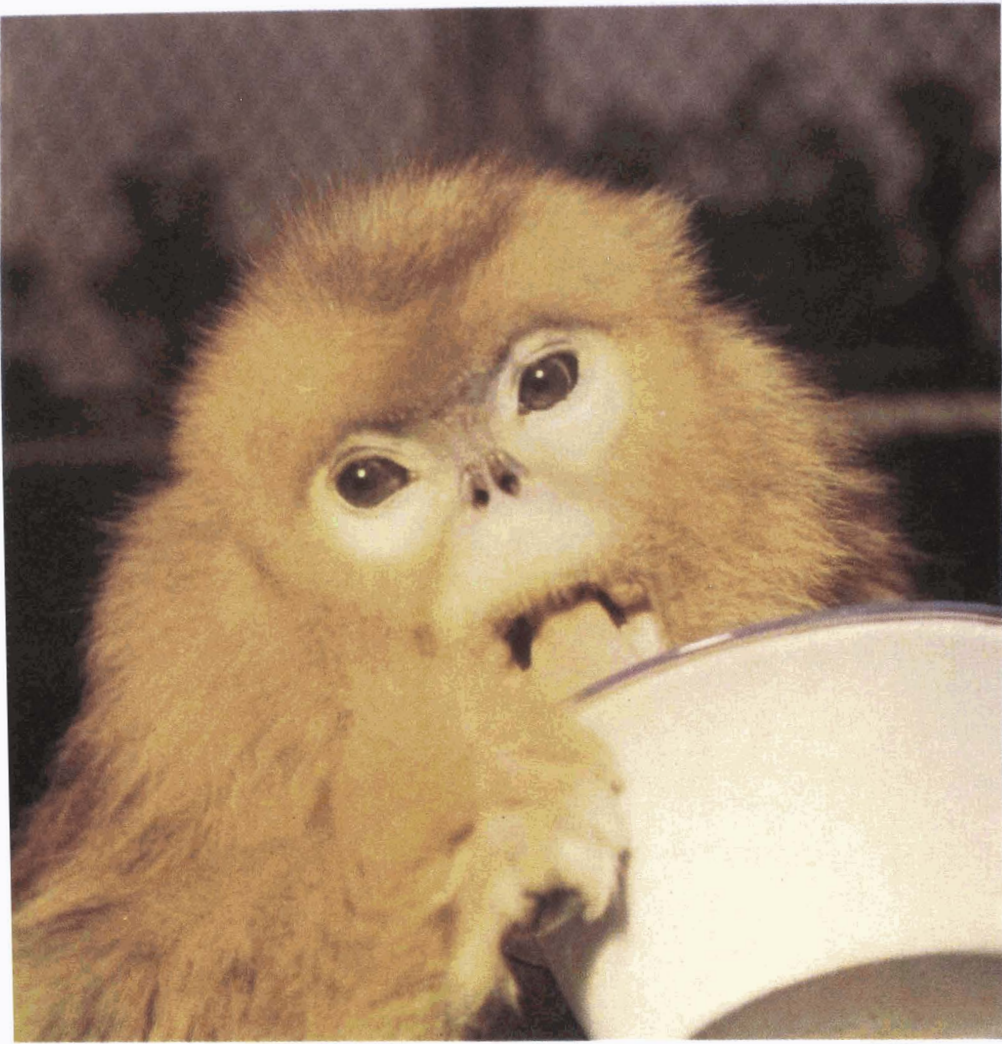


The gala Water Splashing Festival.

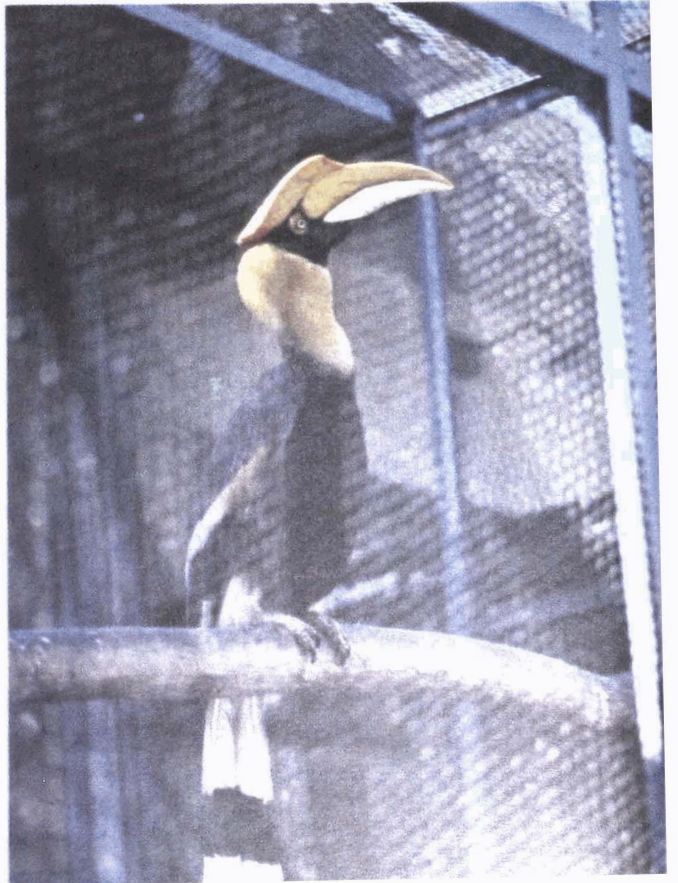




Some flowering plants
of Xishuangbanna.



Golden-haired monkey.



Hornbill.

and on the plains and slopes. The region's abundance of medicinal and fruit crops makes the area very valuable economically.

MANY NATIONALITIES, A LONG HISTORY

China is a country with more than fifty minority nationalities, most of whom are spread over the vast border areas. Xishuangbanna is one of these multi-nationality autonomous regions, the Dai being predominant. Others are the Aini, Bulang, Han, Lahu, Wa, Yao, Hui and Zhuang, totalling 620,000 people representing some dozen nationalities. The Dai and Han each constitute a third of the population, while the remaining third is comprised of many other minorities, the Kucong being the smallest with about 500 people.

The Dai, Han and Hui live mainly on the choice land along the riverbanks, while the other nationalities have traditionally lived in the poorer mountain areas. Before liberation, Dai feudal tribal chieftains hand in glove with the Han rulers exercised reactionary rule over the Aini and Bulang among other nationality groupings. In 1180 the Dai chief Bazhen conquered the Aini, Bulang and other nationalities, drove them into the mountains and himself occupied the plains. In 1912 the overpowering Han warlord Ke Shexun penetrated Xishuangbanna and again in collusion with the Dai feudal tribal chiefs divided and ruled over the other minorities. And so began a system of Han oppression of the Dai, Dai oppression of Bulang and Aini, and so on along the line, the Aini and Bulang in turn squeezing their bit out of the weakest and tiniest nationalities, like a pagoda with the Han at the top.

After China's liberation, the People's Government replaced the old system with one of equality among the nationalities, and the "pagoda" toppled. Mutual help, learning from each other and living in amity have contributed to the building of a socialist Xishuangbanna.

Each nationality has a long history and all have close bonds with the Han. Han records as far back as the second century B.C. mention the Dai nationality. According to *Book of the Later Han Dynasty*, Dai chieftains in the first and second centuries sent missions to the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang and accepted the Han emperor's land, titles and ranks. From the 8th to the 13th century, Xishuangbanna was placed

under the Tang and Song dynastic "Nanzhao" and "Dali" administrations. In the 13th century the Yuan Dynasty ended the separate rule of the "Dali" and strengthened its dynastic rule over the Dai nationality area, establishing the "Cheli military and civil administration" at Jinghong. In 1570 the ruler Dao Yinmeng divided his domain into the twelve fiefdoms of Xishuangbanna. From 1253 in the Yuan Dynasty right up until the termination of Kuomintang rule the Chinese government maintained local administrative organs in Xishuangbanna.

The people of Xishuangbanna have engaged in agriculture since ancient times. Two thousand years ago the Dai nationality cleared jungle land, ploughed it with elephants and planted rice. They very early started to cultivate rice seedlings in beds, removing the seedlings to the fields after 25 to 30 days. The method resulted in sturdy plants that gave increased yields. People of the Aini, Bulang, Yao and other nationalities cleared the bush from the slopes and reclaimed the land for tea cultivation.

With the development of an agricultural economy, handicrafts made also marked headway. From the 8th century the Dai people have crafted gold, silver, iron and bamboo articles, and produced porcelain, textiles, paper and sugar. They wove a durable cotton fabric in attractive colours and designs. In the Ming Dynasty, tribute from Cheli included exquisitely woven silk gauze and velvet. Construction technique and the making of handicraft articles reached new high levels. Mural, sculpture, embroidery, trace design in gold and wine distilling developed similarly.

Each nationality has created a splendid culture through centuries of labour. From ancient times the Dai people have recorded their history in their own written language. They have also produced a vast treasury of literary and artistic works, and books on scientific knowledge. Among the literary works are fascinating long poems, legends, fables, stories and folk songs. In music and dancing there are the popular *zanba* folk singers. There is the spectacular and unique peacock dance, elephant-foot drum dance and sword dance. There are scientific treatises on the calendar and ancient books and records concerning sun and lunar eclipses in the Dai language, as well as works on herbal pharmacology, treatment by traditional methods and prescriptions which have proved effective. The Aini, Bulang, Yao, Wa and other peoples have handed

down through the generations a folk literature and knowledge of herbal medicines that is extremely rich.

3. FROM SLAVE TO MASTER

It was April 11 when we arrived at Jinghong. The Water Splashing Festival being two days away, we decided to spend the time filling in our general knowledge of the locality. For this, we received the help of our host organization, an official of the Dai nationality, Dao Xingcai, patiently giving the briefing.

THE DARK PAST

Before liberation the Dai region writhed under the dark rule of a serf society. A feudal tribal chieftain, the *zhaopianling* (meaning "lord of vast tracts of land"), had been the highest authority and the supreme political and military ruler for hundreds of years. Under him were instituted more than thirty *zhaomeng*, each in charge of an administrative district (*meng*). Advisory councils were set up in the higher ruling organs, and these were not only advisory. They held no little power themselves. The advisory council to the *zhaopianling* was also in charge of tribal affairs, finance and justice, comprising four ministries and thirty *bolang*.* The *zhaopianling* and his underlings at all levels held sway by committing atrocities through this network of "advisory councils".

Every inch of land, the mountains, all rivers — down to every bush and blade of grass — belonged to the *zhaopianling*. The very bodies of the serfs were his property, bound to the soil as they were through lineage. Serfs who tilled the land had to pay tribute, while those who did not had to pay trespassing fee, buy the water they drank, the land their hut stood on, and the earth they were buried in when they died. A serf who shot an animal while hunting had to give half of the side of the carcass that touched the ground to the *zhaopianling*. All fish

* *Bolang* were agents of the *zhaopianling* and *zhaomeng* sent to oversee the local tribal chieftains. "Lang" means to bind with a rope.

caught in the rivers and streams that were worth eating had to be handed over to him, while worthless ones need not. Half of anything taken from the ground had to be surrendered to this head tribal chief. When a child died, it could not be buried as it had never paid tribute to the chief and therefore "had no soul". The little body could only be cast into the river to be carried away and become food for the fish.

The feudal *zhaopianling* took 14 per cent of the total land area as his private holdings and enfeoffed his agents with it as reward for services rendered. The serfs had to supply their own implements, seed and food, and work without pay on the land, the entire harvest going to them. The remaining 86 per cent of the land was divided up among the serfs, who paid rent to the lord for their allotment. The serfs were thus subjected to every manner of levy and onerous tax burden, in addition to corvée labour. This type of "land division" was like chains binding the serfs to the soil. If they were unable to pay the levies, they could be driven from the village and their "allotment" confiscated.

Aside from the serfs, who were the feudal lord's property, body and soul from the day of birth, there were in Xishuangbanna so-called "free peasants", or *zhaozhuang*, who comprised 5.7 per cent of the population. These had declined from the ranks of the nobility. Further complicating the social order, the feudal chiefs classified the serfs as *daimeng* and *gunbenzhuo*. *Daimeng*, which means "village founders", accounted for 55.3 per cent of the households and were the lord's main labour force. A certain period of corvée was demanded each year to till the agents' fiefs and the chieftains' holdings, also to build bridges, roads and other public works. The *gunbenzhuo*, the "servants of the master", accounted for 39 per cent of the households. They were domestic servants to the nobility and on the lowest rung of society. Among their duties were tending the nobles' horses and elephants, carrying his sedan-chairs, husking rice and gathering edible moss. The types of corvée service came to more than a hundred, each village being assigned duties that were handed down from father to son, mother to daughter. To keep the serfs under control the feudal lords had their soldiers, courts, and prisons perform horrifyingly cruel tortures. Flogging, cutting off ears, hands and breasts, branding, boiling in oil and beheading were not uncommon.

The Dai feudal lords were especially crushing in their rule over the mountain people. The *zhaopianling* divided the mountainous region

into twelve slave districts, giving each tribal chief a venerable title such as *balong*, *zhalong* etc. Then he sent his agents to oversee the *balong* and *zhalong*, forming a very tight control net. The KMT government and Yunnan warlords hand-in-glove with the rulers of the various nationalities indulged in merciless economic exploitation of their toiling masses. But the brutal repression inevitably led to resistance by the slaves. There were frequent uprisings against the ruling class in Xishuangbanna, a major insurrection taking place in 1942 and continuing for as long as a whole year.

The events stemmed from the Kuomintang of Cheli County dispatching an emissary to Jinuo Mountain to collect the "tobacco tax". He died on the way back. The reactionary government seized on this incident to accuse the mountain people of poisoning the tax collector. The KMT government officials got the wink of the Dai chiefs and sent soldiers to loot, burn and kill. The Jinuo people rose up and notified the villages of the Dai, Yao, Lahu, Aini and Han nationalities by urgent letter that their delegates should assemble on Jinuo Mountain. There they pledged in the blood of a slain ox to rally to the support of the Jinuo people. Yet they were outnumbered and the rising failed, though this heroic struggle won the minority people's admiration. The Dai sang in their praise: "The strongest animal in the forest is the rhinoceros, the bravest people on the mountain are the Jinuo!" Xishuangbanna's peasant uprisings hit and to various degrees shook the feudal rule. However, owing to the degradation of the peasants and unripe historical conditions, all of these uprisings were put down. A certain amount of social progress was achieved but the feudal economic relations and political system remained pretty much the same.

In June of 1949 a guerrilla unit and a work team led by the Chinese Communist Party went into this remote area talking about revolution and giving hope to the minority nationalities there. Many of their fine sons and daughters joined the guerrillas, while some of the upper class, forced by the imminent liberation, organized self-defence units against the Kuomintang, at the same time expressing their willingness to accept Communist Party leadership.

That same year, 1949, on October 1, the People's Republic was founded, writing a brand-new page in China's history. In February of 1950

Xishuangbanna was liberated, and the slaves in the old society became masters in the new. The dark old days had gone forever.

FOUNDING THE NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE

The founding of the People's Republic ushered in a new era in which China's various nationalities may live in mutual trust, co-operation and common development. The Constitution guarantees them equality and regional autonomy.

The Dai nationality is the majority among Xishuangbanna's minorities. As rulers, and in order to maintain their hold, they too incited dissension and national discord by pitting one minority against another. When Party policy was being carried out following the liberation, reactionary local chieftains stirred up trouble and created confusion, rumouring that "rocks cannot serve as pillows; we cannot make friends with the Hans." Some were taken in and either stayed indoors, their children crying in fear, or went up into the mountains and camped there. The work teams offered help with the farm work, but the people dared not accept, for would these people not demand cash and grain afterwards as pay? Even free medical treatment and interest-free loans were refused. Further, the people were forbidden by the reactionary chieftains to talk with the work teams without the chief's permission. Even in this situation the work teams persisted, respecting the customs of the minority nationalities, going into their stilt-houses and out into the mountain villages of the Aini and Bulang. They helped these deeply oppressed people by carrying water, husking rice, sweeping the yard and distributing relief supplies. They cut bamboo together with them in the mountains and joined in transplanting rice on the plains. The people soon saw that these Hans sent by the Party were quite different from their Kuomintang counterparts. These newcomers did not take so much as a needle or piece of thread from the people but helped in production and household chores. The people's feeling towards the work teams gradually changed. At first the Dai people gave the Han cadres derogatory names. They called the men "Han bigwigs", and the women "hags". Gradually these were replaced by "comrade", "elder sister", Old Zhang, etc., and some even gave the Han cadres Dai names. In Menghai an old woman in

coma from malaria had her fortune told by a "living Buddha": she would die within three days. Doomed, as she thought, she didn't know what to say when a doctor in the work team cured her. She had her children send a fine large marrow to the team, and herself took garlic to offer them to show her gratitude.

There were frequent tragic feuds in the past due to the reactionary ruling class' discrimination against the nationalities and their setting one against another. Now, they say: "We who have suffered are shoots from the same bamboo, but the dark old society made us mortal foes." In some places Dai landholders voluntarily made over their extra land to the mountain people to till, at the same time helping them with seed, oxen and implements. They taught them how to plant rice. All of this greatly impressed the mountain people, who declared their desire to progress alongside the Dai.

On January 23, 1953, the Prefectural Autonomous Government of Xishuangbanna was established, fulfilling the dream of the various nationalities. Their representatives said: "The founding of regional autonomy put an end to the history of our living as beasts of burden through the generations; it marks our becoming our own masters." That was a bright day in Yunjinghong, and the waters of the Lancang sparkled, as a grand ceremony was held to hail the event.

Twelve governing organs at county level were set up; the "advisory councils" of the feudal lords were smashed. Bans on the common people suing officials and opposing the *zhaopianling* were removed. Arbitrary fines were forbidden, as in fact were all the devices used by the nobles to keep the people in submission. The main leaders of the Autonomous Prefecture include Dai, Aini and Han nationalities. The Bulang, Lahu, Wa and Yao also have cadre representatives in the administrative work. When the People's Congress is held, the committee members of the various nationalities discuss state affairs and study major problems in building up a new socialist borderland. Han cadres help the minorities in political study, education and culture, and in handling their own and autonomous regional nationality affairs.

The region has the constitutional right to exercise self-government, and in consideration of the various nationalities' politics, economies and culture, there is regional autonomy over social reform and economic construction. Both the Dai and Han languages are operational. The

Prefecture has its own newspapers and broadcasting stations. It receives special financial grants from the central government for construction, and if income from certain enterprises does not meet costs the government again steps in to help. In some twenty years, government investment in the Prefecture has amounted to 38 million yuan. Of the region's products, 45 per cent are tax-free, while the tariff rate on the remaining items is lower than in most of China. The slaughter tax is not collected at festival times in minority areas.

Stress is placed on selecting and training minority cadres, and since the founding of the Prefecture the government has made a point of bringing into leading positions cadres of minority origin. In the early days of liberation, minority youths joined nationality work teams, gaining experience in practice. The government encouraged these teams to travel and study in other parts of the country.

In 1955, the Prefecture set up minority cadres schools as well as various political and cultural training classes at county level. Young people were sent group by group to nationalities colleges set up in Yunnan Province and in Beijing and to other branch schools, to raise their technical, political and cultural level.

In 1978 there were in the Prefecture 3,400 cadres of minority nationality, twenty times the number in 1953. In the nine-member leading body, seven are of minority nationality origin. More than 95 per cent of all agricultural brigade leaders in Xishuangbanna are of minority nationality. This stress on minority nationality cadres handling their own affairs is important in socialist revolution and construction.

4. VISITS TO THREE VILLAGES

The first village we visited was Manjinglan, near Yunjinghong, half an hour by car from our hotel.

A VILLAGE THAT KEEPS VIGIL AT A TRIBAL CHIEF'S GRAVE

Manjinglan, on the bank of the Lancang River, has 137 households of 700 people. It is a typical Dai nationality village of superb beauty.

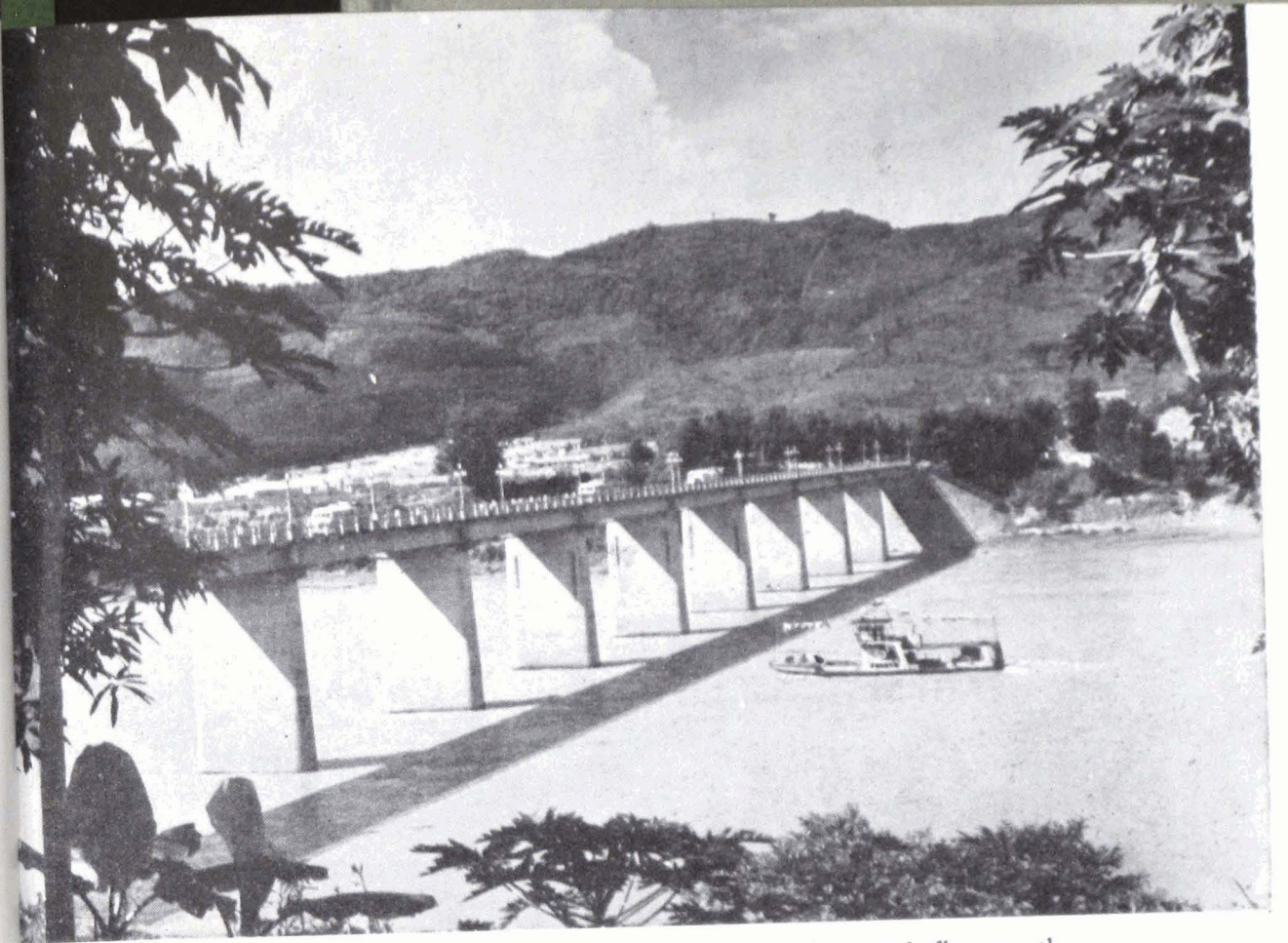
It was not always so. From olden days up until its liberation it was



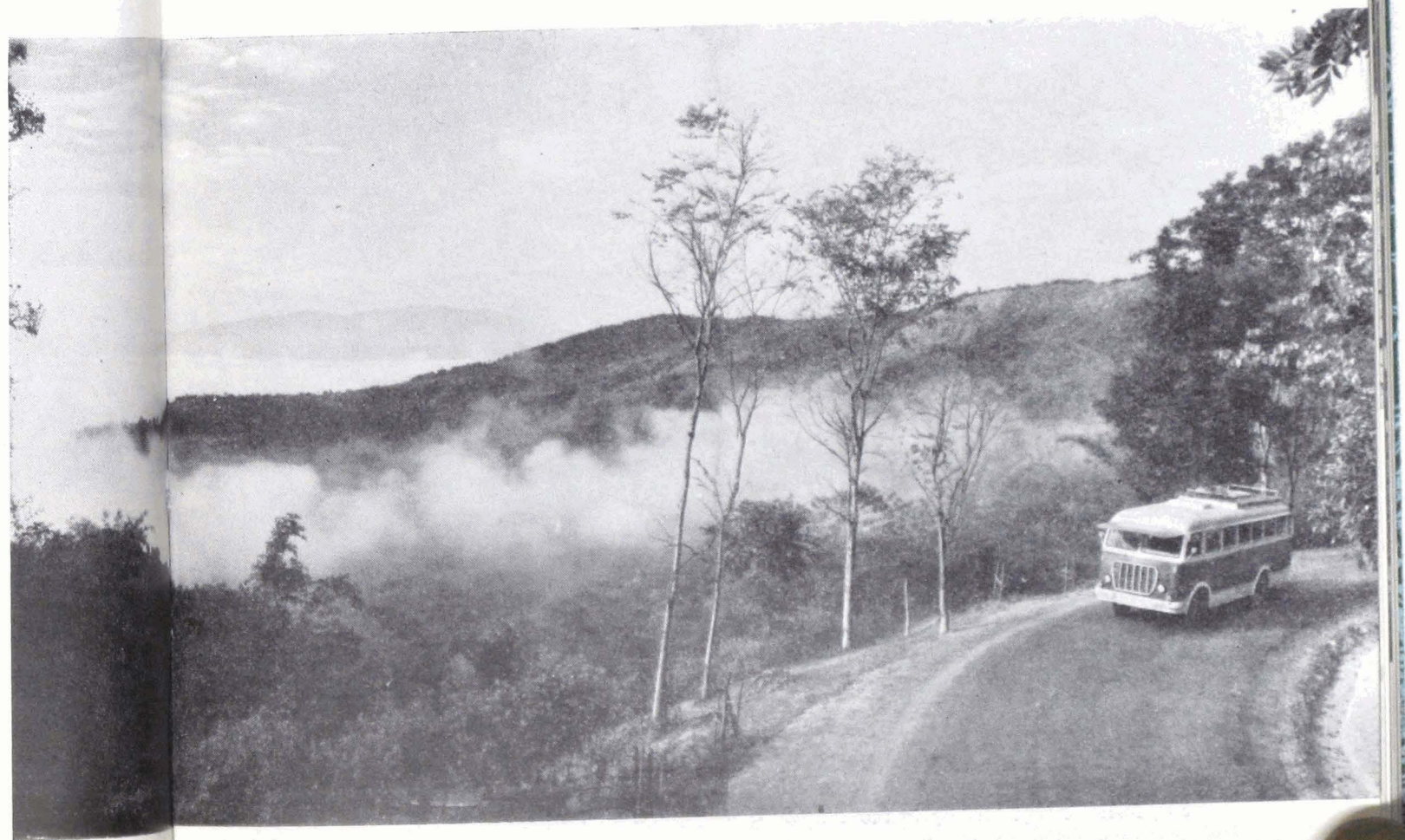
Two little Dai girls.



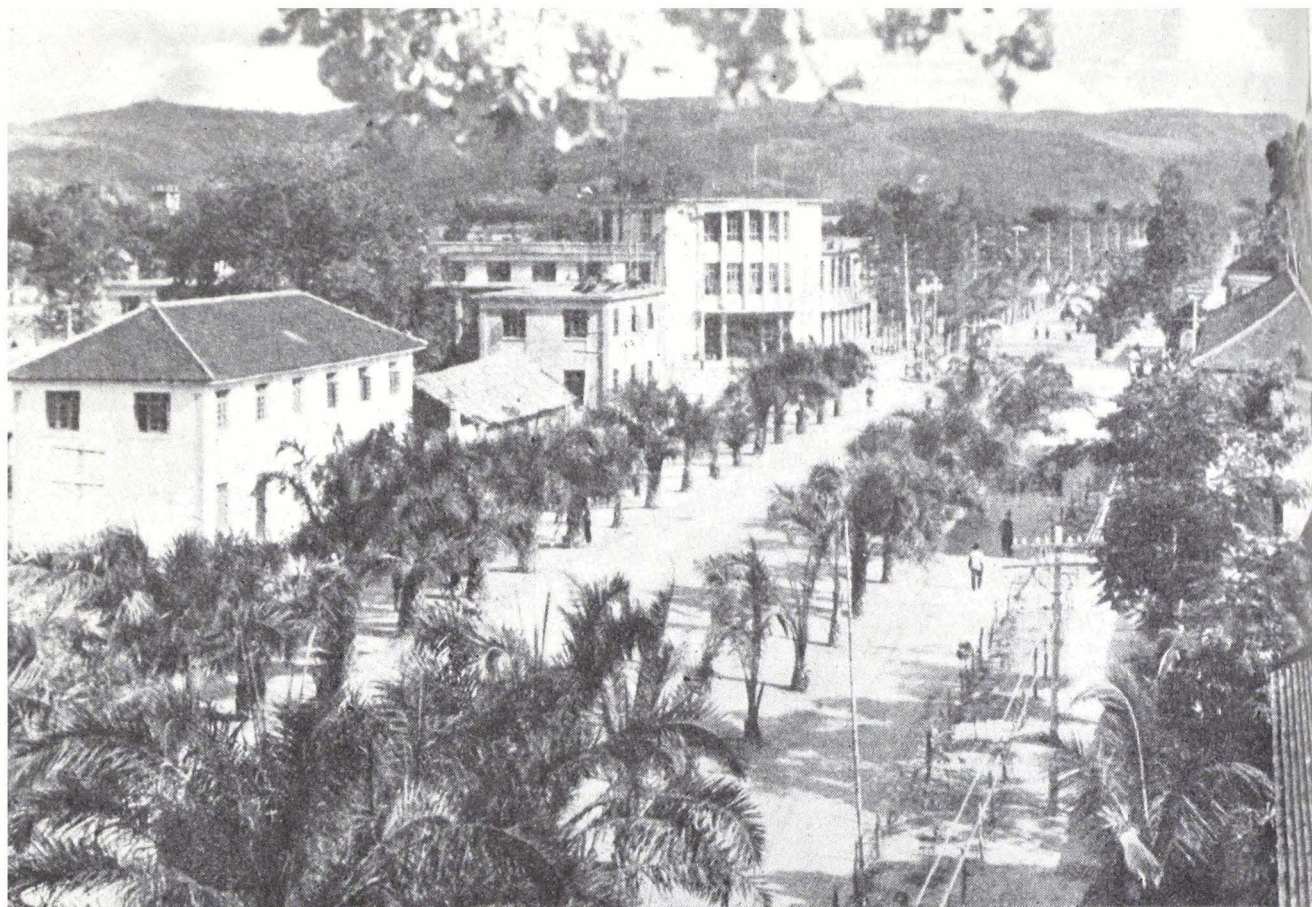
In a Dai village.



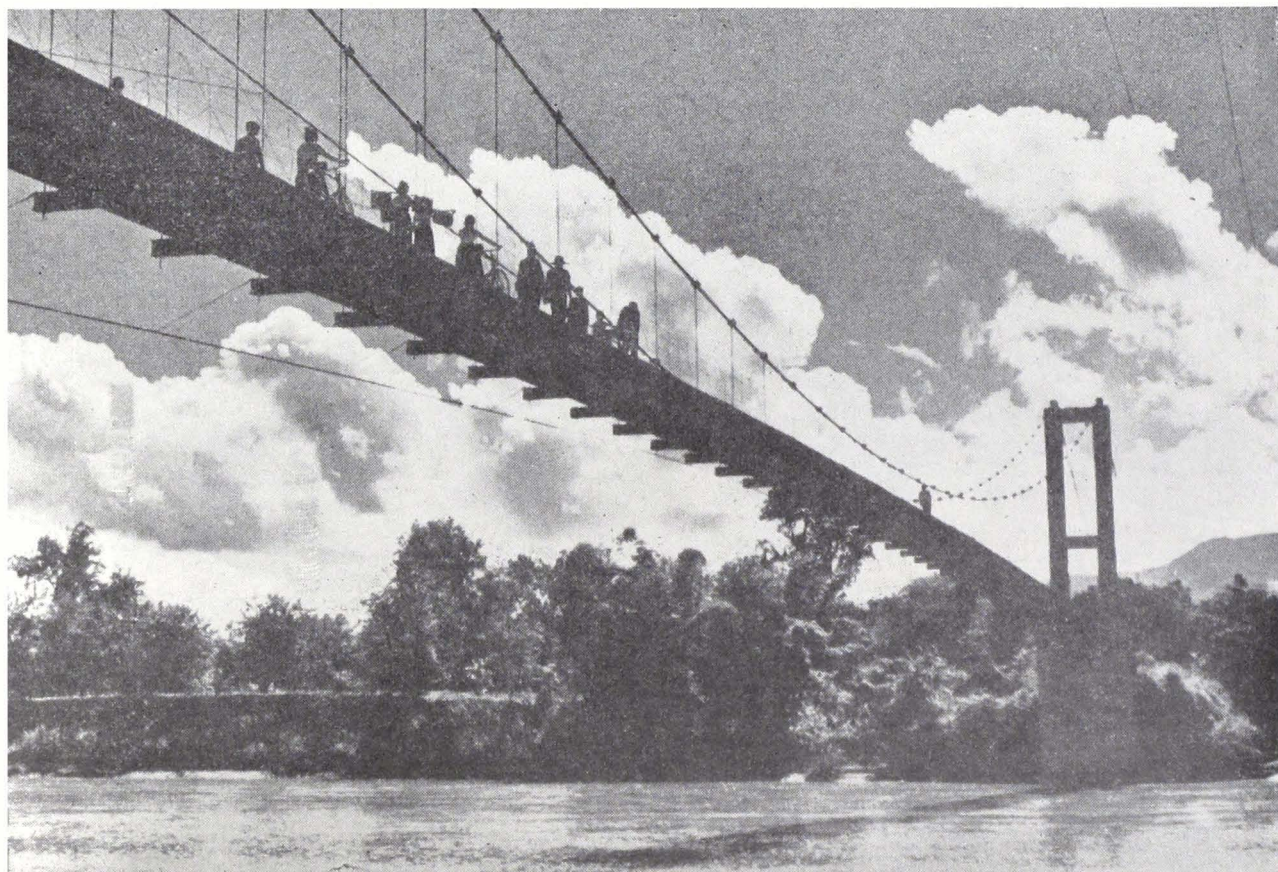
Bridge spanning the Lancang River, known as the Mekong as it flows south.



Roads like this link main cities and towns in Xishuangbanna.

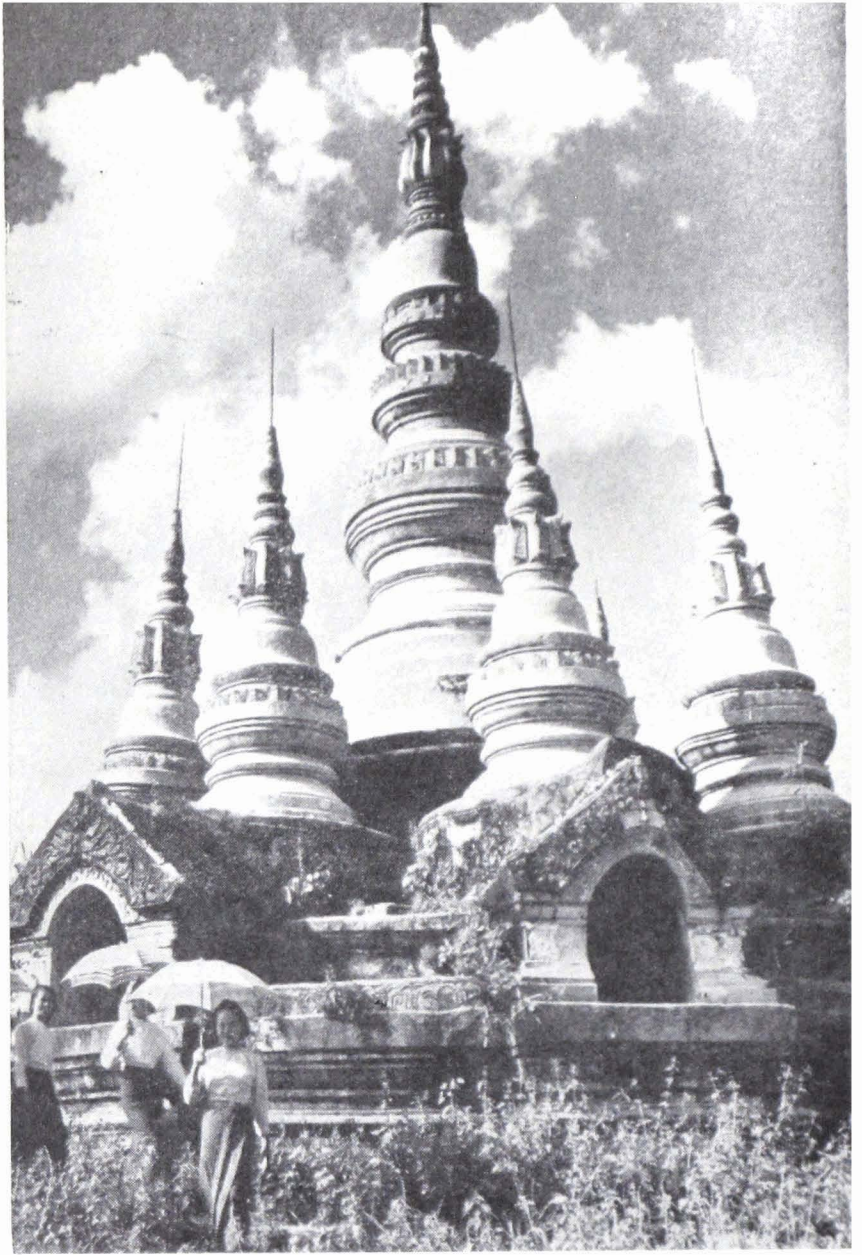


Yunjinghong, capital city of Xishuangbanna.



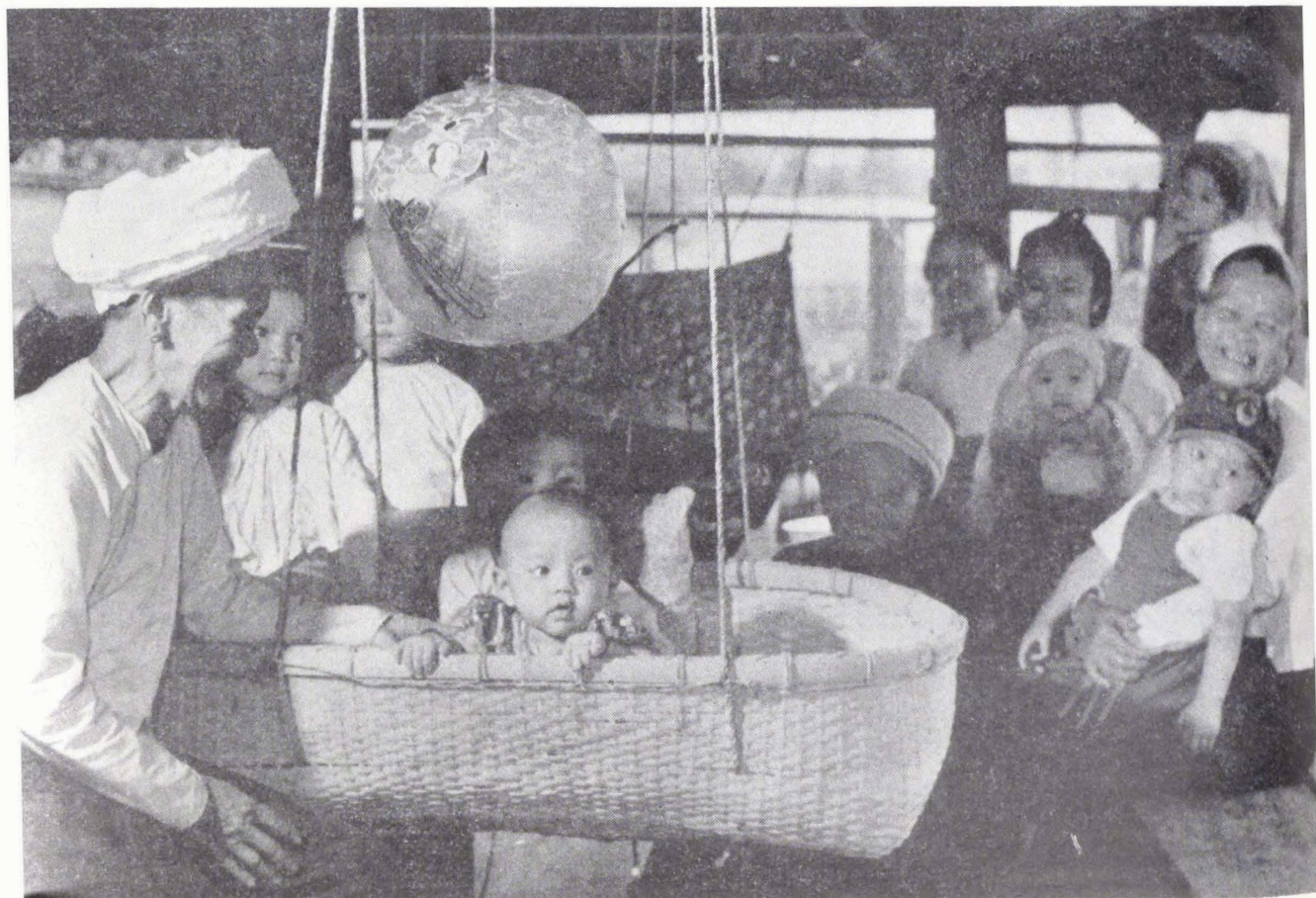
Suspension bridge leading to the Tropical Plants Research Institute.

Manfeilong Pagoda with stone peacock figures at the entrance, said to be more than 700 years old. Three such pagodas were built as separate tombs for the hair, bones and feet of Shixuemoni, chief Buddhist abbot at Xishuangbanna. Footprints said to be Shixuemoni's are visible in the caves of this pagoda, where his feet are believed to lie buried.





Sisters of the Jinuo nationality.



Grannies take over while mothers work in the fields.



A militiaman of the Hani nationality.



Charming smiles of young Dai lasses.

stifled and dark, as though a giant cauldron had been overturned on it. Manjinglan's history speaks volumes of Chinese minority labouring people's sufferings in the bitter past. It is said that long, long ago the area was densely wooded, and beyond the forest flowed the turbulent Lancang River. A local tribal chief, nephew of the *zhaopianling*, died and was buried here. And lest his soul be lonely the *zhaopianling* dispatched servants to keep vigil at his grave. The years wore on, and the descendants of the servants and refugees fleeing famine and fleeing by the nobles reclaimed the land and built homes on it. Manjinglan means "desolation" in Dai language.

Today this "desolation" has given way to natural richness which is being fully utilized. Before liberation, production was low. In this lushness there was but a single rice crop a year and the per-mu yield was only one to two hundred jin. Now the commune members had levelled 900 mu of small and irregular plots of land to facilitate mechanized ploughing, irrigation, drainage and transportation of the crop. They were using fertilizer and weeding the plots. Two crops were gained a year, and fine strains of rice popularized; production steadily increased. In 1978 the area was hit by a serious natural disaster, yet a yield of 1,000 jin per mu was reaped, and 650,000 jin sold to the state — exceeding the annual quota.

Rubber plantations, orchards and medicinal plant gardens covering 850 mu were opened. The annual income from bananas, plantain and mango amount to more than 20,000 yuan. Sugar cane, peanuts, cashew nuts and timber are all of major economic value, while ponds for ducks and fish provide subsidiary farm produce. The village also has food-processing plants and kilns earning collective funds. In 1965 there were only four horse-carts in the village, while now there are three standard and three walking tractors, as well as pumps, electric threshers, pedal huskers, seeders, corn hullers and rice polishers, altogether 27 types of machine. The village was proud too of its four tractor-drawn carts and implements, 120 hand carts and two electric flour-mills.

The material and cultural life of the people has steadily improved with the development of the collective economy. Before liberation there were only two tile-roof houses in the village. In 1958, four-fifths of the families lived in new houses. Most families have bicycles, radios,

watches and sewing machines. Every household has grain in reserve and money in the bank. The production brigade maintains a school. At a clinic convenient for the commune members co-operative medicine is practised.

After liberation the village changed radically. Recalling the bad old days, the peasants say with deep feeling, "Without the bright sunshine the lotus flowers could not bloom and without the golden bridge of socialism, how could we step from hell into heaven?"

We visited in the home a family whose name was Yannuo. The father worked in the production brigade broadcasting station. Their home was the characteristic Dai style stilt-house with a small garden and tropical fruit trees in front. Ascending onto the spacious veranda where laundry was drying, we saw the buckets and basins that had been used. On the floor in the middle of the main room was a tripod under which a fire burned — the Dai "stove". Next to the main hall was the sleeping room with mattresses on the floor — simple but elegant, clean and comfortable.

Yannuo offered us papaya, sugar cane and bananas, saying that in October 1974 Lois Wheeler Snow and her daughter had stayed overnight in their home. "Mrs. Snow and her daughter slept there in the Dai way. They also ate glutinous rice with us." On the wall hung a picture of the family taken together with their American guests.

Yannuo told us about his work of broadcasting in both the Dai and Han languages, though most of the programmes were in Dai, he said.

We were interested in the house and asked him whether it belonged to the family or the collective. He replied that he had built it himself in 1972 at a cost of 800 yuan, the timber being supplied free of charge by the production brigade, which also contributed some of the labour. Built on 24 stilts, it was open on all sides. Bicycles, poultry and farm implements were all kept under the house, a place such as only a chieftain could live in before liberation. Now there were many dwellings like it. In fact, 120 of the 137 households live in such houses. All are in the same style, shaded by coconut, betel, mango or banana trees and surrounded by a variety of exotic flowers. Former slaves and their sons and daughters have now become their own masters and no longer "keep vigil" at the grave of the *zhaopianling*'s nephew.

"DEVILS' VILLAGE"

The next village we visited was Manhui of Menghan Commune, situated in a narrow valley surrounded by wooded hills east of Olive Plain. Rivulet gulch originating from White Sand River runs the length of the village. On its north and south banks are rows of tile-roof houses, while around the valley are green paddy-fields. On the slopes tea gardens and rubber trees form forests. Pineapples, bananas and tangerines are all profuse. Young voices ring from the primary school, tots' laughter tinkles from the kindergarten. The village teems with chickens and ducks, fish ponds ripple with fish. Motors hum from the pump and rice husking shed. . . .

Who could imagine that this flourishing new border village was before liberation a dreadful "*pipa* devils' village"!

Xishuangbanna is a natural breeding ground for mosquitoes. In the old days malaria was endemic. The people called it a "miasma". The sick who muttered in their delirium were accused of being possessed by "*pipa* devils", and many a poor peasant had his patch of land confiscated and was burnt at the stake or driven from the village. High mountains and deep forests were the only refuge for those driven out, and as their numbers increased these "*pipa* devils" built a dozen or so villages called by the feudal chieftains "*pipa* devils' villages".

Sixty years ago the Manhui site was a small wooded valley where tigers and leopards roamed, with no sign of human habitation. In time "*pipa* devils" arrived in this inhospitable place from Jinghong, Mengla and Jiangcheng counties, living in the open at first and clearing the land. Manhui means simply "village in a valley".

With every inch of land and all water belonging to the *zhaopianling*, it was forbidden even to blaze a trail. The valley dwellers became the chief's *ka*, or slaves. Corvée was demanded for bamboo fence-building, gathering fodder for the chief's horses, carrying water, gathering and splitting firewood. . . .

When at year's end the slaves had paid all the rent and levies imposed on them, what they had left would sustain them for at most two to three months. After that they subsisted on grass and olive-tree bark. They wove reed mats and gathered firewood for sale besides performing services to eke out their living. Only two families, those of the chiefs Ba

and Zha, were shod, and only their women had headgear. Many went naked, or at best shared a pair of trousers with others. In famine years people fled, starving and dying as wanderers.

Team leader Bo Yuguang was born in Guanglei Village in Mengpeng District of Mengla County. His parents, castigated by the chiefs as "*pipa* devils", carried him as a baby to the forest by the Lancang River where they existed more like animals than humans. Even so, when the chief heard that they were on his domain, he sent men to kill them, angering his mother so that she drove the assailants off with a hunting gun. The family escaped to the doubtful refuge of Manhui Village, never free from hunger and cold, and there the parents died in bitter hatred of the chief.

The mother of Mitaomifei, a former resident of Jinghong, was named a "*pipa* devil" for being unable to pay the household tax. Mother and daughter wandered for three years to eight villages before finally settling in Manhui.

The day came at last when the long-suffering people could straighten their backs and live in freedom. Xishuangbanna was liberated in 1950. "*Pipa* devils" became masters of the new society and could work with heads high, speak and laugh out, go where they wished. From the bottom rung of society, they were now eager for socialism. The team leader told us that since 1973 the grain yield per mu exceeded 800 jin. In 1974 Manhui Village suffered from heavy frost and 97 per cent of the rice seedlings froze. Undaunted, the people replanted the entire crop and won a good harvest, so that the food grain output reached 380,000 jin, nine times the 1950 yield. Not only was grain production raised, but 1,020 mu were planted to tea, rubber and fruit trees. Eleven ponds were dug for fish breeding, brick and lime kilns were built. In 1978 the income from side-lines amounted to 26,000 yuan.

Formerly there was only one hatchet in each family, and this had to be passed around for every chore. There were tractors now, and generators, pumps, rice huskers and threshers, besides seeders and tea-processing machinery, rubber-tyred carts and an assortment of implements. Of the 66 families, 95 per cent live in new tile-roof houses. The abiding lesson of visiting the Manhui Village was of the old society changing men into "devils" and the new changing "devils" back into men.

A NATIONALITY ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION

The smallest nationality of Xishuangbanna, the Kucong, was dying out on the eve of liberation. Discovered by People's Government cadres to be living a subhuman existence in the deep forest of Mengla County on the southern Yunnan border, they had fled from the banks of the Hongho River to escape the centuries-long plunder of the ruling classes.

We visited two Kucong villages in a narrow valley of the Moxie Mountains in Mengla County at Xishuangbanna's southeastern tip. On the way, a local comrade named Yang told us something of the bitter life of the people before liberation. The Kucong cultivated the land by the traditional "slash and burn" method, and the sole crop was maize. To clear the brush, only three hatchets were available in the whole village. Each spring the village clan chief led his people in planting. The land cleared and burnt over, a hole was made in the ground with a stick and a seed dropped in. Autumn harvest provided for each person for the year 200 to 300 jin of grain, to be supplemented by yams, wild fruit and grasses, and any animals and birds that could be caught. Dwellings were of bamboo roofed over with plantain leaves and fenced in with tree branches. When the plantain leaves withered, the occupants picked up their hatchets, crossbows and the village's single hunting gun and moved on to a place where the "slash and burn" process was repeated. Their clothing was plantain leaves, in which also they wrapped their babes. Without cooking pots, they used sections of bamboo. At night they warded off the cold by a bonfire, the fire being carefully preserved, as it was indispensable to their life. While hunters and gatherers were out seeking food, someone always had to stay behind to keep the fire alive. And when the village moved, the fire went with it, having to be protected from rain by human bodies. A hatchet, clothes, salt — every such item was obtainable only by barter outside the village. But in their nakedness the Kucong dared not go out, so they placed their rattan, animal hides and meat by the wayside and hid in the bushes waiting for a prospective barterer. Then they would call out: "Take these. Leave in exchange clothes and salt." Only when the takers were far away would the Kucongs emerge from the bushes and collect whatever had been left for them. Pitifully little. But even this the feudal lords would not allow. After autumn harvest they sent their

men into the mountains to simply plunder the grain. Many of the Kucong died, not just from starvation, but attacked also by wild animals and disease. Between 1947 and 1949 alone, a third of the village population succumbed. Ten families were wiped out entirely.

In 1950 the People's Government sent a nationalities work team with draught animals, grain, salt, mosquito nets, hoes, household utensils and medicines. They spent six years combing the high Moxie range for the Kucong and persuading them to come down. In 1957 they helped to build six villages in the foothills; in 1958 they assisted in setting up mutual-aid teams and then followed by co-operatives. The Kucong began also to use ploughs and iron barrows, so that production steadily increased and their life greatly improved. Yet there were those who said the Kucong people were too primitive for co-operation, that each should work on his own. The result was that some were forced back up into the mountains to exist as before. In 1965 the People's Government again led the Kucong people down from the hills and established the present two villages. In 1966 co-ops were re-established, and in 1969 when Xishuangbanna went co-operative, the two Kucong villages became "The East Is Red" and "Forward" production teams of Shangyong People's Commune.

Our visit was to "The East Is Red". Setting out from Mengla county town, we followed the narrow and tortuous mountain road for two hours, passing through Yao and Dai villages, which are distinguishable by the gates of each displaying typical national characteristics. These gates were closed, and we had to stop to open and close them, also at times to cross over bamboo troughs in the road. These latter had been installed by peasants to lead water from springs onto the dry foot hills below.

"The East Is Red" had 47 households. A basketball court was being used to sun grain. The dwellings were all thatched and board-walled houses, different from the Dai. There was a primary school and also a hydropower station, rice-husking mill, and a clinic. All the buildings were plain and simply equipped. But compared with the life of the Kucong people in the mountains before there was already a world of difference. Housing, clothing, schooling, and sufficient food grain made considerable improvement to the lives of the Dai.

At our approach in motor vehicles the village children gathered round.

The production team accountant, Yang Guangze, invited us to his home, and again the place was besieged. Two of the village elders welcomed us there with open, friendly smiles. They told us how by co-operative effort 130 mu of fertile brushland by the River Nanwai was yielding crops. The Kucong people, who had never seen an ox, learned from the Han and Dai how to plough and plant rice. In 1967 their total grain yield reached 70,500 kg., and they sold grain to the state for the first time — 14,000 kg. of it. Though not much, it showed the feeling of this small nationality for the new society, and was a pledge to contribute more when they had it to socialist construction. In the decade 1967-77 their total sales of grain to the state amounted to 250,000 kilogrammes, and they also planted 20 mu to tea and fruit. In this dense woods no livestock had ever been kept, but after co-operation the state sent in three head. Now they had over 70 head of livestock including oxen and horses, besides 300 pigs.

Bai Yuzhen, the accountant's wife in her national costume of white bodice and long print skirt, graciously brewed tea for us from local spring water. She was a teacher in the village school. She smiled at our questions about education and medical care, saying that her people had been totally illiterate and counted by cutting notches in bamboo. Now every child of school age was receiving an education. The poor and sick in the old society could depend only on witch doctors, ignorance and superstition, and the death rate was appalling. The clinic today had three paramedics. From a population of 270 in 1966 it had grown to 399 in 1978.

At noon we were served a meal on a low rattan table. The food was typical: venison and bamboo shoots with the typical bitterness of tropical bamboo. Though the Kucong people had settled down to an agricultural life, they still hunted. Our host told us that if we stayed for any length of time we would surely taste the meat of such forest animals as wild boar. And, according to Kucong custom, we should also take some away with us, for even wayfarers share in all game, along with every villager.

Besides the accountant's wife, there were his parents and four brothers and sisters — eight in all. One served in the People's Liberation Army, one worked in the brigade tea-processing plant, and the two youngest were in secondary and primary school. The family did not lack for

food and had money in the bank. In comparing their life with the past the accountant quipped that his mother used to wear "diqeliang" (drip-dry). Embarrassed, she explained: "He means plantain leaves. They were our 'drip-dry'. The richest might by chance marry in a tiger skin skirt. My father wanted to give me a tiger skin, but he had no gun. So I married in a plantain-leaf skirt."

In the short space of 20 years historic change had occurred in the life of the Kucong people. A leap of centuries was made in two decades — from leaves for clothing to fine white muslin and attractive prints; from huddling around a bonfire to the warmth and comfort of housing that truly shelters and has plenty of good bedding.

5. MAKING A START

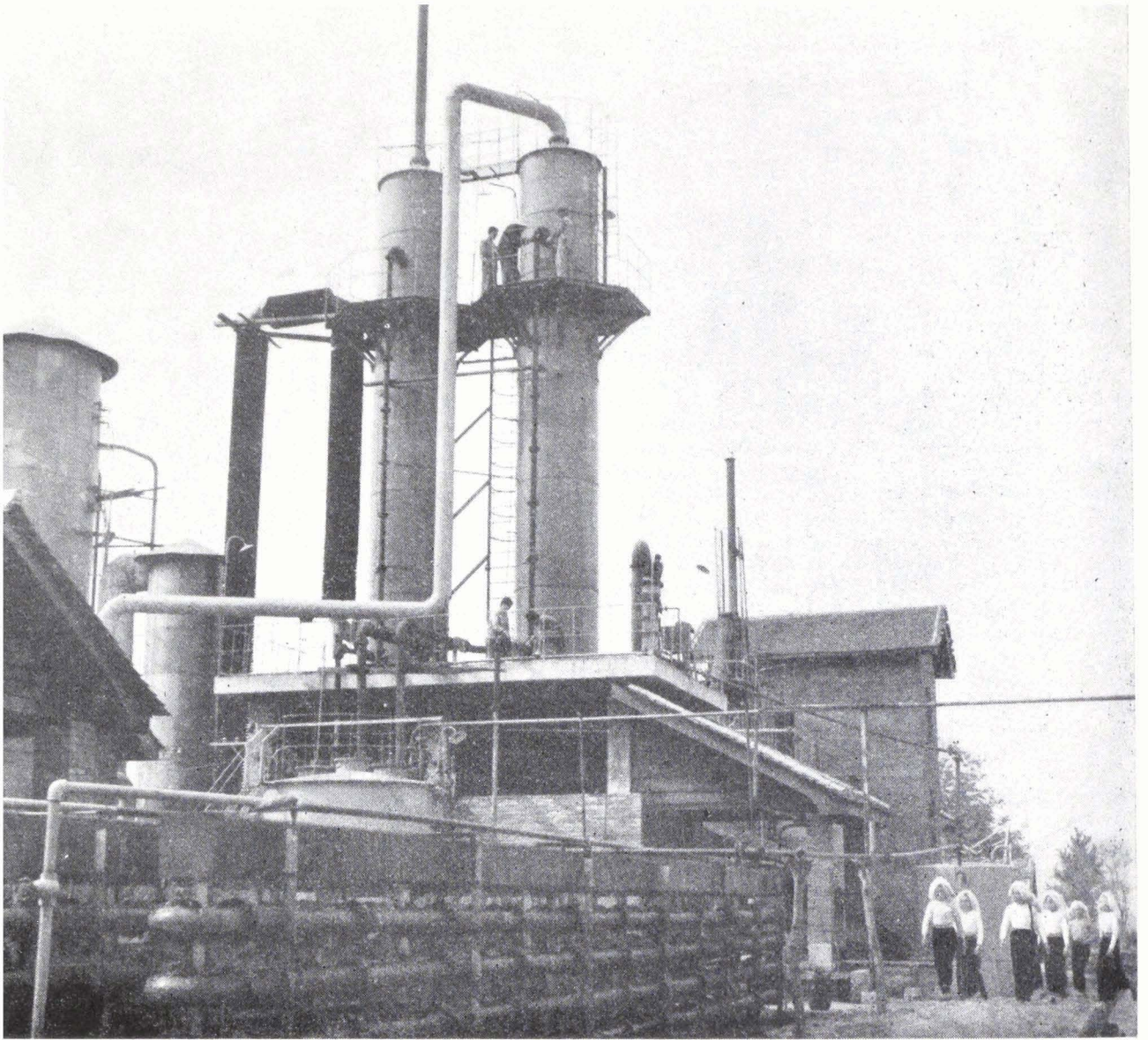
The poverty and primitiveness of Xishuangbanna, apart from political causes, has been due to inaccessibility. No roads, no electricity, no modern industry was the situation before liberation. Though the change has been great, this region is still backward compared with other parts of the country, and the People's Government is doing much to help bridge the gap.

ROADS TO REMOTE VILLAGES

The cadre in charge of transport in the region quoted an old saying in Xishuangbanna: "People don't cross the river, and horses go unshod." In other words, neither people nor horses travelled far. We had come to a place that was totally inaccessible before liberation. The 20,000 sq. km. of land had no road of any kind. A few narrow winding footpaths and animal trails were all there were, and the nationalities were isolated. The Kuomintang squeezed the people for road building, but the money only lined the officials' pockets. The journey from Jinghong to Kunming took 25 days to a month, and such items as salt, cloth, hoes, needles and matches, if they reached Jinghong at all were extremely costly. Extortionists would demand a chicken for one sewing needle, while a box of matches would fetch a piglet. Ten jin of tea had to be given for one

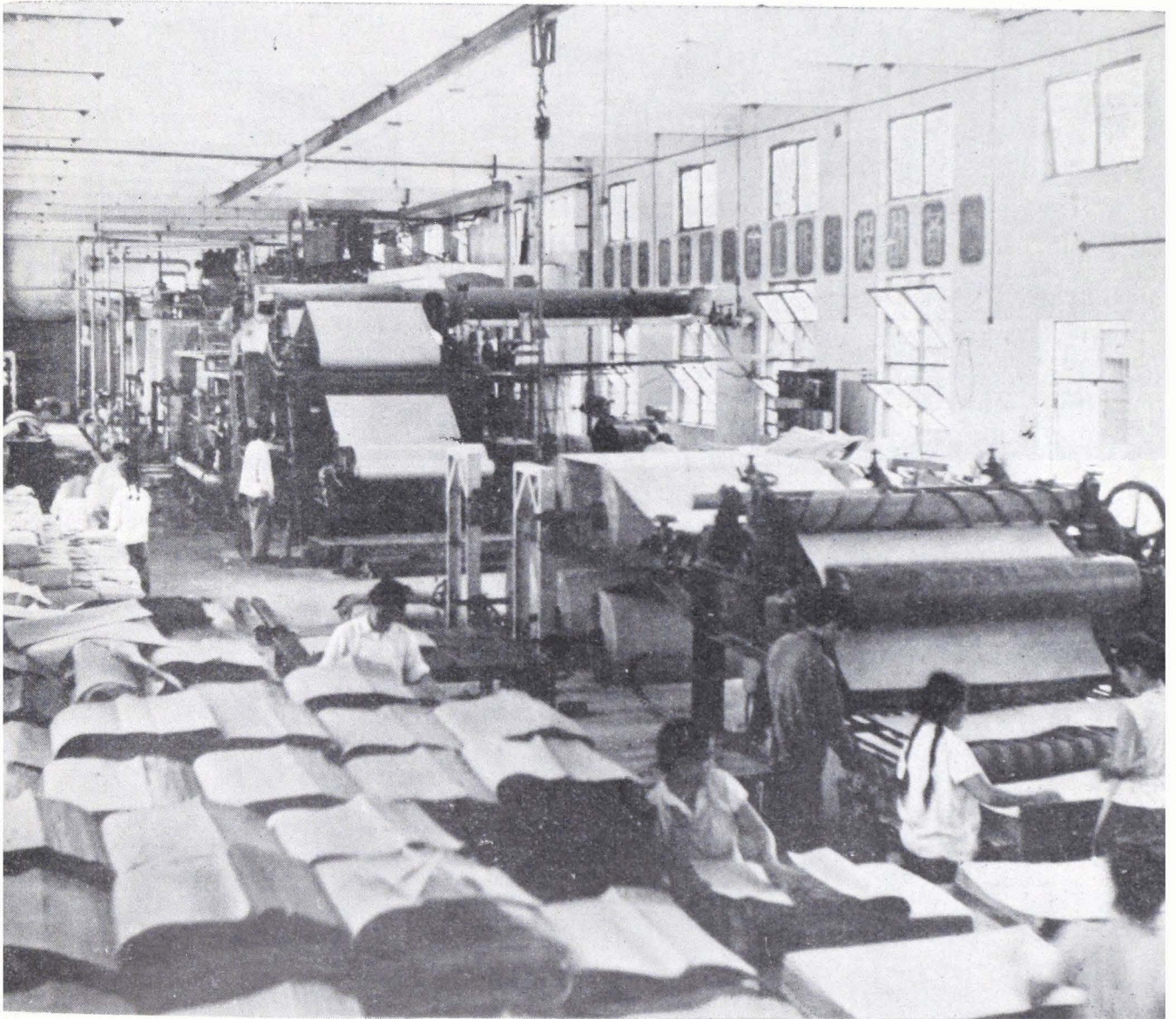


Jinuo nationality commune
members terrace their hills.



A chemical fertilizer plant in the region.

Paper produced in Xishuangbanna
from abundant forest resources.



Morning sun filters into a Xi-shuangbanna rubber plantation.





Breadfruit grows large
in the locality.





Geese do well too.

Harvesting bananas at
Manjinlan production team.

Sugarcane (*rear*) grows
high in Xishuangbanna.



A cloth designer takes a poll of locally favoured patterns

Bags and belts are popular minority nationality items.



jin of salt. Even salt water contained in sections of bamboo was exchangeable for half its volume of white rice. And this was on the plains. In the mountains the people could afford none of these items and were compelled to live entirely off nature.

Soon after liberation horse trails were cleared so that goods could be carried to the people. In 1957 the People's Government sent road-building crews into the area, and they built roads from Kunming southwest to Daluo near the Burma border and from Mengyang southeast to Mengla. These roads became the main arteries of communication to the area's extremities, bringing Kunming and Jinghong within four days of each other by bus.

Apart from roads built directly by the state, the people received state aid to build eight local roads. These include the ones from Jinghong to Menglong, Jinghong to Olive Plain, and from Mengla to Mengman. With Yunjinghong as centre, all fan out over the region. By 1978 there were in all 25 main roads totalling 2,131 km. All communes, 71 per cent of the brigades and 58 per cent of the production teams have motor communication. This speedy development furthers economic and cultural exchange between the border areas and other parts of the country as well as between the cities and the countryside. The living standard of the various nationalities has risen, production increased, and various construction projects have been undertaken.

With the development of transport a great many local drivers have been trained. When the first truck came into the mountains where the Aini dwell, the local people were excited. The event was big news, and old and young gathered round, unable to tear themselves away from the "giant iron horse". No longer a curiosity, these "giant iron horses" with their Aini drivers have become an important force in transport.

The Lancang River as it flows through Xishuangbanna used to be dangerous for boats on account of hidden shoals and boulders, while its narrows were rapids. Before liberation it claimed the lives of countless people who attempted to cross, and all efforts by the people to transform the river in those old days were wasted. The river was improved only after liberation.

In 1965 the People's Government organized a Lancang River control team to rechannel its flow. News of this was greeted with the people's smiles and they gladly invited the team to live in their homes, welcoming

them with baskets of rice and fresh vegetables. After working in the fields the commune members joined them in drilling blast holes, dredging, and removing stones.

Seven years' work was rewarded by the river being widened and straightened, with 60 treacherous shoals removed. Its bed was deepened by one metre to make it one of China's navigable rivers. The passenger steamers *Jinghong No. 1* and *Dongfeng* built locally now make regular and safe voyages up and down the Lancang.

"WE CAN MAKE MACHINES"

For Xishuangbanna these words are significant, for before liberation only the crafts of cloth dyeing, wine distilling, iron forging and silver working were practised as family cottage industry in the area. And these were not yet separated from tilling. Productivity was low and the products crude. Blacksmiths made only hatchet heads and could not supply even the tripods needed to support the families' cooking pots, while ploughs, ploughshares and hoes had all to be brought in on ox-back or carried in by merchants. For the Aini, Bulang and Yao peoples living in the mountains the cook stove was piled-up stones; gourds and bamboo sections served as bowls and scoops.

Industry developed after liberation. In 1950 the People's Government rebuilt the Menghai tea-processing factory and also the Mengla salt works. Since the Autonomous Prefecture was founded in 1953 more than 180 factories, mines and enterprises have been set up, turning out machines, fertilizer, paper, sugar, medicine, rubber and shoes, generating electricity and repairing tractors. Production brigades process their own products. More than 20 types of agricultural machines including rice huskers, fodder grinders, threshers and generators are manufactured locally according to specifications.

We went to the Autonomous Prefecture's Jingde Agricultural Implements and Repair Plant. It had been built in 1954, starting out with 19 workers in a three-room thatched house and making use of an old lathe left behind by the Kuomintang when they fled. In time the plant bought a 32-kw generator which powered the plant and supplied enough electricity to light Yunjinghong. Ploughshares and hatchet heads were

produced for farming, and with government assistance the plant grew to one of 200 workers. Products in 1978 included walking tractors and trucks, tractor parts, generators, turbo-pumps, turbines and rice huskers. Paper making has become a major industry, with raw materials at hand which were formerly burned or otherwise wasted, such as bamboo, reeds, rice straw and sugar-cane residue. Before liberation only a small quantity of *mian** paper was made, and this by hand. None of the people's literary treasury of poems, ballads, stories, folk tales and fables were written down. Buddhist scriptures, laws and a very few literary works had been recorded on palm leaves and handed down. In 1958 the People's Government began building paper mills in Jinghong and Mengla. Writing paper was now available, and even a heavy type for bagging chemical fertilizer.

With the flourishing of local industry a growing number of minority nationality workers and technicians have been trained. One-third of the workers in the Menghai County agricultural implements repair plant are minority nationals. Illiterate to the point of being unable even to recognize their own names, they were taught to read and write in literacy classes. Technical training was also given, and visits were arranged to other parts of the country to gain from others' experience.

Xie Xuexin, a new worker of the Lahu nationality, reached a high level after studying in Jiangxi Province where he learned to design and make simple machines. Da Mula of the Jinuo nationality, like his father and forefathers before him, did not know a single written word and relied on notching a tree or tying knots to count. He had never seen a machine before entering the Jinghong agricultural implements plant, and he became frightened at the sound of a steam hammer. Then he thought to himself: I'm one of the first Jinuo workers. My people expect me to become a competent worker and I can't let them down. He studied hard, mastered forging technique and the use of the steam hammer, and in time was promoted to be deputy head of the plant.

The various nationalities are proud and happy to have machines built by themselves, workers who once gathered firewood and wild grass with their bare hands. They call these new workers "golden peacocks** come down from the mountains".

* A kind of white, fine tissue paper.

** Symbol of the Dai nationality.

“STARS” LIGHT UP STILT HOUSES

Nightfall in most of Xishuangbanna before liberation meant total darkness in which tigers, leopards and wolves roamed. Even in the capital, Yunjinghong, there were precious few lights in the streets. Burning pine twigs was the only source of light for the minority people in the area. The fat from the occasional old bear they might hunt down generally went to light the tribal chief's house. So people used to look up into the sky and sigh: If the stars could come down and give us light, how wonderful that would be!

In 1955 rows of poles appeared on the streets of Yunjinghong. From them were suspended “pearls (electric bulbs)”. When they suddenly shone at night the people shouted for joy and could scarcely tear themselves away from the sight. Their thoughts turned to having electric light in their own stilt houses.

In 1958 the people of Xishuangbanna began the task of exploiting the Liusha River's power potential. Two medium-sized hydroelectric stations were built: the Liusha River station with an output of 3,000 kw and the Binfang station capable of 4,500 kw. The electricity went to various Jinghong and Menghai factories as well as into village homes. The development of industry speeded the setting up of small hydroelectric stations throughout the rural areas of Xishuangbanna, making full use of local water resources, and by 1978 the region had 160-odd such stations with an energy capacity of 2,170 kw, or three times the 1965 figure. All communes, nearly half the production brigades and 39 per cent of the teams including border villages had electricity. Electric rice huskers, saws, tea-processing machines and threshers now save a lot of labour.

In 1970, Dai and Lahu nationality Menga commune members on the Nanlang River in Menghai County worked together with their Han compatriots to build a hydroelectric station of 160 kw in three years. When the project was completed, the people of the several nationalities celebrated the event with singing and dancing. A commune member of the Lahu nationality sang:

The bamboo in the mountains is joined at the root,
The Lahu and Dai are joined in heart.
Nanlang River water becomes lamp oil,

Miles of wire the wick
To light remote forest fastnesses
And the inner recesses of our lives.

Three production brigades and a farm of Menga Commune now used electricity from this station; 60 production teams had powered rice huskers. Nanlang River Production Brigade built a workshop with four tea-processing machines. Power has improved the life of the people living along the Nanlang River and spurred agricultural production. In 1974 the commune there produced 22 million jin of grain or six times the 1965 yield.

Bulangshan Commune of Menghai County is 130 kilometres from Yunjinghong and 80 kilometres from Menghai town. The place is mountainous, reaching 2,000 metres above sea level, and inhabited by the Bulang, Aini and Lahu nationalities. With the development of small-sized hydroelectric stations in the locality, the commune had by 1978 built 19 hydroelectric stations and 1 thermo-power station in addition to 17 rice huskers, 8 fodder-grinding machines, 9 powered threshers and 2 tea-processing machines. This equipment saved 300 man-days in labour a year and put electric lights into Bulang and Aini homes to replace pine twigs.

6. HOW THE AREA GOT RID OF MALARIA

Before liberation it was said: "If you're going to Chefonan,* better buy your coffin first; if you're going to the Menghai Plain, better free your wife." Before liberation, people paled at the mention of having to go there. In 1949 half of the population were found to be seriously infected with malaria.

To learn how malaria had been controlled, we visited the Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture Hospital and put our questions to its assistant superintendent, a middle-aged woman who had gone to Xishuangbanna from Sichuan in 1950 with a medical team. If not for her slight Sichuan accent we would have thought that she was native to the region, so deeply was she obviously involved in the local anti-malaria work. This is in brief what she told us.

* The present Jinghong, Menghai and Mengzhe.

SAD TO THINK BACK ON

“Evil vapour” was what the people called the malaria that sickened them and made them die. It was mosquito territory, and malaria was endemic, especially in the low-lying plains. And, for the exploited and oppressed labouring people there was nowhere to go for cure. Whole villages were wiped out.

Mengwang Plain once had 20 villages with 10,000 people. A spread of malaria in 1929 took a heavy toll, and 1949 found the plain with only six villages left. Crops were abandoned, and people fled into the mountains.

The old Xishuangbanna had only a few private clinics to serve Kuomintang army officers and officials. To these, local tribal chiefs and headmen were also admitted. The labouring people had no way out but to resign themselves to “fate”. Burdened with superstition and ignorance by the reactionary and ruling classes, the sick made sacrifices in the temples to obtain “Buddha water” or witch doctors’ incantations. Utilizing the superstition imposed by themselves, the reactionaries bled the poor and sick white. The landlord Zhao Guochuan demanded 400 jin of corn and a 160-jin hog from the poor peasant Fan Xuezhong, Stricken with malaria, for sending him a doctor. Often a whole family was ruined. One woman too poor to see a doctor accepted six pills of atabrine from a Kuomintang army officer who exacted payment by violating her.

MALARIA UNDER CONTROL

In 1951 the People’s Government organized mobile medical teams from Beijing, in addition to the earlier anti-epidemic team from Sichuan Province, to work with local medical personnel in stamping out disease. All treatment was free of charge. Tramping through malaria-infested territory, these medical workers taught hygiene and public sanitation to counter old superstitions. They cleaned out breeding places of mosquitoes, cleared away rubbish, filled in cesspools and built lavatories. Old, unsanitary habits would have to go. Sanitation workers went from house to house with medical kits carrying out preventive measures and

giving advice while treating the sick. Medical and sanitation work has continued to receive priority in the area.

The battle against superstition has not been easy. At harvest time in 1951 malaria was especially severe, and some dozen people of Mannamen Village on the Menghai Plain died. The rumour spread that only the vermilion seal of the county head could exorcize the malaria-causing demons, so the seal of authority was demanded and medical treatment rejected. Very sick patients were, however, persuaded to accept medical treatment and were soon well. When it was clear that the "devils" were in fact "exorcized" by the doctors with their medicine, those who had been cured warmly invited the doctors into their homes. As the people's confidence was gained, superstition fell away and the village was soon free of malaria.

As late as in 1953 a Dai woman named Yihanmu hai of Menghai County was stigmatized as a "*pipa* devil" when she was in coma from high fever. She was dragged into the street and the village headman told the people to flog her. The doctor came and found her to be suffering from malaria, gave her treatment, and the headman's attempt to kill the woman was exposed. When word got around that the Communists had saved a person branded as a "*pipa* devil", people drew near to her. "The Communist Party has given Yihanmu hai a second life!" they said.

The site of the present Menghai Commune in Menghai County had the highest malaria rate of all, with an incidence above 90 per cent of which 50 to 60 per cent were acute. The post-liberation Yunnan provincial government established an anti-malaria station in this spot and in time, after a thorough investigation of the conditions, adopted comprehensive measures to eradicate the disease. In 1958 the medical teams and anti-epidemic station began training health workers so that every village had one; each five to eight households had an anti-epidemic worker or a person who delivered anti-malaria pills to the door. Exhibitions were held in the villages, film shows, performances and lantern-slide were shown to popularize disease prevention. After five years of work, in 1962, the Menghai Commune area was practically free of malaria, the incidence dropping from 51.9 per cent in 1957 to 2.8 per 10,000 in 1962.

Both population and production have increased on Menghai Plain. By 1974 the grain output of the commune had risen 150 per cent over

1950; 960,000 jin of tea was gathered — five times that of the whole county in 1950. Mannamen Village, which had flourished in the past century, was reduced to 150 population at liberation. Malaria was the main killer. In 1978 the village population had doubled.

With this malaria hotbed cleaned up, the incidence of the disease for the whole autonomous region had by 1962 dropped from 11.6 per cent in 1954 to 9 per thousand. In 1978 there were only three cases per thousand, while smallpox, cholera and plague were non-existent.

MORE MEDICAL WORK FOR THE RURAL AREAS

China's post-liberation sanitation survey found Xishuangbanna at point zero, but with special funds allocated there was rapid establishment of hospitals, anti-epidemic stations, maternal and child hygiene centres and clinics throughout the region. In 1955 a general hospital was opened in Yunjinghong, the region's first.

Stress in medical work being placed on the rural areas, the peasants are its main target. In fact, this hospital alone has treated 250,000 peasants free of charge, while sanitation efforts also go largely for the countryside. The region has 2,682 salaried sanitation workers of whom 1,735 are assigned to state farms, factories and mines; the remaining 66 per cent work in the communes. More than 2,000 beds include 1,000 in commune hospitals. This constitutes 18 per cent of the total, while 82 per cent are scattered over the countryside. The working staff in clinics or hospitals of the people's communes have also been reinforced: on the average every hospital (or clinic) has 12 medical workers and 15 beds. Medical personnel from hospitals of the province, region and counties often make rounds of the countryside giving treatment and winning the hearts of the peasant masses. By 1978 the 191 production teams of the region had 188 co-operative medical stations. A medical network extended throughout the region, ending at last its dearth of medicine and doctors.

Working at one Mengla County co-operative medical station are four "barefoot" doctors representing the Han, Dai and Yi nationalities. In the interest of thrift and cure they use herbal medicines whenever possible, having learned to prescribe from traditional doctors and peasant

practitioners. They had collected some 100 tested folk remedies. From the hills they had gathered 110,000 jin of medicinal herbs which they have found effective in treating fractures, rheumatism, hepatitis, gastritis and various other common illnesses. A Dai timber worker, Miyiwang, whose thigh bone was fractured with a large infected gash in the flesh, was on the road to recovery after 26 days of treatment by traditional methods. The saving in medical expense which the barefoot doctors are able to effect since the institution of co-operative medicine in 1969 has made possible a reduction in the medical fee per person per year from 2.00 to 0.50 yuan.

The People's Government began in 1971 to send medical teams in rotation to Xishuangbanna from China's larger cities such as Beijing and Shanghai to investigate and treat tropical diseases, organize medical service, and train barefoot doctors.

Miyijiao, 50, of the Dai nationality, who depended for 30 years on "benevolent water" to restore her sight, saw again after doctors from Beijing removed cataracts for her in 1973. The surgeon was Ding Shujing, who went to 29 villages and found 55 such patients for whom she operated successfully.

A woman of Bulang nationality who lived in the mountains was saved from certain death in extremely difficult childbirth with rupture of the womb when a medical team arrived in the village.

Another person whose life was changed by the service of the medical team was a 14-year-old girl of Aini nationality. Her right hand had been scalded and all four fingers had grown to her palm. The villagers called her "Nana" ("Wounded Hand"). A 7-hour operation by the doctors of the medical team restored the function of this girl's hand.

THE NATIONALITIES' OWN DOCTORS

In Xishuangbanna 27.5 per cent of the 800 fully qualified medical personnel come from among the minority nationals, while the percentage for 2,700 paramedics (barefoot doctors) and midwives is 80. Or, minority nationals in the medical field number more than 2,000, and this includes Bulang, Lahu, Jinuo and Kucong nationalities as well as Dai and Aini. "They are our own doctors," say the people of Xishuangbanna proudly.

“*Pipa* devils”, those on the bottom rung of society and denied medical care by the tribal chiefs, have themselves become curers of their people after training offered by the People’s Government. Studying at Jinghong or Simao, and some going on for further training in Kunming or Beijing, they have received the enthusiastic help of Han doctors both professionally and politically. Those formerly called “*pipa* devils” are now called *moyadai* (doctors in Dai language).

Yu Erying of the Dai nationality who at the age of ten became a household slave to a feudal lord in lieu of the official tax levy, became a “barefoot” doctor in a production brigade in Menghai County. In the lord’s house she had carried heavy loads, pounded the husks off rice, cut grass and tended the lord’s horses, in time marrying a fellow slave and giving birth to a baby. Finding life unbearable, the couple fled with the child, then five months old, to roam the hills and finally arrive at Mengzhe Plain. Later the tribal chief learned of their whereabouts and, calling her “*pipa* devil”, burned their house down and drove them from the village. Her husband and baby both starved to death.

Trained as a paramedic after liberation, she has cured many commune members and won their acclaim. One who calls her benefactor is Botao whose sick son she saved after the father had given him up. He said that he had consulted an oracle and been told the child was fated to die. Not only did she save the child by round-the-clock care till the crisis was past, she cured the father of his superstition. This had occurred in 1969.

Yu Erying is aided by an herbal specialist, and three young medics who work together in helping out in such cases as fracture, paralysis, rheumatism and difficult childbirth.

The woman doctor Dao Suzhen began work in the Prefectural People’s Hospital in 1963 at the age of 22. Her mother had been stigmatized as a “*pipa* devil” and driven out of the village at the same age as her daughter. The reason: She had refused to become mistress to a tribal chief but had married instead another poor “*pipa* devil”. For 14 years they wandered from place to place, finally putting up a thatched dwelling in Manyun Village where they begged and picked up odd jobs as they could.

Dao Suzhen was happy to attend the first school in the village set up after liberation. Then after three years of study she went to Simao

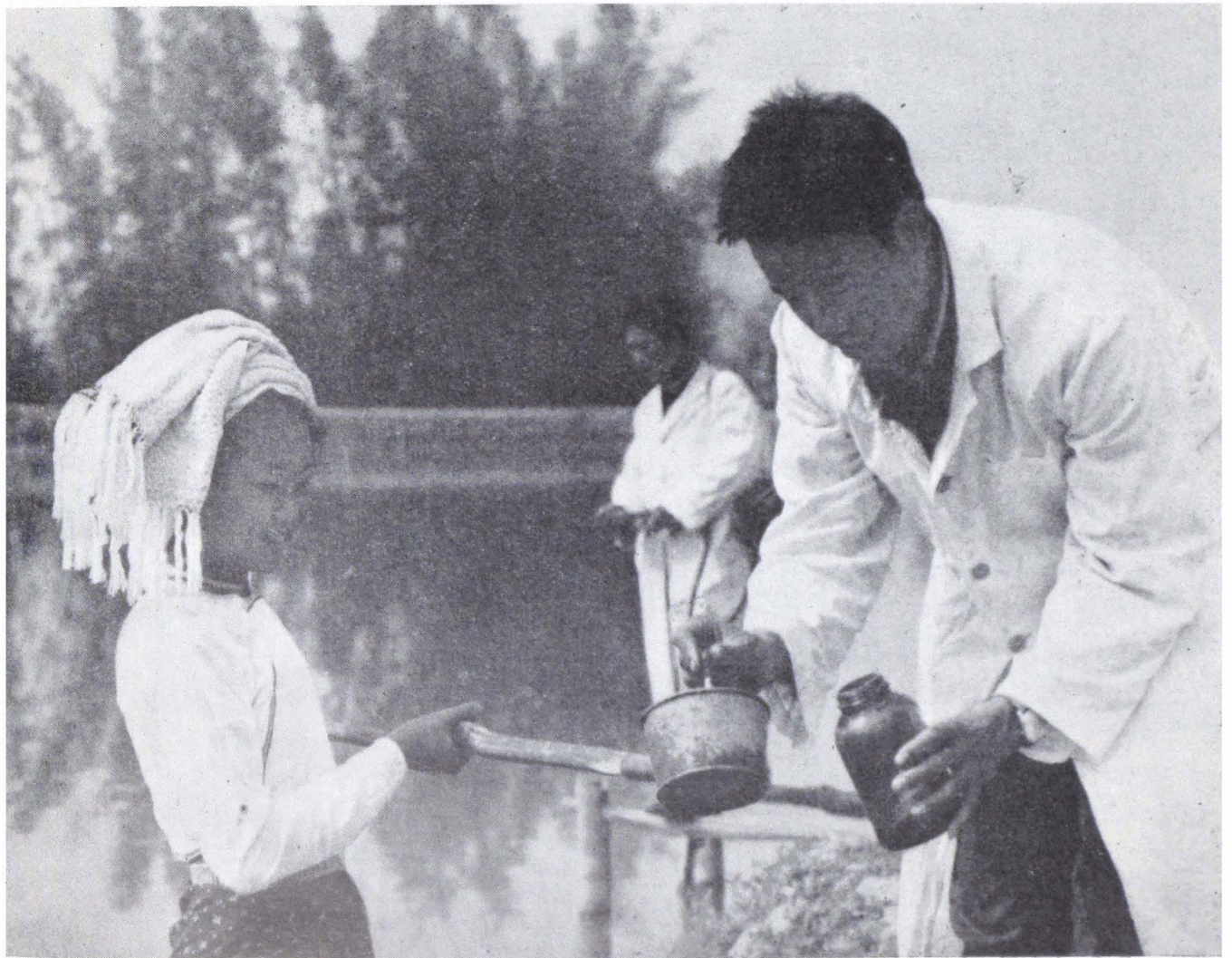


A doctor from Beijing sees patients of Jinuo nationality.



A mobile medical team from
Shanghai makes rounds.

Epidemic-prevention workers
declare war on mosquitoes.





Dao Suzhen, a Dai nationality pediatrician, pedals on her rounds.



Little patients have no fear when their own doctor comes.



A doctor of Bulang nationality cares for her own folk.



Teaching in their own Dai language.

Goodbye backwardness!
We Bulang people have
our own schools now.

At a Hani nationality primary school.





Hani children in the ornate costume of their nationality.

for training in paramedicine. There she joined the Communist Youth League and was assigned to work in a clinic. Soon, however, she was given the opportunity of four years of study at the larger Kunming Medical School, which specializes in training doctors of minority nationalities. This course, though based on only three years of primary schooling, enabled her by studying hard to acquire the skill to serve her people well by relieving their physical suffering. She chose paediatrics as her specialty.

In 1973 Dao Suzhen went on to Beijing, again entirely at public expense, for another year of intensive training. Nor is such training limited to members of the "majority-minority", the Dai. Other, smaller nationality doctors are also practising.

One of these is Zhu Di of the Aini nationality, a Party member in Menghai County who has endeared herself to the people by serving them as a barefoot doctor. In 1958 she began as a health worker in her production brigade and was subsequently given further clinical training so as to improve her skill in village health work.

In 1963, when Qie Zha of the Aini nationality gave birth to a baby with a harelip, she burst into tears, for the old feudal custom decreed that any child with a birth defect should be put to death. This, incidentally, included twins. At the news of this birth, Zhu Di rushed to Qie Zha's home to assure her that nothing of the sort could happen now. The child's harelip could be repaired, she said, which it was.

In 1974 Zhu Di performed her first operation for a woman in critical condition from hemorrhage in childbirth. Her experience and the conditions were both less than adequate, but she saved the mother and child in the emergency.

Over the past 19 years this Aini woman, Zhu Di, has continued learning from both Han doctors trained in Western medicine and minority nationality traditional doctors and herbalists. She has improved her professional skill serving the people.

7. EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Xishuangbanna has changed from a region of illiteracy, where the majority were slaves kept in total ignorance, to a place where primary

education is the general rule and middle schools have been set up. Even some students of minority origin have received college training and returned to the locality.

The popularization of education has spurred cultural life, which is no longer the monopoly of a few. The colourful Water Festival, for which the government allocates special funds each year, is now truly a festival of the people. The good customs and traditions of the minority nationalities are quite alive in present-day Xishuangbanna.

NO MORE NOTCHING FOR COUNTING

Among the nationalities only the Dai had a written language. In the old society boys of seven or eight were generally sent to the village temple to study Buddhist scripture and so learned some reading and writing. Other minorities had no written language at all. Only six primary schools existed in the entire region, and very little was taught.

The People's Government assigned personnel from its own departments to work in Xishuangbanna, and by 1978 there were 1,280 schools there, 213 times the number before liberation. There were 128,000 students, 532 times as many as in 1950, with 96.7 per cent of school-age children attending. The 37 secondary schools established represent an increase of 7.4 times over 1965. There are minority nationality normal school and medical and agricultural schools as well. The Han and the minority language, both spoken and written are taught and used in all schools.

Gelanghe, a mountain area where the Aini people dwell mainly, had no school or even a literate person before liberation. It was a Dai nationality teacher, Zhou Dejun, who set up their first primary school in 1951 in the Gelanghe-Suhu mountain area. The Aini people could not understand at first why they should have a school, they saw no need for one, and even opposed it, saying: "Long, long ago we Aini people went with the Han and Dai on a pilgrimage to heaven to obtain a written language. That of the Hans was recorded on paper, the Dai on palm leaves, while ours was branded into ox hide. On the return journey from heaven, however, we Aini people got hungry and ate the hide. And so the Aini written language went into our stomachs and remained

in our hearts. For us, to read would make us blind." When a local tribal chief threatened Zhou Dejun, he left, but returned to Suhu Mountain the next year and this time was able to convince the village headmen that a school was beneficial. But just when they were making plans, the tribal chief came, lighting his way with a torch, and the village headmen made their various excuses and left the meeting place. The tribal chief said to Zhou: "See, they've all gone. Better forget about your school for the time being. People don't want one. I'll try to talk them round, then I'll let you know."

But Zhou Dejun persisted in his effort to set up a school for the Aini people, and tried next at Xiaohula, another Aini-inhabited area not far from Suhu where he had failed. Zhou Dejun introduced a pupil of Aini origin from Henan Village to the Aini of Xiaohula. He told the advantages of going to school and learning to read and write so as to gain further knowledge. The villagers entirely discredited the myth that reading would make one blind.

Xiaohula Primary School materialized, but at first only strong adults attended instead of their younger sisters and brothers. As corporal punishment had been the rule in Kuomintang schools, and parents hesitated to send their children till they were assured the school teacher was kind and would not curse or beat them.

This Dai nationality teacher learned the Aini language to assist his teaching and spent a great deal of time among his pupils, winning their confidence and stimulating their interest in study.

The success of Xiaohula Primary School was instrumental in the People's Government of mountainous Gelanhe setting up a still larger school at Suhu, and this was followed by more schools springing up in the various townships. Within 20 years several thousand students have graduated from primary schools, while several hundred have graduated from middle schools. Minority nationals have also gone to college, a thing that had never happened before. These minority people with higher education have taken their places as leaders and working personnel in a unified China. Menghai County's cultural and educational Commissioner was one educated in local schools.

By 1978 Gelanghe Commune had a middle school and 29 primary schools, with a total enrolment of 2,400, 99.5 per cent of school-age

children. Of the 76 primary and middle-school teachers, 47 are minority nationals. Aini's youngsters are growing up educated.

The Jinuo area of Jinghong County, a place cut up by mountains and valleys and with 40 villages scattered throughout, got its first primary schools in 1957 and by 1978 had one per village. In 1970 a junior-middle class was added to the commune's main primary school, while 300 graduates went on for further study in junior and senior middle, or technical schools, in Yunjinghong or Simao. Some dozen students had gone to colleges or universities in Kunming, Changchun in the Northeast, or Beijing.

In September 1974 the first college graduates returned to Jinuo to become state functionaries or factory technicians.

The People's Government began immediately upon the region's liberation to help the Dai nationality to develop their written language and to found the bilingual *Xishuangbanna Daily* in Dai and Han and start broadcasts also in the two languages. By making it possible for minority students to go to colleges and universities as well as technical schools, Xishuangbanna has its own personnel trained in the news media, education, literature and art.

THE GALA WATER SPLASHING FESTIVAL

This traditional Dai festival is held each year on the three days beginning on the twenty-fourth of the sixth month according to the Dai calendar. Here, in the subtropical climate, tea bushes have put out luxuriant buds on the hill slopes; early rice is in flower. The dry season is over, and the monsoon is likely to do its part in the Water Splashing. Other nationalities join in the festivities, making and firing rockets and racing in the long boats. The festival marks the Dai nationality New Year, corresponding to the Han Spring Festival when families and friends come together for feasting and extending mutual good wishes.

HOW THE FESTIVAL BEGAN

Many folk tales explain how the Water Splashing Festival began, and readers may make their choice.

One is that long, long ago an evil despot took possession of the beautiful and fertile Xishuangbanna, throwing the people into endless calamity. The despot seized seven of the region's most beautiful maidens, some of whom sang like nightingales. But the captive young women were clever as well as lovely, and acting on an idea of Yu Jin, the youngest and most beautiful of all, they plotted the evil despot's destruction.

The charming Yu Jin plied the despot with the best wine and meat one evening, and got him thoroughly drunk. Then she cooed: "Such a brave and mighty man as you, My Lord, could have the whole world at your feet. Not only all humans, but the animals of the forest as well. You are truly invincible."

The drunken despot was pleased beyond words. "Yu Jin," he replied sweetly, "you are my life and I entrust you with my safety. I have one vulnerable spot, my neck: I can be finished off with so much as a single hair from my head and tied around it. That must never happen." Having said this, the despot fell into a drunken stupor. Yu Jin plucked a hair from his head and pulled it tight round his neck. His head fell and burst into flames, rolling like a fiery ball into the street and setting fire to the people's houses and scorching their gardens. The seven maidens quickly retrieved the head and for 9,999 days carried water and finally quenched the devastating fire. Since that the Dai people have commemorated the seven maidens by pouring water over each other, which is said also to wash away any suffering or illness, and ensure a bumper harvest.

FESTIVAL EVENTS

The opening festival event takes place on the Lancang River at Yun-jinghong. Dawn of that day finds people of various nationalities gathering on the river bank, some walking long distances. All are dressed in their colourful holiday best.

Suddenly the rockets burst, ascending to heaven and returning to the waters of the Lancang, while dragon boats dart into the river to announce the start of the grand festival. Balloons are released by the children to vanish into the sky. Professional and amateur art troupes perform

dances and theatrical numbers. The elephant-foot drum, dragon and peacock dances are outstanding, their rhythm pulsating and bringing joy to young and old alike at this festival time.

The dragon boat races are spectacular, the slim hollowed-out log craft 40 to 50 metres long jauntily sporting a colourful dragon-head prow, while the tail is also in dragon form. The number of rowers corresponds roughly to the length of the boat; i.e., 40 to 50, or as many as 60. The contestants are dressed in national costumes and turbans of a range of colours, each colour representing a different crew. At the signal shot, the contesting boats dart across the river, then the winner draws alongside the bank, its coxswain chanting and swaying, to receive the prize. This is strong glutinous-rice wine, the best the region produces, to congratulate them on their victory and wish them continuing success in the new year.

The second festival day is perhaps the highlight for the visitors at least, for this is the day of the water splashing itself, and everyone can join in. It would be the rare person indeed who remained dry on this day, and all dressed up for the holiday too. Those with cameras, including a Hongkong film team, had to look out. Artists and newsmen needed to be alert or their materials got soaked. Though the ceremonial dancing and chanting got under way only around noon, the people were ready from early morning, the women in long print skirts and white bodices with narrow sleeves — most pleasing to the eye, right up to the floral coronets which they wore perkily to one side. The men in their pink turbans complemented an unforgettable picture. No one was exempt from the splashing. A foreign friend in a bus with the window inadvertently down was initiated with a basinful to the merriment and delight of all those around.

Our reception at Manting Village, where we were to participate, was a sprinkling of Lancang River water with a green leafy twig. We reciprocated, and the fun was on. The dancing, chanting and flinging of light-green water on all within range erased any lines of race or nationality, peasant, cadre, soldier, civilian, villager or guest. Excitement grew as the dance proceeded to the beat of the elephant-foot drum and the *yi-la-bei* chant of the Dai people. The circle grew smaller as the dancers concentrated. Decades dropped away from the oldsters, who danced no less vigorously than the young.

The third and last exciting day crowning the festival was fair day, when from dawn people poured into the village. Snacks were available as well as various performances. Adults were visiting relatives and friends much as other Chinese nationalities do at their Lunar New Year. But it was the young people of marriageable age who were the most active. For this is also the traditional wedding day of Dai young men and women, who are to choose their mates at the fair. The visitor will be aware of clusters of couples engaged in quite open conversation designed to reach agreement on a permanent partnership, and by late afternoon no few young men with shiny new bicycles are riding their bride-to-be to the home of the groom's future mother-in-law, she sitting pertly on the rack at the back.

Respecting the habits and customs of minority nationalities, the People's Government each year sets aside funds for this happy occasion.

The year the people of Xishuangbanna remember best perhaps is when their beloved Premier Zhou Enlai was there in April of 1961 at Festival time, donned the traditional pink turban and joined in every event. How vigorous he was, and how wholeheartedly he was with the people!

In fact, thanks to such leaders as Zhou Enlai, who loved and was loved by the minority peoples, there was no interruption in the observance of such festivals, while added to the traditional events are the militia swimming the Lancang River in full gear, theatrical performances and mass garden parties involving the Han, Aini, Bulang, Lahu and Yao nationalities along with the Dai.

COLOURFUL NATIONALITY SONGS AND DANCES

The Dai have a rich and long cultural history, their legends, poems and folksongs being recorded on palm leaves and their very early *mian* paper. Their brocade, intricately woven of coloured silk shot through with gold and silver thread, is a popular product, as are their water jars of classic beauty, and exquisite silver-decorated boxes made of betel nuts.

Dai folk songs and dances are outstanding for their variety and beauty. Long without a written language, the minority peoples express-

ed their feelings of joy or sorrow in the form of balladry. And, perhaps due to the subtropical environment, Dai ballads are ardent and vivid. Most young men and women sing, and their melodious voices and graceful dancing are a main feature of festive events the year round.

Many of the ballads have been passed down from memory. A number have been revised as poems or songs. Some, written down, were stored in temples along with Buddhist scriptures and so were well preserved. Most of the ballads draw on themes from contemporary events and are beautifully worded and rhymed. Metaphor and innuendo are the usual modes of expression used in antiphonal style by young lovers, the musical dialogues absorbing the interest and moving the other listener to sympathy. Quick at words, practically every young Dai is an instant composer.

Themes vary from epics praising Dai heroes to folk tales of sorrows and eventful happy reunions. Others tell of the people's anger under the dark rule of the old society, while many give thanks to the Chinese Communist Party for the new and happy life it brought. Ballads may vary in length from ten to twenty lines to epics taking twenty or thirty minutes to sing. A special type, generally performed by professional *zanba* (singers) during holiday celebrations, has a fixed form, runs to thousands of lines and can be continued for several days and evenings on end.

Folk songs are popularized among the Dai people chiefly by *zanba*, who have refined the art of balladry. The Dai people, who love their songs, say, "The *zanba* are as necessary to Dai daily life as salt."

Most are songs of either past or present love. Finely worded, simple in form, gracefully rhythmical and cheerful, they are typically Dai in national flavour.

A few examples in translation follow.

Yellow candles
Shed their light
Over the sacrificial table,
Fragrant *jinsbu* flowers
Shining from your hair.
Maiden, oh,
Your blushing cheeks
Far outshine the *jinsbu* bloom;

The fascination of your eyes
Profunder still than blue November skies.
Before the graceful steps of your dance,
Even the peacock dares not display his tail;
Your melodious song
Mutes the nightingale.
Adoring you as I do
I long for you,
The love between us
Pure as the white cloth you weave,
Sweet and sparkling as the morning dew,
Is the joining of two hearts,
No ploy of empty words!

Now listen to the reply:

Oh, Yanlong, Yanlong,*
The love between us
Is a cord entwining our emotion,
A golden pagoda built of adoration,
A fresh blossom in our heart
Resisting all pressures from outside.
Our love is no sham or falsehood,
The emotion shared is as solid as rock,
As firm, tall and straight as the iron tree
Which no hurricane can bend.
We've solemnly pledged our love;
Heaven is our witness.
Our promise shall stand
Till ivory is wormed through!
Yanlong, Yanlong, oh
Be quick, you're expected up in the stilt house.

Such is the joy of young love and marriage among the Dai in Xi-shuangbanna.

* "Brother."

No less beautiful is Dai dancing which, to the accompaniment of drums and gongs, marks every festive occasion with young and old joining in and sometimes lasting through the night. The dance takes five forms: group, duet, solo, elephant-foot drum dance and peacock dance, the last two being the most popular.

The elephant-foot drum dance is performed by any number of people in a circle, which can extend outward indefinitely or form into several concentric circles. Accompaniment is on gongs and drums. The pace may be slow, the men moving vigorously, while the women dance with grace. Steps can vary, each dancer needing only to keep the tempo of the drums and gongs. Much originality and skill are shown within the bounds of the beat.

For the peacock dance masks are used and the dancer's whole body is transformed into a bird, with coloured paper or calico over split bamboo frames to form the wings and tail. Jerky peacock movements are imitated, all in time to the prevailing rhythm. Nationalities other than the Dai are also fond of this peacock dance.

The Aini, Lahu, Bulang and Jinuo people of Xishuangbanna have their own distinctive ballads and dances as well. Though fewer and artistically simpler than the Dai items, these others are often beautifully composed.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage was surprisingly unhampered by the conventions of the Han. It is the custom for Dai young women to gather round a bonfire in the evening, spinning yarn, and for the young men to come playing the *se* or *ding*, bamboo musical instruments in a serenade of love. A girl who is attracted by a particular boy will listen to him alone, and then place a stool beside her. If her young man sits on the stool placed for him, the match is as good as made, and the new couple will leave the circle and go off together. A modern bit has been added to this procedure with the introduction of flashlights into the region. A girl who has a flashlight beamed in her face and takes no offence is in effect saying "yes" and expecting to be carried off on the back of the suitor's bike for marriage.



Filming the traditional Dai
elephant-foot drum dance.

At the Water Splashing Festival.

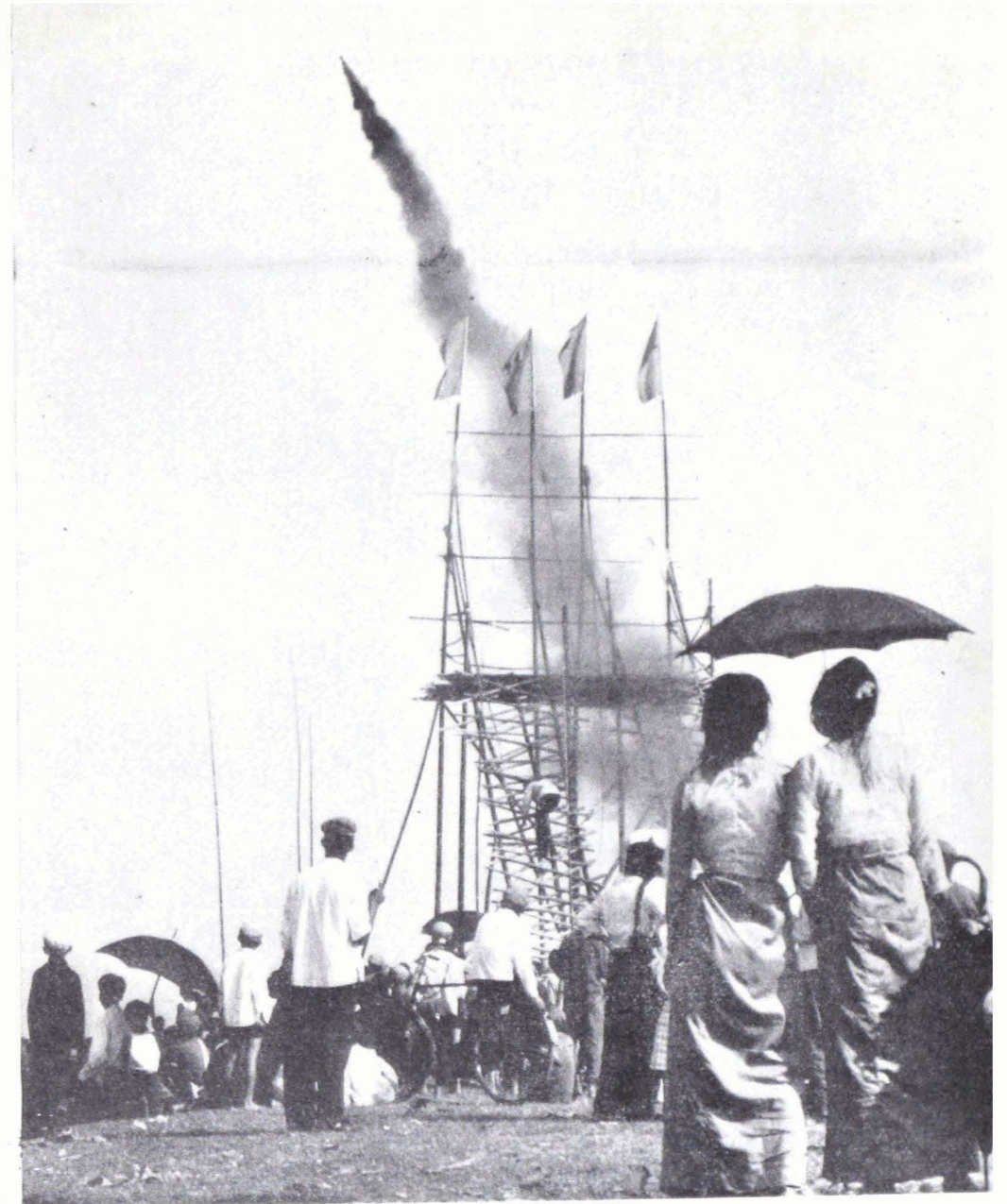




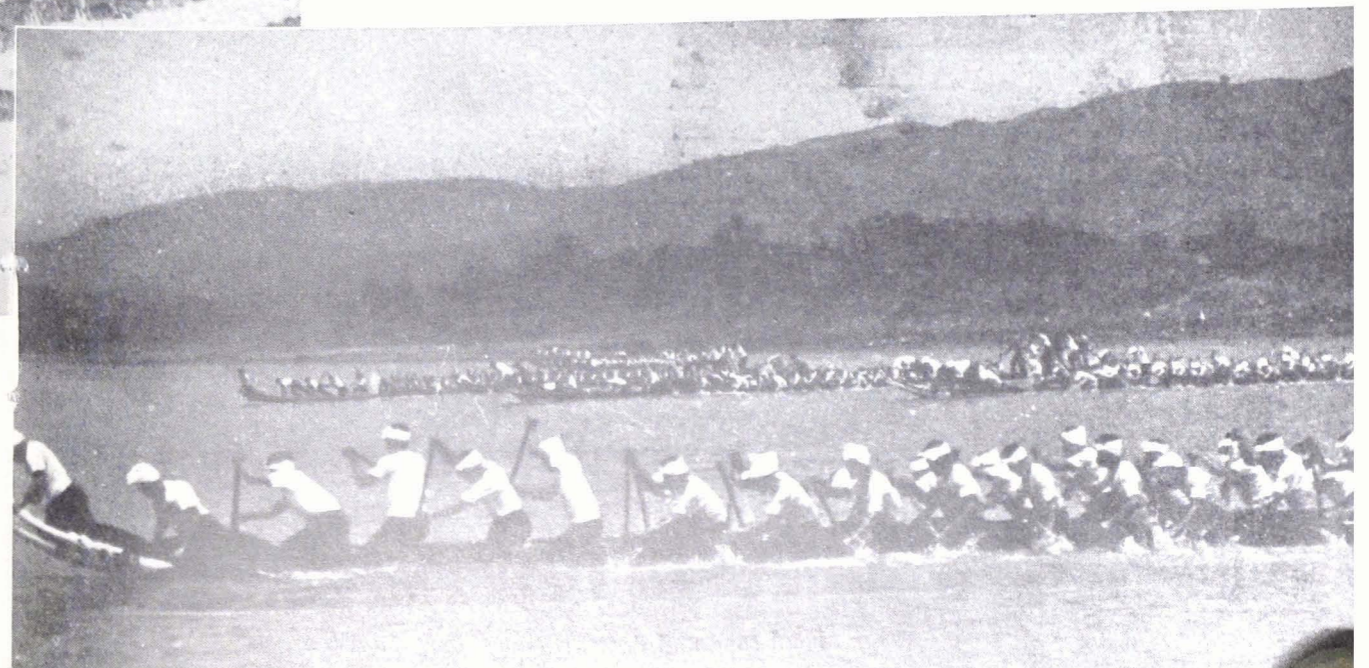
No respite.



Plenty of fun.



Rocket launching — greeting heaven and earth at the Water Splashing Festival.



Dragon boat racing.



Kang Langjiao, well-known Dai musician.



Hani song and dance troupe.

Peacock Princess, a dance of the Dai people.



The peacock dance is caught by a foreign newsman's camera.





Dai dance of the parasols.

Extemporaneous songs may also be used to inquire into a young man's or woman's feelings. Different tempos are used for different themes. One "probing" ballad we heard went like this:

Listen! Dear girl,
The lotus blooms on Golden Lake,
Spreading fragrance far and wide.
Such beauty and loveliness
No one can help but adore.
I wish I were a bee
To gather honey there.
But I don't know
Whether another bee
Has come before me.

The girl addressed was not engaged and, liking the young man, thought a moment and then sang back:

Listen! Dear Yanlong,
The tender bamboo shoot is just out of the earth,
The lotus is in bud
And no bee has sought it yet.
Yanlong soars like an eagle in the sky,
How can a silver pheasant fledgling have a place in his heart?
If Yanlong is still not convinced,
Please climb the stairs of her stilt house and see. . . .

In Xishuangbanna another common procedure is for the parents of the suitor to ask a mutual friend to approach the girl in her home with the marriage proposal. If it is accepted, the young couple register their names and are issued marriage certificates after which a wedding is held on a chosen date.

The custom among the Dai is for the wedding to take place in the maternal home, where the couple also generally lives until they have built their own stilt house. The old Dai custom was for them to live three years in the maternal home and then three in the paternal before setting up housekeeping on their own. Now the arrangement is more flexible, and things can be arranged according to the needs of the respective families. Generally, as in the West, a couple, especially with

children, like a home of their own, independent of their parents. But the present situation is that the couple usually start their married life in the bride's home.

In the old days, there was a great slaughtering of pigs and oxen for wedding feasts, which were held on a grand scale. The newlyweds had to kowtow to the "family gods" and then their parents. The old folk tied white cotton threads around the couple's wrists in congratulation and the hope that they would live in harmony and devotion for the rest of their lives.

Singing and dancing largely replace all this since liberation. Relatives and friends gather from far and near for the nuptials. The wedding gifts are practical items of daily use — water glasses, towels, embroidered pillow cases, jars, wash basins, pots and pans and thermos flasks. Typical Dai food is placed on low tables in the stilt house, while guests sit on low stools or mill about, munching and singing songs that wish the newlyweds a happy new life. They are also wished sons and daughters that are clever and industrious as well as handsome or beautiful.

The Dai nationality of Xishuangbanna are Chinese who do not have the tradition of practising ancestor worship. Nor have they ever sacrificed to any gods. They have no tribal organization or family tree. They even have no surname. A few clan names exist among the Dai people, but these were given by Han school teachers in the old society to the Dai elite who had the chance to study and have nothing to do with blood ties. There is, however, the family of as many generations as are living at any particular time and the *zhai*, which embraces several families, and then the entire Dai nationality of Xishuangbanna. Any Dai household in difficulty will find help from a number of sources.

Marriage is unhindered by the more rigid Han code of ethics, and the marriage partners are both economically independent and live as social equals, showing understanding, sympathy and respect for each other. Parents have no claim to a couple's income even though all live under one roof. Quarrels rarely occur. There is the right of inheritance by sons and daughters equally. The social atmosphere among the Dai people of Xishuangbanna today is one of carefree harmony. A "wonderland of poetry and song", Xishuangbanna takes much from the Dai people's heritage of living in freedom and peace.

8. NATURAL ZOO

Wild animals abound in the vast expanse of Xishuangbanna's warm and humid virgin forest. There is the wild elephant, wild ox, golden-haired monkey, gibbon, sloth-monkey, zibet, etc. numbering as many as 60 species. Nearly one-third of China's birds, 400-some kinds, also give colour and song to Xishuangbanna. Yunnan is the only home of seventy of these bird species.

Around 100 varieties of fish flourish; there are more than 30 types of amphibians, while reptiles are abundant. Various lizards, frogs and boas are also indigenous, making the place a "natural zoo".

FOREST SCENES

Xishuangbanna is one of the few remaining areas in China of primitive forest and we were eager to see it. A day in the forest of Mengla County was arranged, with the old hunter Lao Xie as our guide.

We saw the tracks of wild elephants and oxen if not the actual animals then, and we encountered gibbons, monkeys and reptiles. The impression left with us from the north was unforgettable.

Birds' "club". Lao Xie had told us that carnivorous animals abounded near the plain, including the zibet, raccoon dog, mongoose and otter. These were generally nocturnal animals, hunters of frogs, mice, snakes, fish and insects by night.

Once we entered the forest we were in a different world. Giant logs and stumps were the monuments. Vegetation was clearly defined according to height, while leaves of many seasons formed a springy, creaking mattress underfoot. Shafts of sunlight could scarcely penetrate the dense forest. We became more and more aware of the birds as their songs grew louder. The seeds of the banyan tree, a favourite food of the birds, ripen in February and March, providing a feast for them. Several hundred or it is estimated up to a thousand have been sighted on a single banyan. Red-breasted and blue-throated woodpeckers chirped and pecked, the former producing a hollow sound, while the latter sounded more like the tapping on "wooden fish" heard in monasteries and jazz bands.

Thrushes and red-billed leiothrix flew in flocks, their singing rhythmically sweet. Purple-cheeked and yellow-backed sunbirds and red-breasted hummingbirds were among the smaller type, tipping the scales at only five to seven grams. These flew about singly or in pairs.

Then there were the rare hornbills, birds with circles around their eyes and dark-brown, blue-spotted necks and lustrous dark green feathers on their bodies. Startled for a moment at our approach, they very soon resumed their melodious singing.

Monkey world. Passing a big banyan, we saw a group of monkeys picking wild fruit and playing "monkeyshines". Of the half dozen kinds of apes and monkeys in Xishuangbanna, the golden-haired monkey is the most valued.

Like the giant panda the golden-haired monkey is rarely seen outside of China. There are three kinds: light, grey, and dark brown. They have highest priority for protection by the state. Up to 1.5 metres in height, they are striking in appearance, with blue faces, round heads, short ears and large upturned nostrils. The mouth protrudes considerably, the body covered with long, golden hair that glistens in the sunlight and makes the animals quite beautiful to look at. They prefer to live high up in the mountains at from 1,500 to 2,500 metres above sea level. Here they find the coniferous and broadleaf trees which they favour as habitat.

The golden-haired monkey stays in the trees so long as there is food there, or if they are thirsty. Then, when they do descend from their leafy tree homes, they do it in troops of from 30 to 50 at a time, or even several hundred. Nine hundred were once estimated seen romping on the forest floor. Obviously the golden-haired monkey believes in safety in numbers! They also have one or two "monkey kings" that ensconce themselves in the treetops and keep watch on things below. These "monkey kings" are invariably large and physically strong.

Golden-haired monkeys are by nature alert, agile and protective of their young. At the slightest rustle they scatter, and can run 40 kilometres an hour. When a monkey mother is pursued, she flees with her baby, and if she finds no way of escape has been known to fling the baby away in a mountain valley so that it will not be taken along with her.

The main food of the golden-haired monkey is pine nuts, wild fruit and bamboo shoots. The species is easily domesticated, does not harm humans, draught animals or crops, and is worthy of human protection and affection.

The home of the peacock. Peacocks in Xishuangbanna represent beauty, happiness and good fortune. Thus the peacock dance is often performed, especially at harvest time. The birds abound in the forest, the most common being the green peacock, whose feathers display the typical intricate design. The wings are short and round, the tails long. They too live high in the mountains at 2,000 metres above sea level where they find wooded land, bamboo groves, brush and grass. They particularly like the open ground by brooks in forest land. Peacocks generally emerge from their haunts in pairs, looking for food or perhaps sport. A dozen had been seen at one time. They feed mainly on plant sprouts, wild fruit, grass seeds, grain and insects or small amphibious crawlers. They are docile birds. Their breeding time is from May to August, when the male peacocks spread their tails as a mating invitation.

The Dai people love the peacock and take the bird as symbol and theme in art and literature. *The Peacock Princess*, legends and long poems are examples. The term "golden peacock" is applied to their heroes.

AN OLD HUNTER'S STORIES

We hoped of course to meet a few elephants, wild oxen and the like in the forest, but the old hunter who was telling us about the forest said that might take several days. So he told us some stories instead.

The Wild Elephant Who Moved to Shanghai. The Shanghai Xijiao Park requested an elephant for the people of the Chinese metropolis to see. So they enlisted the help of the local people to catch one. First they learned where elephants were common and how they moved about. During the summer rainy season the animals were known to roam deep in the forest and in the tall grass. Sometimes they went to their watering holes. When the weather turned cold, they came out to open ground in search of the sun's warmth. The order of proces-

sion is first the males followed by the young, with the females bringing up the rear.

Two methods of trapping were agreed upon: pits, and anaesthetic darts. Now the people played their part by reporting a troop of elephants grazing in a cornfield. Three young animals were among them. It was the month of October. Before dawn the next morning they went into the mountains only to find that the elephants had moved on. So they followed the animals' tracks and, travelling swiftly, overtook the troop the next afternoon. From a distance of about 20 metres a Shanghai team member fired a dart into a young female. The males charged the team, who fired guns to drive them off. The anaesthetized young elephant was brought to the ground and was soon bound, though she slept on for nine hours even after the administration of detoxicant shots.

She was about eight years old and weighed in at 1,500 kilogrammes. Six months were allowed for her to become accustomed to domestication, after which she made the long journey to Shanghai. Named Banna for her home country Xishuangbanna, she gave birth six years later to a baby named Yina in the Dai language. The father was the twelve-year-old Bamo, a gift of the Burmese government.

The period of gestation was 644 days, or about 21 months. Yina's birth weight was 89 kilogrammes. A sturdy baby, she was roaming about and climbing slopes soon after birth, and reports six years later were that Banna and Yina were delighting visitors at Shanghai's Xijiao Park.

The Wild Ox. This is a rare as well as one of the biggest of its species. An adult weighs from 1,200 to 1,500 kilogrammes, and may measure three metres in length and two in height. Its hair is dark brown and glossy; its tail, long and thin. The forehead and lower legs are white. It has a pair of hard horns.

The wild ox's favourite habitats are sparsely wooded mountain slopes and grassy open ground in forest areas subjected to tropical weather, with monsoons. Such is the climate of Xishuangbanna, where the animals go up the mountain slopes in the rainy season to return to the plains when the grass on the slopes withers. The wild ox, which feeds mainly on grass and other vegetation, chooses as its beverage mineral water that is offensive to humans.

Like the elephants, the wild oxen follow the "leader", with a male at the head of a herd and females and young behind. These roving animals may cover 20 miles in a day in their search for food. A special characteristic is that adult males are driven from the herd to live singly for a year, when the bull returns to fight with the former herd head to the death or severe wounding. The winner then assumes leadership of a new herd, which follows him away.

Wild oxen are harmless to humans unless molested, but they can be ferocious, and hunters need to beware. We were told of an incident involving two hunters who encountered a maddened animal on open ground at a distance of no less than 40 metres. Playing possum would have saved them, for the wild ox does not attack "dead" humans, but there was no time for that. Lao Xie, who was telling the story, took aim and the ox charged, knocking the gun out of Lao Xie's hand. It was found later 20 metres away, its barrel twisted. When Lao Xie came to his senses, neither the beast nor his companion were in sight. A torn satchel lay beside the gun, and there also was his wounded companion, Kang Langhan. When Kang came round, he remembered the charge by that wild ox. A horn had hooked in his satchel strap, and if the strap had not snapped Kang might well have been dragged to death.

PROTECTING AND USING ANIMAL RESOURCES

Aside from the well-known animal products useful to mankind and the aesthetic and scientific value of animals, in China they also provide treasured medicinal materials. Tiger bones, pilose (hairy) antlers, bear gallbladder, and lizards are also fairly well known. Otter, tiger and leopard skins are of high quality and in great demand in the fur industry. These furs are practically waterproof. The glandular secretion of the civet cat is used in high-grade perfume as well as medicine. The apes and monkeys are most valuable in modern medical science and biology as experimental animals.

In preserving and rationalizing the use of these resources the People's Government has got good results by relying on the public. Some species, among them the giant panda, golden-haired monkey, takin, white-lipped

deer and wild elephant were on the verge of extinction before the founding of the People's Republic, when measures were instituted to develop these precious animal resources. Many rare species have not only been preserved but their numbers have grown.

9. BOTANICAL KINGDOM

Xishuangbanna is a veritable botanical garden in China. Investigators place the number of plant species native to China at about 30,000. Yunnan Province alone is home to roughly half of these, while Xishuangbanna has more than 5,000, making the area a prime supplier of valuable and rare materials for the country's socialist industry and medical science. Botanists find the area ideal for research, a natural laboratory in which they can explore the distribution and species of various plants and the laws governing their evolution, important in enriching and developing tropical and subtropical economic crops. Xishuangbanna is often described as a big "green treasure house".

The over-all impression most visitors to Xishuangbanna get is one of stepping into an exotic garden. Giant palms form canopies over roads and paths. Rubber trees tall and straight grow in plantations. Tea shrubs present permanent patches of green. The aroma of old camphor trees scattered about the tea garden was wafted on the gentle breeze. There was bountiful plant life in the mist of the mountains, while the dense forest appeared jungle-like, with ancient trees 60 to 70 metres high entangled in vines.

On the forest floor and in the mountains there is also a dense growth of short herbaceous grasses and creepers. The sunlight is shut out overhead, while vines cling to trees like pythons. Some vines spanned trees high in the air or even "leapt" across a breach in the mountains. Some of these vines were workable, as rattan for making chairs; some were medicinal, and some were oil-bearing.

A strange type of "strangulation" of various trees by the banyan could be observed. This resulted from birds eating banyan seeds and excreting them, still viable, on the boughs of other trees. There they sprouted, their roots growing down till they reached the ground and took hold. These in time choked out their host trees and replaced

them. Such hanging roots of the banyan are referred to as forest "demons".

Some fruits and nuts grow not on the tree or plant branches but directly on the trunk or boughs. Examples are papaya and cocoa. Other phenomena were board-like exposed roots of trees that measured as many as 10 metres in length and breadth. "Natural umbrellas" are readily available in the tropical forest. Simply pick yourself a leaf from the banana or other broad-leaf tree and you'll make it home dry!

Aside from the valuable fine-grained woods, there is a tree with an annual growth rate of three metres in height. There are also species from the Ice Age still flourishing. Other tree species contain an extremely poisonous juice with which the minority peoples tipped their arrows for use in hunting. On the edge of the forest and in newly opened land, "airplane" grass grew, so called because its seeds are tiny and fly long distances. This ubiquitous grass was everywhere and provided excellent green manure. It was also regarded as a "scout", "reconnoitring" soil where other economic crops might be introduced.

Leaving the forest and emerging onto the plain, we were back in the world of the ramrod-straight betel and coconut palms and the stilt bamboo houses of the Dai nationality. Bananas and papayas were ripe; lichees were in bloom perfuming the air. Mangoes, "king of tropical fruits," hid behind green leafy screens. Huge pineapples grew around dwellings or on hill slopes outside the village. Golden ripe rice waved in the breeze on the broad plain.

THE HOME OF PU'ER TEA

Xishuangbanna is the home of the famous Pu'er tea, named for its place of origin.

This broad leaf tea grows at 1,200 to 1,800 metres above sea level and in hilly areas on the plains. The tea gardens often appeared as green patches through the mist on mountain slopes, giving it the name also of "tea from the mountain mist".

Temperature varies little throughout the year in Xishuangbanna but greatly during the day. Most of the soil is reddish yellow, and much of it is acid. Over the surface is a thick layer of compost. These

advantageous natural conditions promote the growth of a tall tea bush. Rated high in quality for its fragrance, Pu'er tea enjoys good domestic and foreign markets, so that it is also known as "green gold".

Xishuangbanna is the original big leaf tea-growing area in China. The Dai, Aini and other nationality people planted it long ago, as witnessed by two shrubs on Nannuo Hill of Menghai County that had grown so large through the generations that it took three people with arms outstretched to surround one of them. The other had died, and its growth rings indicated its age to have been 800 years. On Bada Hill of the same county even larger shrubs were found, and these were estimated by scientists to have been growing there for at least 10 centuries.

Pu'er tea has played an important role in China's history of developing economic and political ties between the many nationalities in Xishuangbanna, and the Han, Bai and Tibetan people in other parts of the country. The transport of tea to the distant Erhai area in Yunnan Province and its sale there had already begun 1,200 years ago. Later it was transported to Tibet and became a drink indispensable to the Tibetan people. In barter for the tea, the Tibetans supplied horses to the ancient Xishuangbanna in what was called an "exchange of tea and horses". From the 17th century Pu'er tea was available throughout the country, becoming an item linking China's many nationalities.

The fame of this choice tea brought merchants flocking to Xishuangbanna and corrupt officials soon reacted, buying up the tea plantations and bleeding the growers white. The Qing government set up its Official Tea Bureau at Simao to control the tea trade and collect taxes on it. Branch offices were opened in every tea-growing area, totally controlling the growing and sale of tea. By 1936, on the eve of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the damage done by the reactionary ruling class in the tea-growing area was especially serious, while exploitation of the nationality growers increased. Tea production declined, yet the merchants and local headmen fixed their quotas for delivery of tea for their lucrative trade. They demanded the stripping of all leaves and even chopping off branches to mix in with the leaves in order to increase profits. The prices paid the tea growers were repeatedly forced down till weight for weight, processed tea leaves were worth practically nothing in comparison with salt. "No tea bought or

sold," said a sign on a tea-processing plant at Nannuo. And when an Aini tea plantation worker, who was in fact a slave, carried a basket of tea to Menghai to exchange for direly needed salt, he was beaten to death by the company's agents. Many tea growers left their homes for places unknown, begging and dying on the way. Tea gardens were laid waste, and the homeland of the precious Pu'er tea declined, till Xishuangbanna's production of 40,000 *dan* (one *dan* equals 50 kilograms) in 1936 had dropped to 2,500 *dan* by 1949.

With liberation the tea plantations were restored to the former slaves, and the homeland of Pu're tea got a new start, to flourish as never before.

The People's Government started the rehabilitation of tea production by sending in relief, then setting up scientific research institutions and rationalizing prices. The tea and salt prices were reversed so that 100 jin of tea could be exchanged for 500 jin of salt, or fifty times its value before liberation. Help in the form of labour went to the tea-growing areas to reclaim and free the plantations from brambles. Fertilized and pruned, old shrubs budded anew, while new plantings were also made. Peasants of the Aini nationality in Longxin Village of Mengla County who had never grown tea now planted 500 mu to new tea shrubs. Tuanjie and Dongfeng production brigades of Xiding Commune had never grown tea. Now they have more than 2,000 mu. Manlai Production Brigade of Bada Commune, which produced a negligible amount, now has more than 1,000 mu in tea. Other people's communes — Jinuo, Jinghong, Menglong and Jingnuo — are also planting the slopes to this highly desirable crop.

Some residents of the Lahu nationality in Nanlang River Production Brigade of Menga Commune were exchanging animal hides and other valuable products for the tea they drank until a Han technician taught them terracing and tea cultivation. Dai nationality growers allotted part of their tea-garden area to their counterparts of the Lahu nationality, allowing them to gather tea seeds and cuttings to get the area planted. Nanlang River Production Brigade in 1978 cultivated more than 800 mu of tea, changing the look on the mountain slopes and along the river.

The last few years have seen continuing expansion of tea plantations in Xishuangbanna and increasing yields of choice tea. Even in a year

of unusual frost, 46,000 *dan*, or 18 times the 1949 yield, were gathered.

Before liberation the tea leaves were processed by hand, an entire year's production amounting to 100 to 200 *dan*. The reactionaries left behind three dilapidated workshops with three worn-out tea-processing machines. In 1958 the People's Government built a new tea-processing plant at Menghai. With floor space 27 times that of the old, it had 80 power-driven tea-processing machines. The electricity was generated on the premises. Various high-quality black and green teas are processed for both the home and world markets. With further technical improvement, the amount of tea processed amounted to 27,700 *dan*, or nearly 270 times that produced shortly after liberation, and this had further increased to 31,000 *dan* in 1978.

Now many communes, production brigades and teams have workshops for preliminary processing of the leaves. Menghai County has 60 such workshops for black tea and 70 for green, equipped with a total of 550 machines.

Types of tea increased and quality improved with scientific and technical advance. The "Yunnan Black", "Yunnan Green" and "Pu'er tea" are products already well established on the market, while high-quality teas such as Jinzhen (Golden Needle) and Yinzhen (Silver Needle) are making their appearance also on domestic and foreign markets.

GOURD ISLAND

A local saying was that travellers to Xishuangbanna had not really visited the region unless they had seen Gourd Island. This saying seemed little exaggerated.

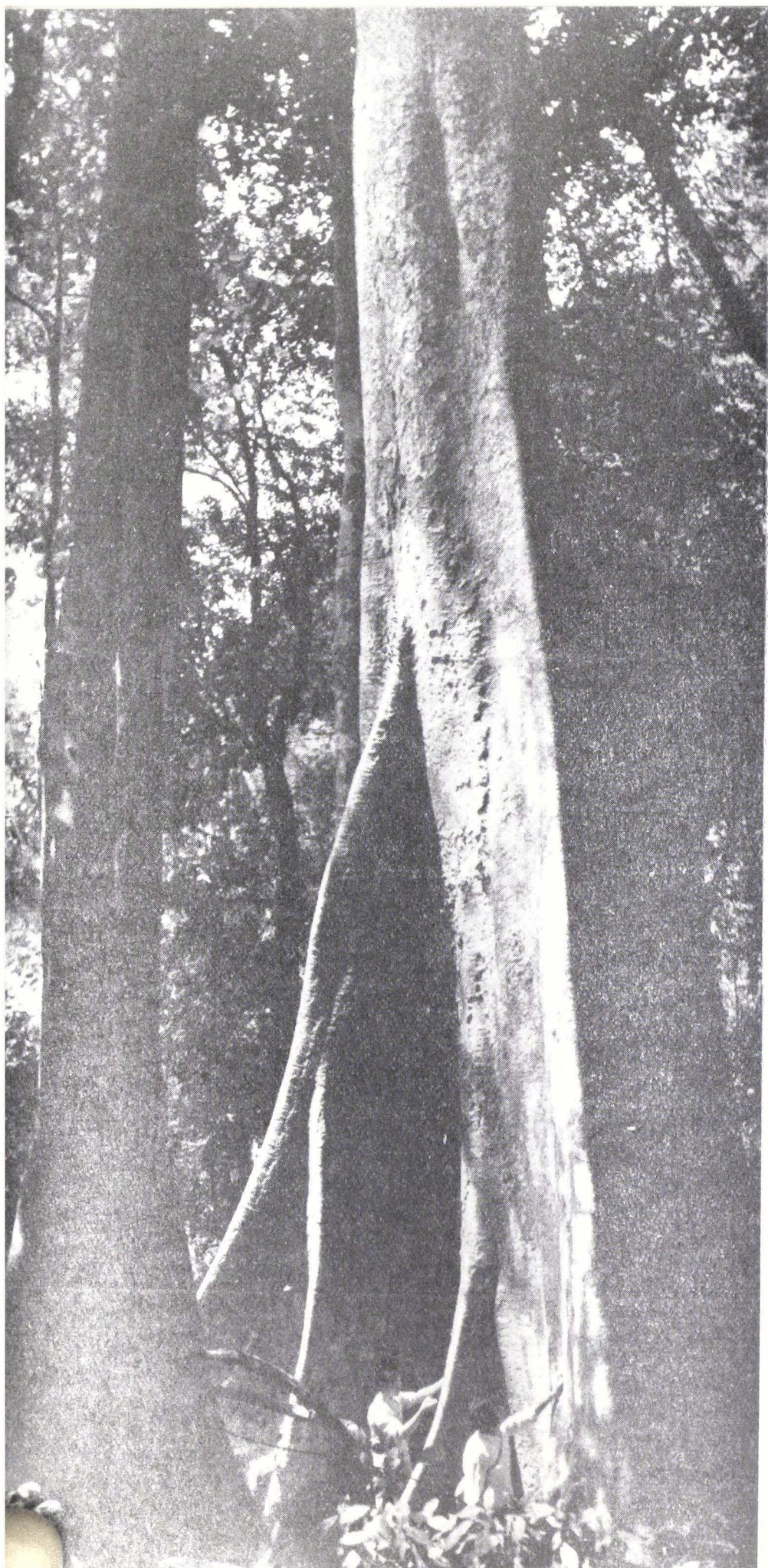
A peninsular in the shape of a gourd, this "island" in the Luosuo River in Mengla County is the site of a botanical research institute headed by the well-known botanist Cai Xitao.

Here the Luosuo River broadens out and its current slows down. The bend in the river appeared golden under the westering sun. A suspension bridge spanning the river was set off by dense green forest.

Gourd Island is covered in virgin forest and favoured by nature in respect to terrain and weather. Plant life on the island is especially



Botanists seek new wealth from lush forest.



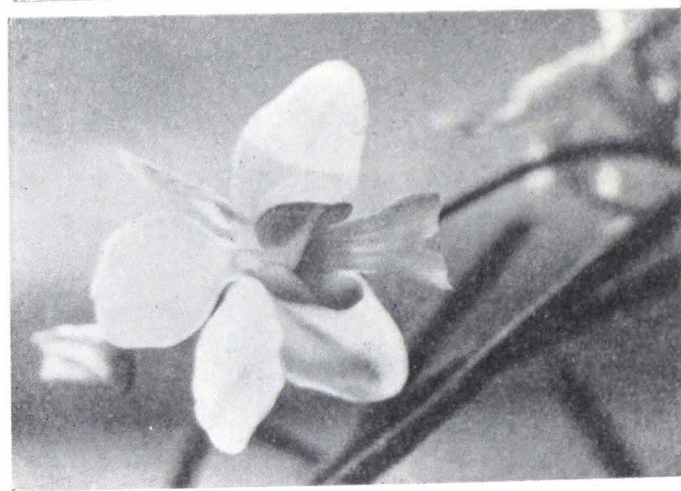
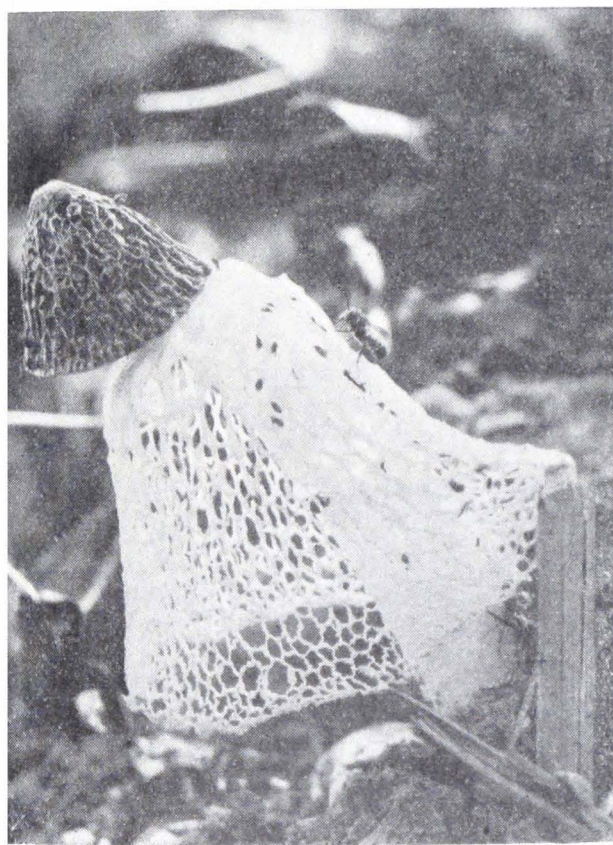
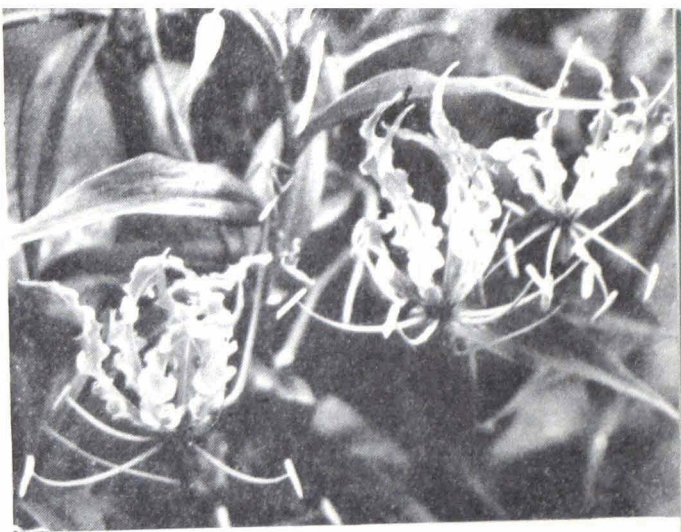
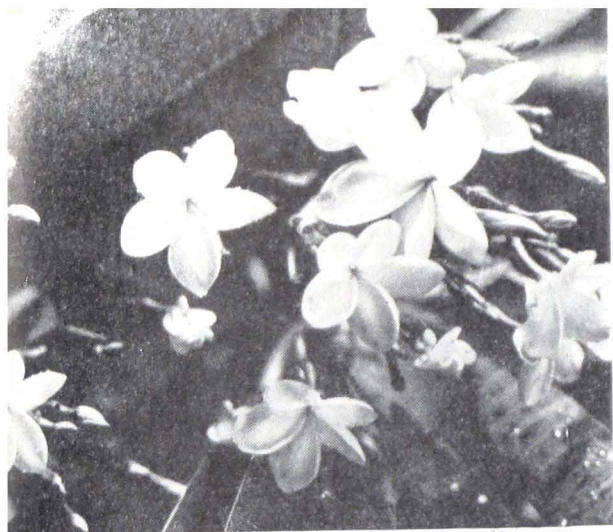
Blade-like
roots.



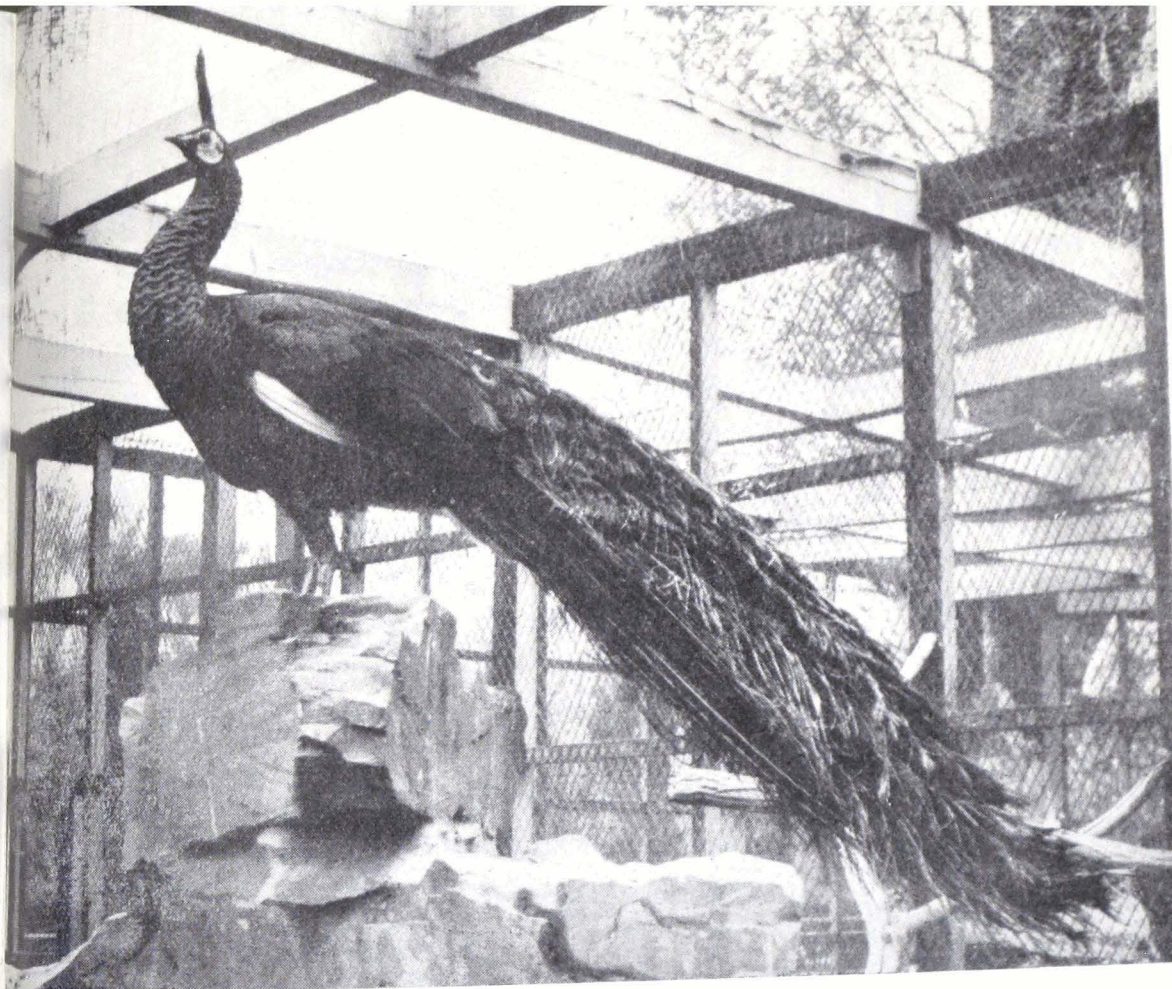
Jungle growth in Xishuangbanna's tropical monsoon forest.



Giant taro in the virgin forest.



The peacock is the Dai people's traditional symbol of happiness.

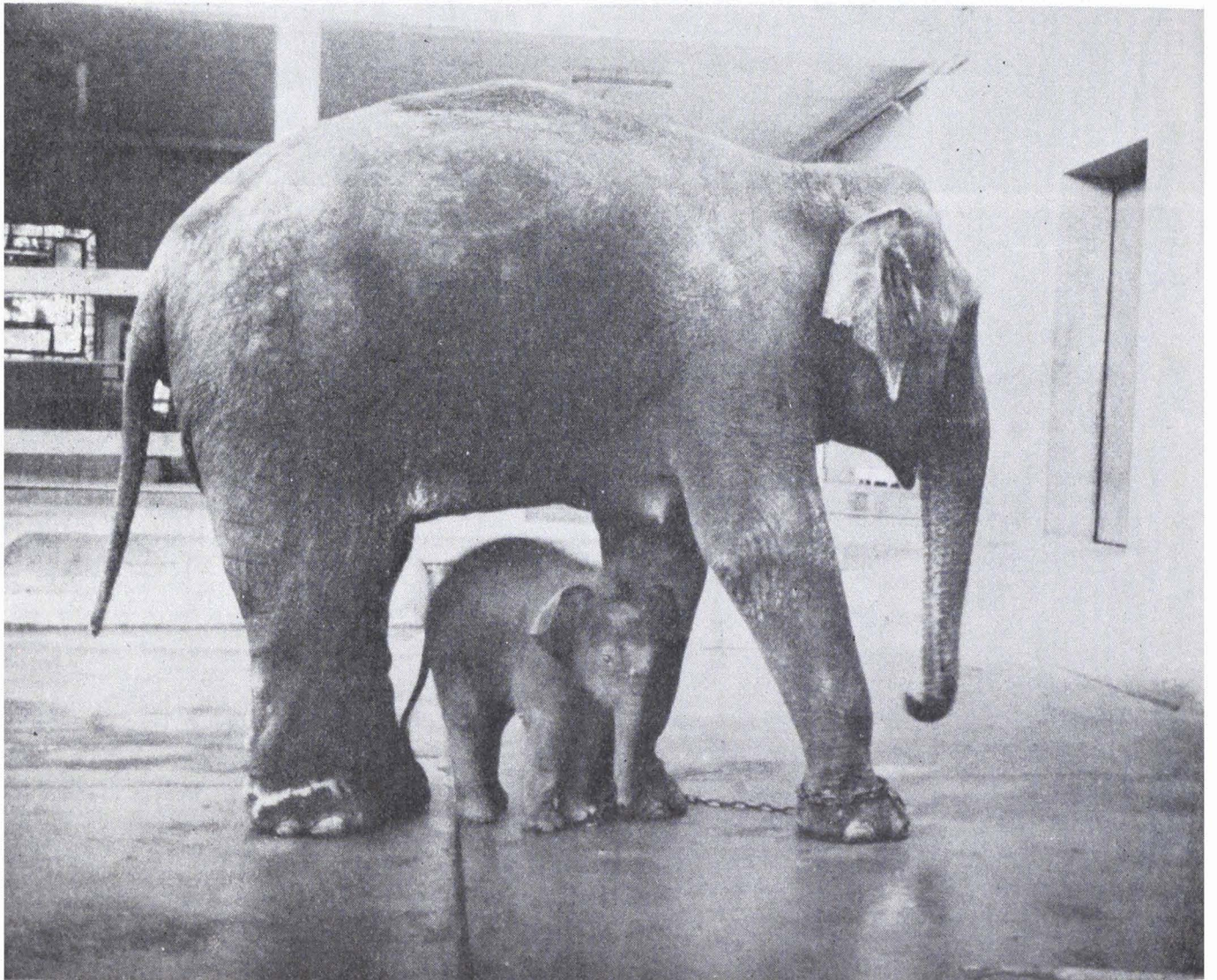


Lily pads like rafts.



Peacock pheasant, a rare bird species.





Banna and Yina.

luxuriant, representing species varying in height from lichen to trees as many as 90 metres high, the types in between forming a layered botanical mass. Huge trees supported several hundred ferns, host and parasitic plants all flourishing.

Cai Xitao arrived on the island with seventeen young botanists in 1958 and began working with thirteen colleagues of the Dai and Yao nationalities. To make a start, they put up a few sheds in the dense jungle of forest to live in. They were its only human inhabitants.

Now after twenty years, 400 to 500 metres of palm-tree lined path lead to a dense grove of oil palms with nameplates attached. The island research institute presents also exotic flowers which fill the air with perfume. Trees were of many kinds, some supporting orchids, while rare cactus abounded. Two hand-dug ponds had floating on them lily pads nearly a metre in diameter. A five-year-old child climbed onto one and was quite safe. Near the ponds grew a giant banyan such as could be seen only in virgin forest, the powerful roots from its branches firmly in the ground like so many Grecian pillars supporting it. And entwining these pillars were several dozen species of vines and creepers, the whole covering altogether half an acre. Entering this sanctuary, one found it refreshingly cool, a leafy fairyland that would delight any painter or photographer, a haunt hard for anyone to leave on a hot day.

The botanical institute has expanded its work to include an experimental section, a medicinal plants section, an orchard section and one where plants are grouped according to species. There are altogether three thousand species of plants of which more than a third have been introduced from other places of the country and abroad.

The institute has grown to five rooms: plant community, classification, chemistry, physiology, and acclimatization. Working staff now numbered 430.

To serve socialist construction is the guiding principle of the research. The botanists said: "Our research projects are based on state and popular needs." One forest product that is especially valuable in medicine is a powder made from the resin of dracaena whose bark is scarlet. This powder stops bleeding, stimulates blood circulation, eliminates extravasated blood and promotes tissue growth. As early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907) this medicinal material was mentioned in

Xin Xiu Ben Cao (Materia Medica Newly Revised) by Su Jing. Sad to say, a thousand years later China was using an imported drug for this purpose despite local resources.

This styptic resin had to be rediscovered in China, and Xishuangbanna was in her botanists' minds as its logical locale. It was known that in East Africa, Southeast Asia and America the styptic material is obtained from plants related to the century, palm and leguminous plants. Experiments were made, and failed.

A whole year passed before a possible source of the resin was thought of. Cai Xitao, veteran botanist and director of the institute finally learned from botanical literature that it might be obtained from certain plants related to dracaena, such as was found in East Africa. This tree grew also among the many others in the forest of Xishuangbanna. "If we can't find a source of this styptic material in Xishuangbanna's treasure house of plants, how are we as botanists to be worth our salt in building the socialist new China?" they asked themselves.

And so this grey-haired professor in his sixties led an investigation team deep into the primitive forest, crossing mountains and making inquiries at Dai and Aini villages along the way. Finally they found several of the trees they were looking for on a mountain precipice formed of calcareous sandstone. The next effort was to locate saplings, and in this Professor Cai was so enthusiastic that he climbed a big tree together with the others, gathering its twigs. The result of this expedition was three mature dracaenas transplanted at the institute as well as 200 saplings and several kilogrammes of resin brought out of the forest. With careful cultivation all grew well, and styptic power of proven effectiveness has been produced since.

A certain species of mayten has been found that it is believed yields an anti-cancer substance with minimal side-effects. This has aroused wide attention, and scientists in other Asian countries, Africa and the American continent have also located the species. Meanwhile, work goes on in our country as well, the tree having been successfully transplanted from Xishuangbanna to other parts of China where studies are being carried out. Colchicine, found to be effective in the treatment of breast cancer particularly, has been isolated from climbing lily, a plant recognized as of therapeutic value in the 1960s.

A rare medicinal species which can be cultivated under glass like fungus is described in the ancient *Compendium of Materia Medica*: "Sweet, mild and non-toxic, used mainly in the treatment of partial deafness, joint ailments as a tonic beneficial to maintaining spirit and vitality, and strengthening bones and muscles. It will preserve youth and prolong life if taken over a long period." Subsequent use has endorsed it in the treatment of bronchitis, asthma, chronic hepatitis and high blood pressure.

Scientists have also found a source of additive for "freeze-proof" lubricant in the forest, called *hartia tetratapa* willd. The substance extracted is carbonic fatty acid 14, which keeps planes flying at -50° C, a substantial contribution to China's socialist construction.

Other species acclimatized to Xishuangbanna are several dozen rare medicinal and food accessory and commercial plants such as cinchona, benzoin, cassia, sandalwood, coffee, cocoa and pepper.

China's scientific research workers are continuing their efforts to gain more wealth from the country's "botanical kingdom" by introducing an increasing number of plants from other similar climates, to make Gourd Island still more beautiful than we found it in 1978.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Two weeks on a first visit to Xishuangbanna had shown me so many new things. They had been most enjoyable! Not that everything is perfect. Far behind many other parts of China at liberation in education, the level is comparatively low. There had been some indiscriminate felling of timber for industry before adequate controls could be enforced. The People's Government also called for the preservation of rare animal and plant species, with government personnel in charge.

With Xishuangbanna's rapid development, I would expect to find new changes towards modernization in this beautiful subtropical area were I to visit again in this 1980.

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