

HISTORY OF THE HMONG



History of The Hmong (Meo)
Mottin Jean

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— J. MOTTIN —

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THE HISTORY OF THE HMONG (MEO)

Jean Mottin

FOREWORD

I must first make a confession to the Hmong. Before coming to Asia I did not know about them, nor did I even know that there were people by the name of "Hmong" living in this world. It was only when I came to Thailand that I heard about them as people originally from China, and in love with the mountains. Doubtless they will easily forgive me as apart from their people in Laos, very few know about the French and where my Country is. The Hmong, as the French, are very poor in geography.

I was then posted at Lomsak, Phetchabun Province, with mission to visit Khek Noi, a small Hmong village, in the reserved forest on the way to Phitsanulok. I at once felt the desire to know more about the history of the people in order to know them better and I asked them, but soon realized that the Hmong are as poor in history as in geography, even in their own, probably due to the fact that having no writing they have kept no records of their past. I then looked for books, but the task was not easy, for, though the Hmong are better and better known, very little has been published concerning them so far. In addition good research would require to have free access to libraries in China. I nevertheless found some articles, and my notes becoming more complete I decided to compile them into the present booklet.

I did so for two reasons : first, in order that the Hmong may know about their history and the great feats of their ancestors. As you will see their past is most thrilling indeed and worth reading about it. This is why this English version has first been preceded by a Thai one more accessible to them. But then I was asked to do it for outsiders as well, that we too may come to know this small people, so often talked of, but so little understood,

As I was still writing, a friend of mine who knows the Hmong well told me : "I hope this history of yours will turn out good, if not the Hmong will never believe it. They do not know their history, but

still have the highest ideas about it." Well, as it is I hope the Hmong will believe me and love those lines, for in spite of the drawbacks that their forefathers often had to suffer, it seems to me that they still have good reasons to be proud of their past. Though they are but a small people, the Hmong still prove to be great men. What particularly strikes me is to see how this small race has always managed to survive though they often had to face much more powerful nations. Let us consider, for example, that the Chinese were 250 times more numerous than they, and yet never found their way to swallow them. The Hmong hardly number 3 million ; they have never possessed a country of their own, they have never got a king worthy of this name, and yet they have passed through the ages remaining what they have always wished to be, that is to say : free men with a right to live in this world as Hmong. Who would not admire them for that ?

I do hope that these few pages will not be the last ones, and that their history will still go on for a long time, as glorious as in the past. The Hmong living in Thailand must be faithful to the Country which has so graciously accepted them and loves them. This is what I do not cease repeating to them. Yet, on the other hand, they must not feel ashamed remain what they are. They have big shortcomings, as we all have, but they also enjoy great qualities, and their dress their feasts, their customs are so beautiful that we do not see why they should do away with them. The patrimony that their forefathers have passed on to them, sometimes at the price of their lives, they now have the duty to preserve.

Before closing, I also wish to thank Rev. Sister Mary Gemma Feeney very much for the kind help she gave me in the translation of those notes from the French. Her English is certainly the best and could truly be said the King's English as in fact she used to be a teacher to the King of this Country when he was still a young child. I know that she too loves the Hmong.

J. Mottin
Khek Noi,
Nov. 1978

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Khek Noi village in Thung Saleng National Park (alt. 725m)

A White Hmong group; notice the girls' pants and turban.





Li Mbi and family. *NOM NPIS LIS* *Spina* 22/10/90
 — Mother and son





On special occasions White Hmong girls wear the
traditional white skirt.

White Hmong ladies wear various turbans according to origin





Young men paying respects to their elders.

Collecting maize sometimes in september.





Man offering a chicken to the house spirit.

Shaman looking for the lost soul of a sick person.

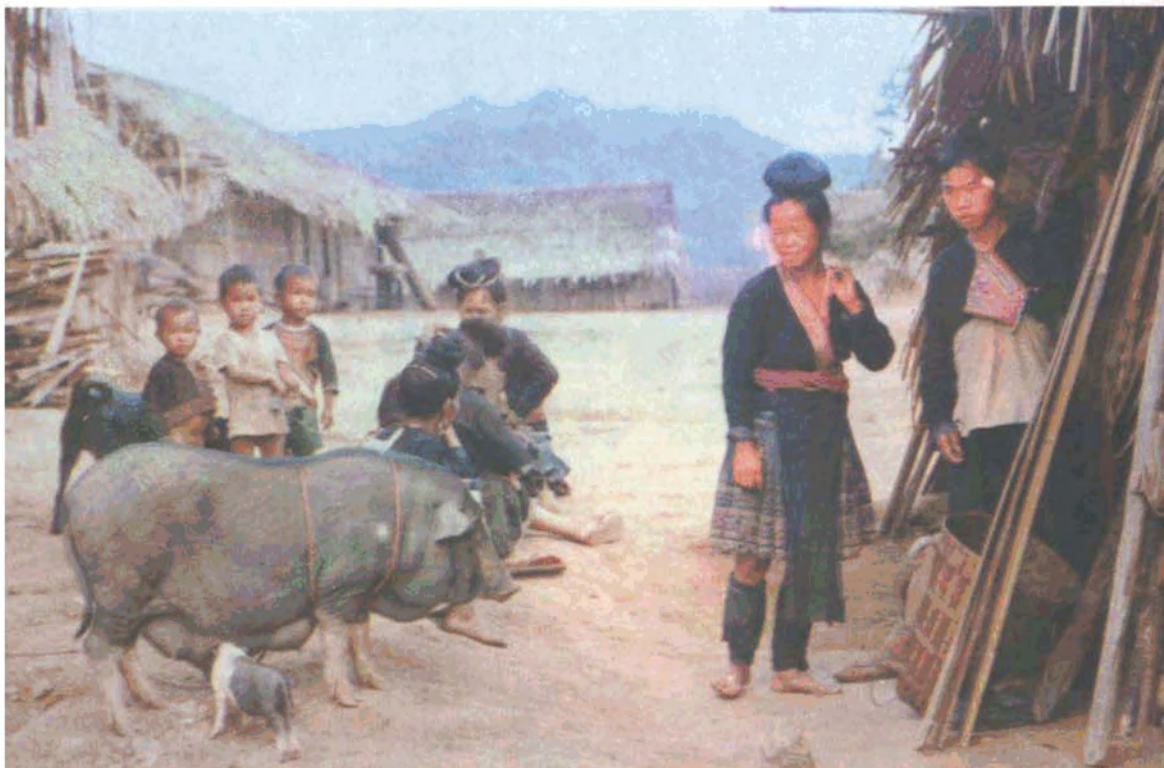




— Mai Yi and her sister Ma.

Jean Mottin and a White Hmong family.





Green Hmong ; notice the lady's dark blue skirt.

Young ladies waiting for young men to invite them to play.





Boys and girls playing ball on New Year's day.

"Flower" receiving the ball.





Mother carrying her baby on her back.

Young ladies (Notice their dress and skirts).





Mirror, mirror, which is the most beautiful in the village?

Two G.H. girls (sides) with W.H. friend (center).





Taking little brother to the fields.

Collecting mountain rice sometimes in November





Men blowing pipe and beating drum to accompany
a dead women's soul to the ancestors' kingdom.

Opium smoker.



NAME

The term Meo generally used in Thai, Laotian, Vietnamese, English, and French is actually the deformed pronunciation of the word "Miao" which the Chinese have for a long time given to that race, and which is now officially used by the Government of Red China, country which includes in the interior of its frontiers the source and the major part of these people.

The origin of the name is still an enigma. In Chinese it is written 苗 which represents "grass" or "vegetation" 艹 above a "field" or a "rice field" (田) It therefore signifies "growing shoots" or "green harvest".

Qualified people have tried to see an explanation to such a name. Some suppose that the Chinese wished to speak of "the inhabitants of the fields", "the sons of the soil", in other words meaning "the aboriginals". But this is a very free interpretation as it is not understood so by the Chinese. Others, therefore, prefer to establish a comparison with an old district of the He-nan Province, called by the same name, and it is a fact that, in the olden days, people were easily given the name of the region from which they came. But in addition to the fact that this still remains to be proved, we must still find out which of the two gave its name to the other. Still others have, for one reason or another, seen in the name a comparison with the miaul of a cat, and this is the interpretation that people hold on in Laos or Thailand at least when translating by "meo" which means "cat", even though it is not the same tone. But this interpretation remains again a mere supposition, as the word "miao", if really the "miaul of a cat", should be preceded by the classifier used for cats (猫). In other words we can see no reason which might have motivated the Chinese to designate these people by that name.

Whatever explanation we may find, the term "Miao-Meo" is not the name by which this ethnic group has chosen to designate

itself. In truth, as strange as that may seem to be, taken at least in its entirety, it has no name of its own. The present name has been imposed to them from outside, and it is in no way acceptable to them as it is, like any name imposed on a minority, impregnated with a certain pejorative shade.

In Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, these people call themselves by the name of “Hmong”, and prefer to be called by this name. The term, yet, must be properly understood. It cannot be applied to the whole ethnic group of the Miao which, as we shall see later, is divided into subsidiary groups of which the Hmong are only one. “Hmong” and “Miao” therefore are not synonymous. Nevertheless, as the “Miao” of these southern countries are effectively all “Hmong”, we do not see why this name should be refused to them, since it is theirs and pleases them.

MIAO-YAO, A QUITE DISTINCT GROUP

The ethnic group of the Miao – since in its general sense it must be designated by a name – is one of the easiest to identify. It constitutes, with the Yao, one of the 5 great families of the Asian languages, and it is well known that the criterion of linguistics is one of the most decisive to make out human groups.

These families are distinguished thus :

- Sino-Tibetan, including the Chinese, Tibeto-Burman, and Karen languages.
- Thai.
- Austro-Asiatic, including Vietnamese, and Khmer.
- Austro-Asiatic, including Malay, Cham, and Jarai.
- Finally, the Miao Yao family, with 3 Miao and 4 Yao languages.

In ancient times, the Miao and the Yao, linguistically related, must have been co-existent somewhere in the basin of the Yang-tze River. The Chinese have associated their names by calling them alternatively “Man”, “Miao”, or “Miao-Man”, in the sense of “non-Chinese”. However their latter manner of life seems to have separated

them. The Miao moved towards the West in dispersed groups of wandering nomads (see illustration page 8). Falling back on themselves, they became isolated in the mountains, and did not mix with the other races. Relatively speaking their speech was little influenced by the languages surrounding them, and inversely their tongue had no impact on those around them. The Yao, on the contrary, moved more directly towards the South, but did not scatter so widely (see same illustration). More sedentary, they had less difficulty in mixing with their neighbours, sometimes even to the point of giving up their own language, or on the contrary influencing strongly the local languages.

GROUPS AND SUB-GROUPS

Even if the Miao form a quite distinct ethnical group, nevertheless they are not completely homogenous.

They first form several groups the exact number of which varies according to which group is questioned. According to Moréchand the Miao are formed of 4 distinct groups which are in order of their importance: the Hmong, the Hmu, the Mong, and the Hmao. According to Lemoine they form only 3 groups: the Hmong, the Hmu, and the Kho Hsiong. In any case their names are definitively theirs. It is thus that they have named themselves between themselves. The signification of these names however we do not know. According to Mr Yang Dao, himself a Hmong, "Hmong" signifies "freeman" just like the word "Thai", but he does not justify his interpretation and nobody else amongst the Hmong seems to know about it. The Hmu, the Mong, and the Hmao live exclusively in China, and Moréchand admits that practically nothing is known of the Mong and the Hmao, to the point that even the transcription of their name is not sure. It is then above all by the Hmong that the Miao are known to us.

According to Moréchand, the Hmong in their turn divide into 3 sub-groups, known as: the White Hmong, the Green Hmong, and the Black Hmong. However this is also contested by Lemoine who thinks that the Black Hmong are in reality the Hmu.

This question of names seems to vary considerably indeed, sometimes without rhyme or reason. It is thus that the Green Hmong of Thailand have at least 3 other nicknames, which does not please them at all. The White Hmong surname them the Striped Hmong on account of the women's skirts which are more or less coloured in rays. In the region of Chiang Mai yet another name for them is the Blue Hmong, which seems more close to the truth. The Green Hmong, according to Mr. Person, call themselves Green only because they confound green and blue of which they use shades which are very close. Thus the Hmong say that the sky is green. Finally, as if that did not suffice for general confusion, the Thai call them the Black Hmong, seemingly without any reason, for, on the whole, they are less "black" than the others. Actually there are no Black Hmong in Thailand. But as we may already have guessed, all these names have been given on account of the characteristic colours of the clothes of each group, those of the women in particular.

In times so recent that it can still be seen occasionally, the White Hmong women wore a pleated skirt falling to the knees, while their legs were encased in puttees enclosing the ankles up to the knees in thick rolls. Today they don't find the skirt very practical, and the material being very cheap, they prefer to wear large black or blue trousers of Chinese fashion. They encircle their waist with a coloured sash, most often red, the end hanging in front like aprons, being rectangular in shape and embroidered. The "sailor-collar" of the corsage is large and rich. Lastly, the head is enveloped in a blue or black turban adorned differently according to the source of their origin. The men are only distinguished by their loose black trousers the bottom of which does not descend very low.

The women of the Green Hmong have remained faithful to the skirt, but its colour is a sombre blue, ornamented with laboriously executed patterns done in wax, and with a motif lovingly embroidered on the lower part. The belt is red and the aprons mostly black as amongst the White Hmong, but the corsage has a collar about 4 fingers narrower, with curved edges. In addition to this they do not wear a

turban, but a fine band, ornamented with red pompoms, wound round an enormous chignon. The men wear the same kind of trousers as the White Hmong, but the bottom of the trousers nearly touches the ground, like those of the Arabs, so that one can ask oneself if there is not question of a skirt drawn in round the ankles. They often wear a black satin toque with a red pompom on the top as the Chinese used to have.

As to the Black Hmong, they are unknown in Thailand, and are so few in Laos that it is difficult to find them. This may be due to the fact that feeling very isolated they have adopted not only the costume, but also the language of the White or Green Hmong, which has made them still more difficult to distinguish.

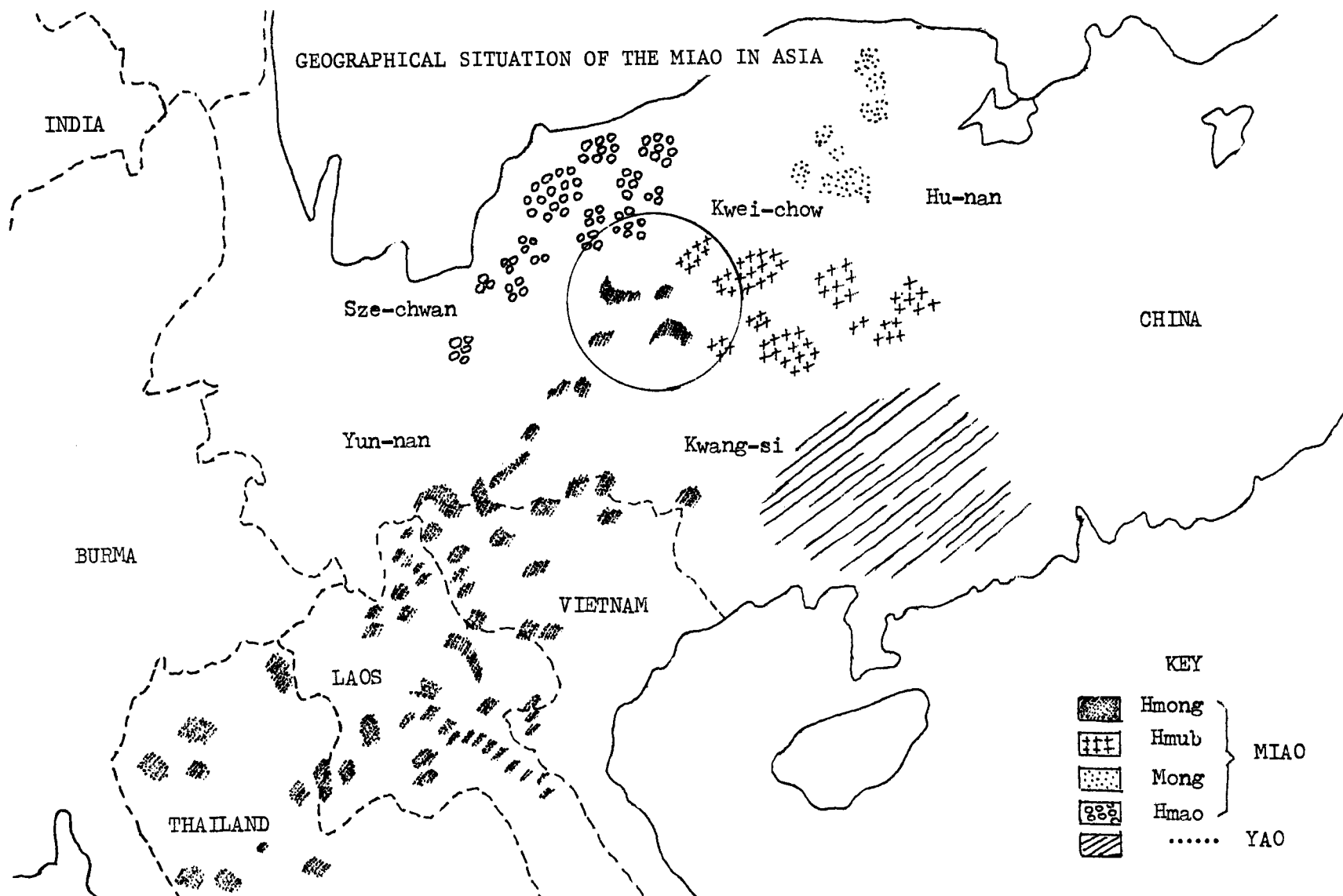
A characteristic trait of all these people is that the different groups avoid mixing.

If by chance they live together, the village divides into different localities. Many even regard the others as dangerous enemies, and sometimes relate horrifying stories about them. For example the White Hmong sometimes speak of the Green Hmong as being inhuman and capable of the greatest cruelties even to the extent of nourishing themselves on the flesh of little children they have stolen.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISSEMINATION

Originally coming from the basin of the Yang-tze – at least so far as one can know with certitude – the Miao at first migrated towards the West in the mountainous and rugged regions of Kwei-chow and the neighbouring provinces : Hu-nan, Kwang-si, Yun-nan, Sze-chwan. It is in Kwei-chow that the closest points of likeness are to be found among the different dialects of the Miao, which seems to point to a second important centre of implantation. But since then, in a recent movement of immigration, certain groups have once again begun to seek their fortune further South, not only in Yun-nan and Kwang-si, but also in the mountainous regions of Vietnam and Laos, and lastly in Thailand.

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION OF THE MIAO IN ASIA



Looking now at a map it could be seen that the Miao are situated in a zone limited on the North by the Yang-tze, on the East by the 110 th meridian, on the West by the Burmese frontier which they have never crossed or very little, while to the South they have spread to the North of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, extreme southern point of their advance. However, although all are included in the same zone, yet the different ethnic groups are not intermingled and each has taken a different direction.

The Hmong are to be found in the North-East, near Quinan, with perhaps a slight deviation towards Libo. The Hmu, nearer to the centre of their dissemination, are to be found to the East of Kwei-chow and in Yun-nan. The Hmong, also closer to the centre of their break-up near the West of Kwei-chow, moved either towards the South reaching Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, or to the West towards Yun-nan. As to the Hmao, they settled to the North of Kun-ming.

This accepted, what strikes one at once is the extreme dispersion of all these people. The maps do not give a clear idea of the way in which they are scattered, and the marks which indicate their positions are deceptive, as those people are always on the move. In truth, impoverishment of the soil, misunderstandings, epidemics, fear of spirits and wars, oblige them to emigrate unceasingly. It is never a case of having to do with thickly populated areas...One of the characteristics of these groups of people is that they never form urban centres. If a few groups of houses are to be seen, these are grouped without any plan, without any streets.

Except for private houses, no buildings exist which are specially destined for common use. For example, no communal house for the reunions of the notables of the village are to be seen, nor for religious ceremonies. Left free in immense natural surroundings difficult of access, these people never take root, but come and go as their necessities demand.

However this brief geographical sketch in latitude would not be complete if no mention was made of their repartition in altitude. This fact has struck many observers. Surrounded as they are by the

mountainous aspect of these regions, the different ethnic groups are to be found established at very different but precise heights. Thus the Thai, the Lao, and the Vietnamese are allergic to the mountains and live only in the valleys. Above 50 meters live the Karens, the Kha, or the Black Thai. Above 400 meters live the Yao, and the Lolo. And finally at the highest altitudes for the people of these regions, between 1,000 and 2,000 meters if it is possible, live the Hmong. Seek among the highest and most inaccessible mountains and there you will find them, for it is there they find themselves at home !

Many have sought the explanation of this phenomenon, and some have tried to explain it by the fact that the Hmoung coming the last to these domains had to be satisfied with the highest lands not yet populated. But that does not explain why the Kha who were the first occupants of the land had to fall back on the lower slopes. It is impossible to think that the Hmong were not capable of chasing out the older proprietors because they are excellent fighters and the better armed among the people of the minorities. Without doubt, the reason lies in their past.

DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

The demographic situation of the Miao is difficult to estimate with exactitude. We will be satisfied by giving the opinion of those who were especially interested in this problem, but the variants underline clearly that these estimates must be received with caution.

	G. Young 1962	Lebar 1964	Morechand 1968	Lemoine 1972	Yang Dao 1972	Official Statistics
CHINA VIETNAM LAOS THAILAND	45,800	2,500,000	2,680,000 220,000 60,000 5,000	160,000	250,000 300,000	2,740,000 219,514 145,000 58,000 (55,000)
TOTAL			2,965,000			3,162,514
HMONG AMUB MONG HMAO			1,285,000 900,000 440,000 110,000	1,700,000		
In Thailand GREEN HMONG WHITE HMONG	26,600 19,200					29,000 26,000

- Gordon Young, in “The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand”, 1962.
- Lebar, in “Ethnic groups of mainland South-East Asia”, page 65.
- Moréchand, in “Le Chamanisme des Hmong” ; but the figure he gives for the Hmong population in Laos only stands for the single Province of Xieng Khouang before 1960. Besides he has corrected himself in “The Many Languages and Cultures of the Laos” where he gives the figure as 300,000. The figure he gives for Thailand is manifestly lower than the reality.
- Lemoine, in “Un village Hmong du Haut Laos”, C.N.R.S.
- Yang Dao, in his thesis “Difficultés du développement économique et social des populations Hmong du Laos”, 1972.
- Official statistics of China, in “Précis sur les langues des minorités Chinoises” of 1953. The dictionary of the New China, Hsin Houa Tsen Tien, estimates them at 2,510,000.
- Official statistics of North Vietnam in a census of 1960.
- Official statistics of Thailand given by the Tribal Research Centre of Chiang Mai, in November 1970 (58,000), and an unpublished report of American experts in 1973 (55,000).

HISTORY

IN CHINA

The Miao before the Chinese

Basing himself on the originality of their physical traits, their religious beliefs, and their language, Fr. Savina felt himself warranted in separating the Miao from all other ethnic groups of Asia, and to situate their origin somewhere in Mesopotamia.

It is true the Miao have a rather fair skin, nearly white. Their hair easily becomes reddish to the point that certain adults, but above all the children, are light complexioned. Equally, listening to their legends, one is forced to admit their surprising similitude with the Babylonians narratives concerning the creation of the world. These people too speak not only of a unique God, but of the creation of the world, the creation of the first man, the creation of an original couple, of the first sin, of a deluge, of a "tower of Babel", of the confusion of tongues, and the hope of the coming of a savior.

Relying besides on certain other traditions Fr. Savina makes the Miao pass by the far North before finally entering China. There is, in truth, allusions to a region "behind the back of China", "which was covered with snow and ice, and where the days and the nights lasted for six months alternately". "The trees were rare and very small, and the people were clothed in furs".

All these accounts are truly very troubling indeed, as it is impossible to find out where the Miao brought them from. Yet, none of them is sufficient a proof, and we should avoid making any too hasty deductions. Other nations, even as far as in America, have like legends regarding the origin of the world, without having passed by Mesopotamia.

Alas ! this is about all we can learn of the Miao from themselves. They have no books, no monuments, nor are they interested in history, not even their own. Outside these legends coming from a

very far off time, nothing else of their traditions is known except for the fact that they have lived for a very long time in contact with the Chinese, who have left a very strong mark on them.

It is then to the history of China that we must go if we want to get some information about them. It is with China to begin with, that we can really associate them.

Of their pre-history only one thing is certain, that is that the Miao were in China before the Chinese, for it is the latter themselves who indicate the presence of the Miao in the land, which they, the Chinese, were gradually infiltrating, and which was to become their own country.

First contacts with the Chinese (3 rd. cent. B.C.)

The Chinese of antiquity would have left the Great Plain between Loyang and Taishan about the 3 rd. millenary before Christ. They would have gone up the valley of the Wei river to the West, reached the Shantung to the East, and the Han and the Huaihe in the South during the 2 nd. millenary. They must have reached the banks of the Yang-tze during the first half of the 1st millenary, and finally infiltrated the southern regions, rather rapidly to begin with between the 3rd cent. B.C. and the 3rd cent. A.D., but more slowly in the ensuing period.

This progress, actually, was made in different ways. For while they became the masters of the North at the price of fierce battles, they assimilated the South by a long drawn out type of osmosis, which on one side gave impetus to the "chínisation" when it was accepted by the local population, but on the other hand forced other groups reluctant to accept chinese civilisation to keep on their own in more distant and less favoured districts. It was that slow but smooth progression towards the South which rather affected the Miao.

The first Chinese writings which mention them date from about the 3rd. cent. B.C. They speak of the "Sam Miao" that is to say the "3 Miao", but the expression must be understood in a more general plural and translated by "the Miao". Allusion is made there to a

relatively precise ethnic group. Nevertheless after that time up to the 10th cent. A.D. no more mention is made of the "Miao" as such. Instead we are told about the "Man", term which in fact designates all the "non-Chinese" populations. We must wait till the 10th cent, to find again mention of the "Miao", and it first seem to refer really to our "3 Miao" of previous times. But then to complicate things still more, between the 17th and 18th cent. this same Miao word took a broader sense in its turn to include all the non-Chinese populations of the South-West, our Miao being the most well known of them. Sometimes it is true, the two words are found together in expressions such as "Miao-Man" or "Man-Miao". That is to say the Chinese were more or less slow in discovering with whom they were dealing.

However that might be, the first texts localised them in the basin of the Yang-tze, which however they left before the beginning of our era to go South-West right down to what actually is the Kwei-chow Province.

They were already mountaineers. They had no political ambition and only desired to live independently. Even though there was no question of pitched battles, the first contacts were not exempt from friction, and in 47 A.D., in Hu-nan, for example, for the first time a rising was indicated which was only pacified two years later.

Thus from the beginning the Chinese realized that this small people would not let itself be assimilated easily, but the Miao also learned that the new invaders would give them no quarter when an occasion presented itself.

Under the direct authority of the local lords

(3rd cent. B.C. – 15th A.D.)

The progress of the Chinese in the South, and particularly in the South-West, was so slow that the most recent studies tend to point out that they did not attain their actual limits until quite a recent epoch. Actually in the 18th cent. A.D. the Empire was less than one third of what it is today, and 80 to 90 % of the Yun-nan/Kwei-chow plateau in particular was still inaccessible to its officials.

There was therefore a great deal of independence in those regions, and a large part of them was still controlled by small local chiefs, who according to their good fortune could even raise their territories into temporary kingdoms. As they were very vulnerable however, those free "kingdoms" had often to join together into loose federations composed of different tribes, still independent one from the other, and which even if they had to join momentarily to fight a common enemy, would never accept the predominance of any other ethnic group.

Facing these local Lords the Chinese at once took an attitude more diplomatic than military. Instead of trying to fight them and take their domains, which they felt they could not allow themselves to do, they sought to utilize them. The Kings were submitted, but they were not removed from office. They kept their hereditary titles, and were responsible for the local administration. They had only to pay tribute. In brief, they were practically in the same situation as the heads of the Districts of the Empire.

Certain names of these so-called Kingdoms in the region of Kwei-chow have come down to us. That of Zang Ze, for example, in the 7th cent. B.C. ; that of Chu in the West, in the 4th cent. B.C. ; or that of Ye Long, in the South-West, whose King, Zhu Wang by name or "the Bamboo King, was so called as he had been rescued when very small by a young girl from a bamboo floating along a river. We are told that he enjoyed a certain kind of cult given him by the Miao of Hu-nan.

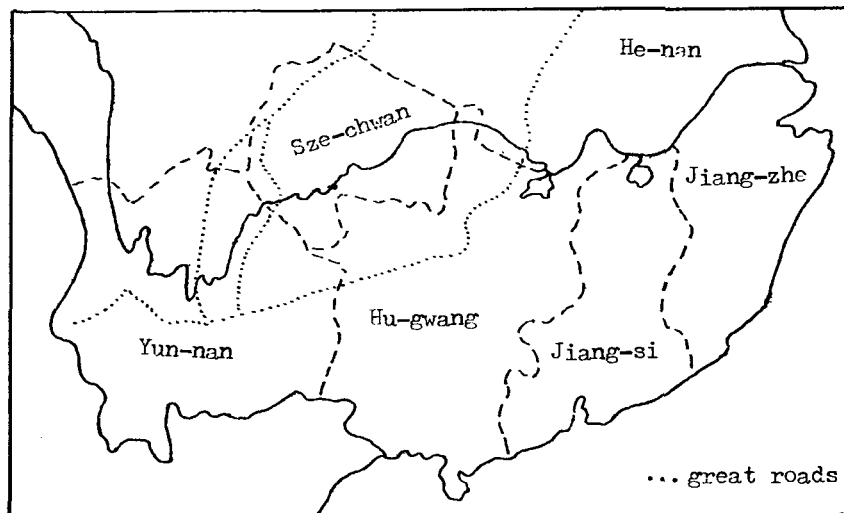
The emissaries who came carrying the tribute of grain, cloth, horses, corn, and wax to the Emperor, have been described by the Chinese as being very savage : "with hair tangled, black faces, dressed in the skins of tigers, and with the tail of a tiger fixed in their hair as a kind of ornament".

Perhaps there were some Miao amongst them, but it is not sure as they are not mentioned any more. If due to bad circumstances they were forced to take part in some fighting, they certainly did their utmost to by-pass those Kingdoms which rose and fell around them.

A shared administration (15th – 17th cent.)

At the end of the 12th cent. the Chinese suddenly pushed themselves very hard towards the South and the South-East. To the South they set up expeditions against Vietnam in 1285, and Java in 1292. In the South-East they opened war against the state of Dali, ruined the place, and seized the whole of the Yun-nan region which was definitively annexed to the Empire in 1253. They then drew further into Burma where they took Pagan in 1287.

The annexion of Yun-nan then obliged them to cut a more direct and more practical road than the old one running through the Sze-chwan Province, and this of course drew their attention to the massif of Kwei-chow which was still shared between the 3 Provinces of Yun-nan, Sze-chwan, and Hu-kwang.

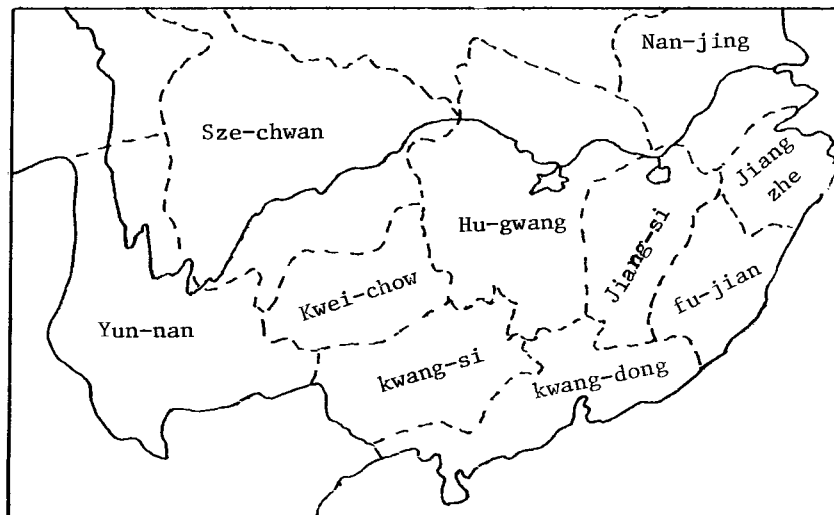


THE SOUTH-EAST UNDER THE YUAN

Military zones were first created. They were called "Wei" or "Suo" according to their importance, and on them depended the administrative divisions called "Jun" or "Yi".

Then, little by little, the old lords were pushed away. Instead Chinese officials were placed at the head of the military zones, while the administration of the civil divisions was left to the care of the local inhabitants, as it was still impossible to go deep into those wild areas. People had to pay taxes and satisfy the demands of military service, but could arrange their differences between themselves.

The non submission of the last great lords was the pretext for their definite ruin and for the formation of the Kwei-chow Province. In 1413 the Emperor had two chiefs of the military regions executed, and their lands were confiscated to form the new Province. Its



THE KWEI-CHOW UNDER THE MING

administration was then to be shared by three different offices called "the Three Si", that is to say: the Office of Administration properly speaking, the Office of Supervision which was to control the officials and serve as a Court of Appeal, and finally the Military Office.

In addition the new Province was divided into 3 Prefectures or "Fu", 4 Sub-prefectures or "Zhou", and 75 Cantons or "Zhang-kwang-si".

The Ming did all they could to ameliorate the system used by their predecessors. All the administrative units under the Fu continued to employ local chiefs, and it is from that time that mention is made of the "Tu Si" designating the officials belonging to the military hierarchy, and the "Tu Kwan" designating the native officials belonging to the civil hierarchy. Their offices were hereditary and could even be transmitted to women. They had absolute authority and the central government made no attempt to find out how the local power was established as long as peace was maintained and all dues paid. But the chief had to justify his title, foresee who would be his successor, and mark the limits of his territory, matters which could give pretext to intervention. The successors were bound to have a certain Chinese culture, and with this end in view the children were urged to attend the school of the Province or even those of the Capital. Indeed every effort was made to make these "savages" visit the Empire, especially those who came to pay tribute to the Emperor, that they might admire what the Chinese had done, and by contact become familiar with them.

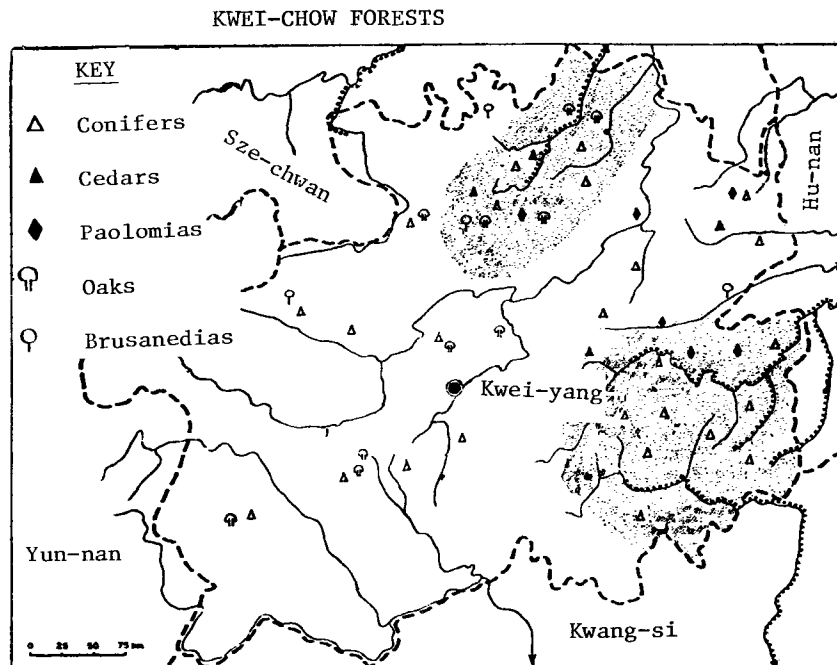
The Kwei-chow : a den of bandits

How then did the new Province look ?

It is important to have a correct idea about it as it has been on their geographical surroundings that the attitude of the Miao has depended a lot. They would never have had the history we know of if they had lived in the plains.

At that time the region is already immense, well in proportion with the scale of China, and it has increased rapidly through the centuries, having today a length of 600 kilometres, and a breadth of 400, thus being equal in area to one-half the size of Thailand.

It is bounded on the North by the Sze-chwan and the Hu-kwang, and on the South by the Yun-nan and the Kwang-si Provinces.



The whole of it is made up of a vast mountainous area having an average altitude of 800 metres, but forming, however, two distinct parts. One consists of high mountains which are the prolongation of the Yun-nan ranges on the West, with an average height of 1,500 to

2,000 metres, and peaks of 3,000 metres. The rest consists of a lower plateau with an altitude of 600 to 1,000 metres. The large streams of water thus have their original source coming from the West and from there flow either to the North-East or to the South.

However the relief is cut by a central pass crossing the whole Province from East to West thus looking, according to a writer, like "the body of a bee with two bulges, one to the North the other to the South, and a medial "squeeze".

This pass was controlled mid-way by Kwei-yang, capital of the Province, alike compared to "the chest of a man whose arms would be made by the direction of the roads with their sub-prefectures and garrisons". It was just this pass that attracted the attention of the Emperors desiring as they did to find a way of communication going towards the west.

The soil being chalky the relief is very irregular. Far from forming an even plateau the mountains make it look very wild. Their slopes are abrupt and their summits terminate in rocks "sharp like swords" or "pointed like the claws of a wolf". One risks being lost in their winding labyrinths.

The valleys are so shut in and so deep, that it is nearly impossible to cross them directly and a traveller must take the little paths running along the slopes thus lengthening his route indefinitely. Mountain streams sink abruptly into subterranean passages, thus forming caves or grottos sometimes very deep. And these are to be found everywhere.

To this rugged relief is added a severe and unhealthy climate. From one district to another, from one day to another, there are very great variations of temperature. It snows, it rains, the wind blows! The humidity is intense and brings with it malaria and all kinds of fevers. So the Province has a bad reputation, and one often hears the old proverb: "At Kwei-chow one cannot find a single tenant with more

than 3 sq feet of level land, the sun never shines for more than 3 days running, and one can never find 3 cents in the pocket of any inhabitant". The Chinese themselves still do not hold the Province in esteem, and this is why it has never been densely populated.

Although the land is elevated the Province on the whole is very irregularly wooded. To the West and in the centre the mountains are generally bare. But to the East there are two immense forests renowned for their richness. They extend one to the North, the other to the South, to regions of a lower altitude, where the sharp summits of the mountains give way to a more rounded relief.

Many different varieties of trees are found here : conifers, cedars Tong trees from the seeds of which oil is extracted, oak trees, Japanese cedars used for cabinet making, lacquer trees, Chu trees from the pith of which paper is made, and Nan Mu trees which are special to those regions and very precious ; they were used at least since the beginning of the Ming, in the construction of imperial buildings...., and many other species, never forgetting the humble bamboo !

All this timber was more and more in demand. The trees were felled by the local inhabitants, and transported, sometimes very far, by waterways.

We have already mentioned the imperial road. This was very useful indeed, though still in rather poor condition. Till the end of the last century at least, this main road was not more than 2,50 metres broad. As other ways of this importance it was paved with large but irregular stones about 15 to 60 centimetres broad. In the slopes those would rather look like large steps, which were so slippery during the rainy season that travellers had to put on wild grass shoes.

Besides this main road there was practically nothing else but small Miao paths running without any plan, crossing one another at random, and so winding indeed that they could be said "as twisted as the intestines of a goat", or "as tangled as a bunch of hair" No use to

say that they were not safe at all, and a Chinese traveller would never dare go alone by them.

Bridges were of two kinds. Some were made of stone, with semi-circular arches, the reflexion of which in the water would make them look like the reflexion of as many moons. Some were narrow flying bridges hanging on huge chains with thick planks put across to make the way.

Travellers usually went on foot, but high ranking civil servants would often use small mountain horses, which were noted for their strength. They changed the horses at different stages when on a long journey. Travelling chairs also were used. These were carried by as many as 8 coolies, but other men helped them when the slopes were too steep and pulled the chair with ropes.

It is easy to understand that such routes were never safe. Many of the travellers, who on setting out were well off, found themselves stripped of everything before the end of the journey. In the matter of brigandage the Miao as well as the Chinese rivalled one another in audacity and astuteness. But it is equally easy to understand that the Province became a sort of impenetrable fortress for the people who lived in it. All its formation favoured this : its mountains, its forests, and also its multiple caves which were so many dens for the rebels as well as hide-outs for their supplies and cattle. The Chinese were powerless to dislodge them. Even some outlaws came from far away to take refuge there. In the year 1681, for instance, General Hwang Ming was defeated and fled there with a hundred of his men for fear of the Emperor's anger. They lived there in safety for 20 years. The same, in 1682, another defeated General, General Ma Bao, had to flee to Yun-nan across the south-eastern forests. On his way, the Miao confiscated his weapons, but let him go alive. General Hwang Ming, who was somewhere about, taught then the Miao how to use these weapons, and the famous flint rifle of the Miao seems to have originated from this incident.

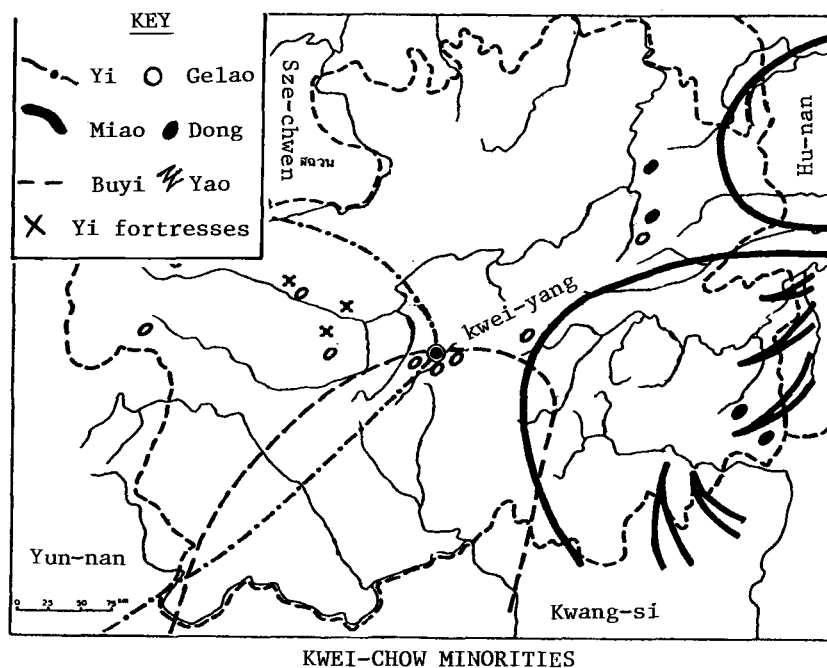
The road leading to the Miao was well known in China by all those looking for some kind of shelter, and the last one to have escaped by it has probably been the most celebrated of them all, Mao Tse Tung himself. We shall speak of it again later.

A people frowning at chinese rule

We have seen that due to want of direct knowledge the Chinese had first been satisfied to call all the non-chinese by the generic name of "Man". Not until the end of the 10th cent. did they begin to distinguish between the different tribes, and even then there was much confusion. There was a tendency to name them after the region they lived in, by the name of their leader, or according to the colour of their garments.

True enough these tribes were divided into so many groups and sub-groups that even today we are not sure to know them all.

In the 18th cent. "Miao Albums", or sketches depicting the minorities of Kwei-chow, have left us the description of 99 different



*Position of some of the minorities
living in Kwei-chow in the 18th century.*

groups of them. But some look so similar and are designated by so slightly different names that one may wonder whether they do not refer to the same people.

In 1962, the Institute of Ethnology in Peking, for its part, numbered only 52 of them, the best known being the Lolo or Yi, the Zhong, the Gelao, the Yao, the Dong, and of course our Miao forming the most important group of them all.

How numerous were they actually ?

In the middle of the 18th cent. the total population of Kweichow was reckoned at 3 million inhabitants, with about 56 % of non-Chinese. A hundred years later this percentage was inverted after the slaughter and the migrations following the great insurrections, and the non-Chinese were not more than 45 %. But in 1965 their number had risen again to 60 %.

Amongst them perhaps the Miao numbered about 700,000 ?

They were spread all over the Province, but with two main groups : one in the North-East along the Hu-nan frontiers and beyond, and one in the South-East. As it can easily be seen they were feeling attracted by the forests. They were practically non-existent to the North of the capital.

The Chinese distinguished them into two groups, namely : the "Ripe" or "Green Miao", and the "Green" or "Uncooked Miao", according to whether or not they were submissive to the government. These terms prevailed till World War I.

They lived perched on the mountains or on high plateaus in fortified villages called "zhai" surrounded by stockades which could be many kilometres in circumference. Inside the enclosure there was always a spring or a pool to irrigate the fields, and a large storehouse for stocking cereals. As to the houses they were made of interlacing leaves, and the roofs of wooden tiles or thatch. On entering a house, to the right there was a big bed which served for all, and on the bed a big stove for heating, unless the stove was dug in the ground in the middle of the room.

For the Miao the village was their single political unit, because unlike other groups they had no hereditary chiefs, nor even a chief for their clan. The chief of the village was not elected. but he

imposed himself by his personality, especially if he knew the Chinese language. It was only when they were recognized as chiefs by the Chinese authorities that some of the leaders would extend their influence over the surrounding villages. They could then raise taxes in kind to maintain a small army, and it was this food that filled the storehouses already mentioned. Like other officials they often exceeded their rights.

Although they tried to have rice fields on the plateaus or in the valleys, the Miao traditionally practised farming by burning down the forests. After making a clearing in the forest, they burned the wood and planted in the ashes, and this cycle recurred about every three years. They had buffaloes, but they did not use them for the work of ploughing, which they carried out by hand. They planted rice, maize, sesame, millet, wheat, beans, tea, cotton, and hemp. Rice was not necessarily their most important crop. Maize, introduced in the 17th century, had been a great success everywhere with the "Green Miao", who, at times, could grow nothing else. As to opium, it was yet unknown, and did not appear before the 19th century.

In addition to those cultures, the Miao were also breeding buffaloes, horses, pigs, sheep, hens, and ducks, so that they were entirely self-supporting. The buffaloes were offered in sacrifice or for barter, and the soldiers covered the skins with pieces of metal and used them as a breast-plate. As for the horses they were renowned not only in Kwei-chow but outside the Province as well. They were small but wiry, and were in much demand as tributes for the imperial army. Therefore it was not unusual for one family to possess a dozen.

These people did not only plunder the forest. In fact they also helped to exploit it, and even worked to replant it. They would cut down the trees on a mountain and then roll the logs into a river running through their country. The Chinese dealer down the valley would receive them, gather them into a raft, and take them to some town. The trees of these regions were very fine, and with their wood the most beautiful coffins of the Empire were made. Liu-zhou had got a name for this kind of work, and it was from there that the Chinese saying had come : "Eat in Kwang-chow, but die in Liu-zhou"

The Miao were also making themselves all the objects they needed for their work and for hunting. We will only mention here their very famous blunderbuss, and their knife.

At the time of his birth a boy received as a present the weight of iron necessary for making a big knife which he would always carry with him after his adolescence. This knife was lovingly forged, and reforged several times during the youth of the child, and to test it a man would place himself along a road and wait for a buffalo to pass by. Then he would brandish the knife and if the blade was sufficiently good the beast could have its neck cut through before it had time to feel anything.



*Pictures of Hmong men and women in Kwei-chow,
at the very beginning of this century.*

Both men and women wore heavy clothing as the climate was very cold. The women wore a skirt but some began to change it to the more practical Chinese trousers (unless, perhaps, pressure had been put on them by the government). Their embroideries were so beautiful that the Chinese reproduced them in their art albums, offered them as presents, or even presented them among the number of objects given in

tribute to the Court. Their jewellery was made of massive silver, perhaps due to the fact that the Province possessed several mines of this metal, which therefore was easy to find.

The feasts seemed to have been more varied than they are nowadays, but the most famous of them was already the celebration of the New Year. This did not coincide with the Chinese New Year, but was taking place during the third month of the winter. Boys and girls threw a plaited bamboo ball covered with fine silk to one another, or danced around a pole called "the spirit pole". These games were actually just a pretext for courtship. The young people were looking for a match, but the boy did not marry the girl until she had brought a child into the world. They also drank alcohol which had been carefully prepared. After having made it, the young girls would filter it and pour it into jars which they sealed with clay. They then would sink these jars in the mud of a shallow pond, and draw them out when the water rose.

But those people were a mystery to the Chinese. Not that they altogether despised them, on the contrary, they sometimes recognized in them values equal to their own, and were inclined to think that the Miao were simply Chinese who had remained in a state of barbarism. But they just could not understand how those people could be so attached to their forests, live isolated and independent, without organization or law, and despised the Chinese civilization, which, to them, was the only way to guarantee order and happiness.

Out of patience with them they wished to win them back.

Reforms, revolts, emigrations (18th and 19th cent.)

For too long the fire had been smouldering under the ashes.

The system of administration employed up to this time had given rise to many abuses. Assured of the heredity of their office, made too strong with their absolute power, the Tu Si after making a pretence of submission to every new Emperor, actually brought a reign of disorder and terror. If someone did not please them they had him tied up and

executed without trial. In addition the family of the victim had to pay an indemnity called "the tax for soiling the knife". They also went so far as to draw in advance ten times the amount of taxes they themselves had to pay to the Chinese authorities, and they were themselves at the head of the brigands demanding ransom in a neighbour's territory!

Under the Ming practically not a single year had passed without troubles surging up from one side or the other, to such an extent that at the end of the 16th century the Chinese had built to the West of Hu-nan a big wall 150 kilometres long and 3 metres high to protect their land from the Miao incursions.

Weakened for a time by the divisions inside the Empire after the fall of the Ming, the Emperors could do nothing. But as soon as order was restored, and because of the continual demands of the governors, a reform called "Gai tu gui lui" was introduced at the beginning of the 18th century. Among other things it was stipulated that the Tu Si rebels had to be subdued by any means, and all their goods seized for the benefit of the Empire. All private settlements of accounts were henceforth forbidden, and on that account all arms were confiscated. It was also forbidden to the Miao to sacrifice buffaloes, because these customs impoverished them and incited them to plunder. Finally the men had to have their hair cut short and to dress in Chinese clothes.

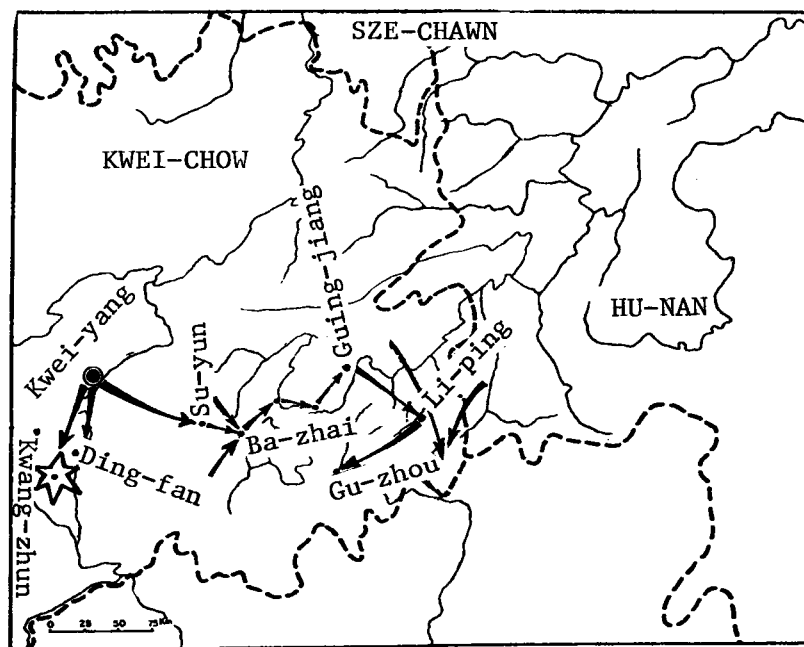
This reform seemed clearly in favour of the common people ; but do they always see the difference between the essential and the accidental ? Could they understand ? What picture had they about those so-called "reformers" ? The Chinese were in fact coming in larger and larger number in their Province. They always took the best lands, and as soon as they had gained some more fields they were at once taking more and more advantage on the local population little prepared to defend itself. The taxes received from the people were an injustice to them as they did not get any advantage in return. In addition those taxes were far too heavy for small land owners. These people knew nothing of the art of speculation in commerce. They took loans at 5% per month, fell into debt, and found themselves dispossessed in no time, and if by chance they tried to resist, the Chinese "destroyed their houses, killed the men, and reduced their wives and children to slavery".

No, in truth, this reform made no impression on them. But the Chinese were determined to impose it on them, and the occasion to do so was very soon given to them by the inhabitants themselves.

The wars for the reform lasted 8 full years, from 1725 to 1733.

In 1725, in the Ding-fan and Kwang-shun region to the south of Kwei-yang, the Zhong carried on a scandalous commerce with Chinese or Miao captives, and their leader, A Jin by name, proclaimed himself King of the Miao. He was arrested and executed.

In 1727 Miao brigands were reported to be hidden in the very heart of the forests in the South-East. Prince Ortai, then Governor of the Province, at once had those responsible arrested. But this local incident was immediately taken as a pretext to clear the region definitively.



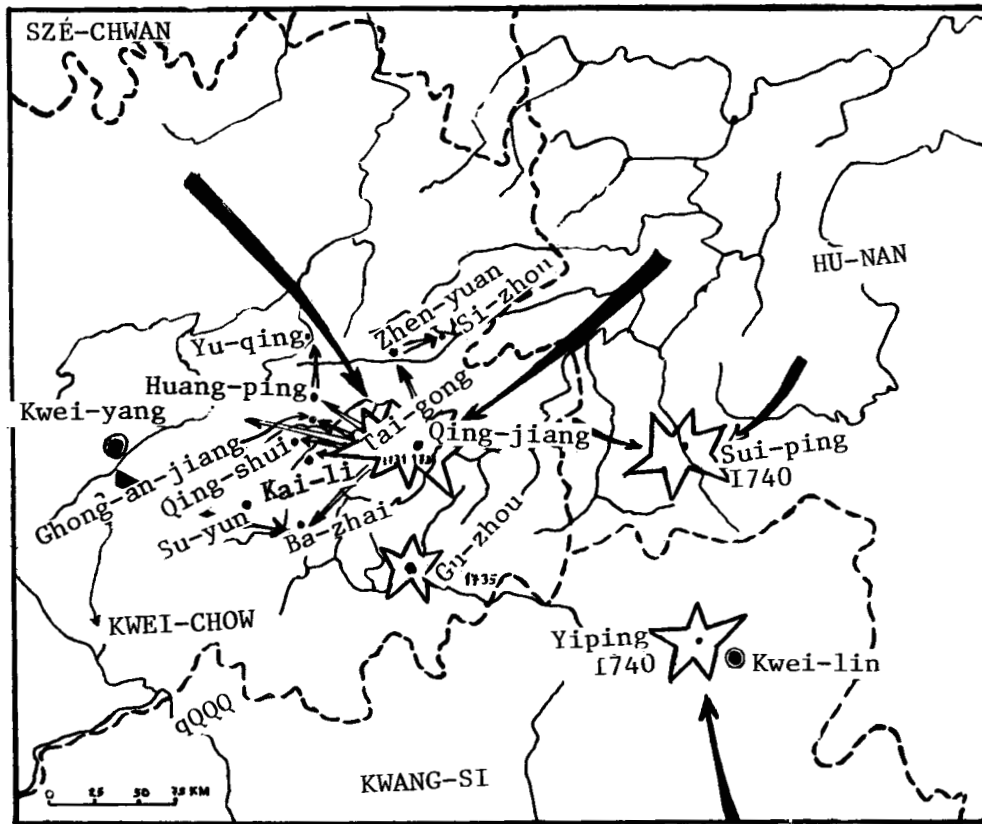
Expeditions of the Han from 1724 to 1730.

In 1728 Prince Ortai put the matter in the hands of General Zhang Kwang Si, asking him to be responsible for the attack. As the Miao held the two eastern rivers and as it was necessary to have a route opened for vital supplies, General Zhang Kwang Si decided to attack from the West even though it was further off. Leaving Kwei-yang he first reached Du-yun, imperial town, then Ba-zhai which was taken by surprise and at once surrounded by fortifications. The following year he reached Qing-jiang and made his troops cross the river at night. Those who resisted were massacred, their boats confiscated, and posts were established to control the traffic along the river. In 1730 he continued his route into the direction of Li-ping and Gu-zhou. There the Miao had built up an army of 10,000 men, equipped with guns and canons on the model of those which Ma Bao had left them fifty years before. But they were crushed, and with the arms of the vanquished Ortai built an iron pillar of 3.30 metres in height on an island in the river to the south of Kwei-chow.

The reform then had to be taken seriously. It had already subdued all the South, but the Miao of other regions were to start new revolts.

The first rising took place from 1734 to 1737.

In 1734 the Miao rose up from the forest of the South-East, in the region situated between Qing-jiang and Tai-gong, and blocked the route. Then in the space of a month they took possession of Qing-jiang, Zhen-yuan, Kai-li where they massacred one thousand of the inhabitants, Ghong-an-jiang where they destroyed all the houses on the banks of the river, Huang-ping, Yu-qing, and Si-zhou. This sudden reversal of the situation can probably be explained by the fact that the Miao had acted so rapidly that the Chinese had no time to interfere. But the situation was nonetheless very precarious.



First rising of the Miao from 1734 to 1737.

Peking now gave orders to call up all the troops of Kwei-chow as well as those of the surrounding Provinces, and the Chinese disposed of three fronts facing Tai-gong, Qing-jiang, and Ba-zhai. The Miao, terrified by the turn events had taken, surrendered, but some were immediately executed, with the effect that this arose in others the desire to renew the struggle. Many of them after killing their wives and children once more faced the imperial army, and they in fact succeeded in blocking their supply route.

Furious, the Emperor dismissed the Governor, and this was replaced by Zhang Kwang Si himself. He then attacked the Miao separately, and cornered them on the plateaus where, in their turn, they

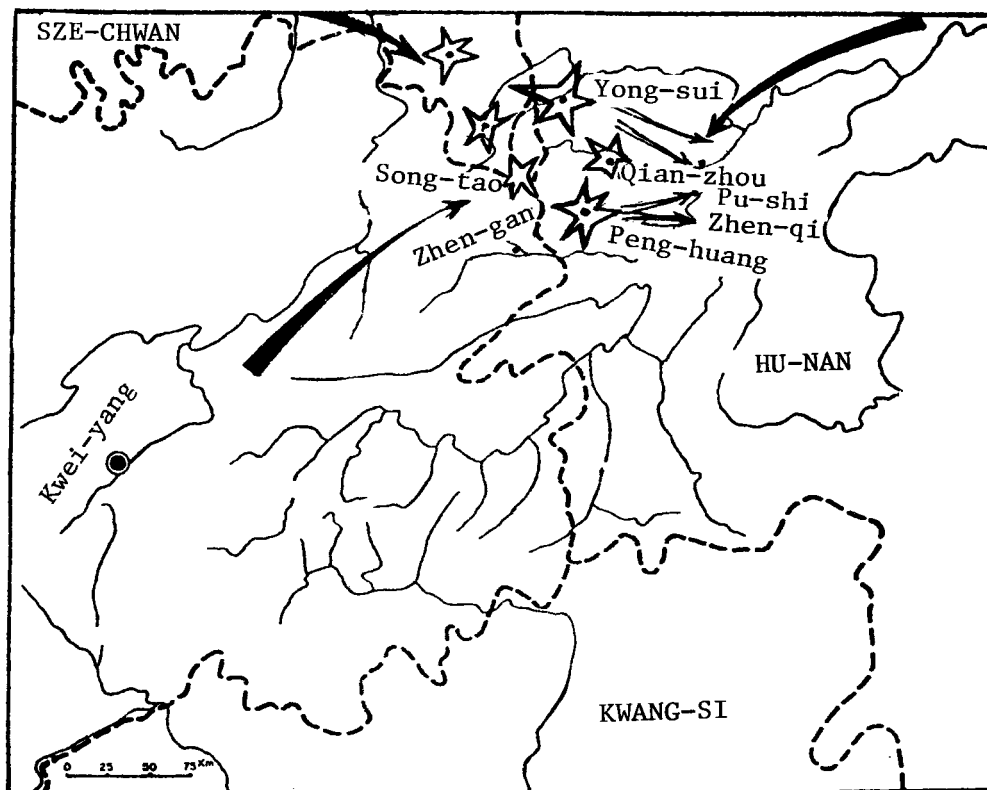
found themselves without supplies. When at the end of the year, they finally came out, the Chinese were waiting to massacre them.

The repression was terrible. According to one report 12,024 villages were burnt, 388 only spared; 17,000 Miao were killed in action; 27,000 were taken prisoners of which half were executed; 46,000 guns were seized, and all the lands of the vanquished given away to the Chinese soldiers.

For 50 years nothing more heard of the Miao.

The second rising took place from 1795 to 1806.

Suddenly the Miao appeared on the frontier of Kwei-chow, Hu-nan, Sze-chwan, and took back several villages at the same time, so it seemed as if there had been a conspiracy. In addition it was



Second rising of the Miao from 1795 to 1806.

whispered that the principal leaders had taken a blood oath to chase out the Chinese. Song-tao, Zheng-da-ying, Zhen-gan near to Feng-huang, and the region of Qian-zhou took up arms nearly at the same time, and in 15 days the Miao under the command of Wu Ba Yue took successively Yong-sui, Qian-zhou, Zhen-qi, and Pu-shi, which remained a legendary victory as the Miao were convinced they would be able to make it up to Peking.

The Chinese, once again, called up the troupes of Kwei-chow and the surrounding Provinces, and within two months they partially re-established the situation in Song-tao and in the region of Yong-sui, systematically burning all the villages.

The war continued however, for the Miao resisted with fury. Wu Ba Yue proclaimed himself King in Ping-long near to Qian-zhou. He was captured the following month by the treason of a chief who had surrendered to the Emperor, but his two sons, Wu Ting Li and Wu Ting Yi, continued the resistance.



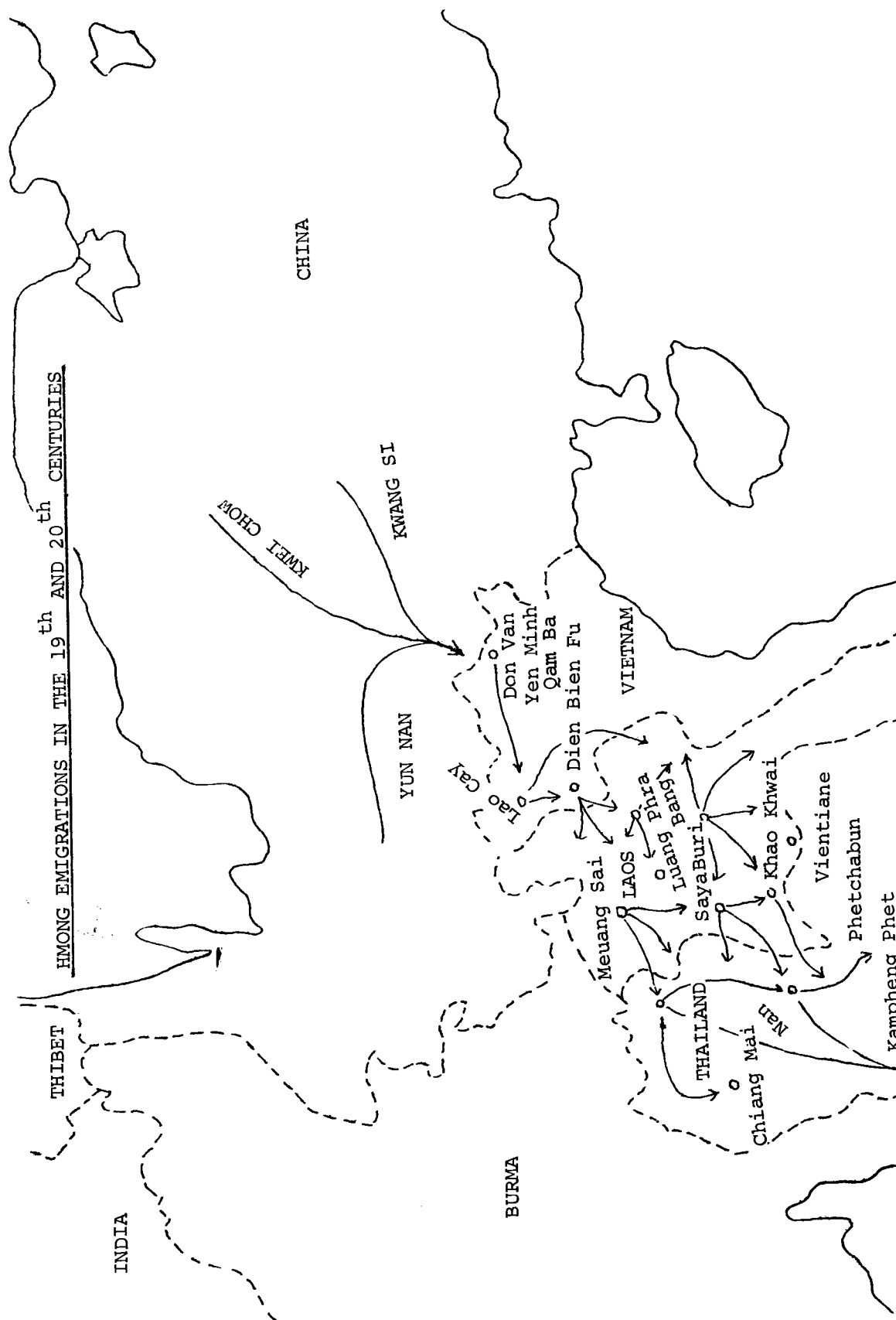
Attack of Bao-mu-shan, near Song-tao, where Wu Ting Li had retired and was captured in 1796.

In 1796, General Ming Liang was sent in command. After having taken back Ping-long, he returned to Kwei-chow in the region of Bao-mu-shan, near Song-tao, where Wu Ting Li had retired. Wu Ting Li was captured, and the following year the revolt drew to an end. There were just a few outbreaks in 1801 at Song-tao, in 1802 at Yong-sui where Long Lui Sheng had proclaimed himself "King of Heaven", and once more at Yong-sui in 1804.

The rising was again repressed without mercy, and Fu Nai, the official in charge of carrying it out, became most notorious among the Miao. A great number of fortified towers were erected, in the one region of Feng Huang alone the number rose to 987, and the old wall which had been built under the Ming was re-constructed.

Such overwhelming defeats must necessarily have caused a crisis of despair among the Miao, and caused at least certain of them to do what they had never felt the need to do for nearly two thousand years, that is : to go and seek their fortune elsewhere ! If we keep in mind that they now number nearly three million in China and about half a million outside China, then it can be understood that one-seventh of their number preferred to migrate during the 19th century, not including those which migrated within the limits of China. These events, however, did not affect them all without distinction, for, as we will see further on, among the Miao in general it is only the Hmong we find in other countries. Among all the members of their race it was seemingly they who were the most affected.

From 1800 on, they descended towards the South, a direction which has always been familiar to them as well as to the other migrating populations of South-East Asia. They perhaps first thought to be able to settle down in Yun-nan or in Kwang-si; but there the same troubles started all over again. In 1853, for example, in Yun-nan, "a rather serious rebellion of the Mohammedans in union with the Miao" was noted, and there were many others. The greater number of them, therefore, continued to travel southwards to settle in Vietnam, in Laos, and finally as far as Thailand.



These migrations have continued practically up to our times, but they have been carried out a very different way. At the beginning, in 1800 and 1860 specially, they were relatively important and people had to fight their way through. In 1800, for example, a witness saw "a group of 5000,6000 Miao of all classes, with women, children, and domestic animals, arriving all together, fighting with anyone trying to oppose them, installing themselves by force on the land which they found suitable, and spreading themselves over Yun-nan and other regions around that Province". These migrations still continue in our days, for the borders are so slack in these countries that it is difficult to stop them, but they are less important and any way very peaceful.

Under the Chinese People's Republic

The events which convulsed China during the first half of the 20th century relegated the affairs of the Miao to a very unimportant place among the troubles of the Chinese. But one event seems to show clearly that they remained as independent and firm in any rebellion against authority as ever. Here indeed is what Madame Han Suyin says in her book "*Le déluge du matin*" about the great march of Mao Tse Tung :

"The march (of the Reds) continued, and they arrived at Kwang-si, in the region of the Miao, a national minority. "Chief of the Squad, where are we now ?" "I do not know, comrade. Find someone who knows." I saw a young man and hurried towards him, but he did not understand me. I tried all kinds of words : the Red Army, Soviet, Communist Party... I called him "cousin" in three dialects... He shook his head. At last I said to myself : "This is it ! We have come out of China. We are in a foreign country where they do not even know Chinese !" The soldiers really thought that the Miao were strangers. They had never seen them before. President Mao then gave us some explanations about the national minorities, regarding the Miao, and how to respect their customs. After that we spoke to them by gestures," (page 310)

"The extra guns were distributed among the villagers who came joyously towards the Red Army. In spite of its losses it remained celebrated and loved. Mao forbade the troops to borrow anything from the Miao, not even doors to sleep on, as this was the custom in the villages of the Han." (page 312)

"The Miao served as guides to the Red Army, and showed them the defiles by which they should pass." (page 179)

"The national minorities were a discovery for Mao. He studied their ways, their customs, and gave orders to his soldiers to make no reprisals against them even if they were attacked by these despoiled and distrustful people. Moved by their sickly state of health, one of the first measures he took after his triumph in 1949, was to send the American doctor, Ma Aitch (George Hatten), to establish a sanitary programme for the ethnic minorities." (page 348)

If we may smile at the idea that the first concern of Mao Tse Tung was the amelioration of the sanitary conditions of the Miao, it is nevertheless not less true that as soon as they came into power the Communists showed great interest in the minorities. The Consultative Conference of Peking held September 1949 consecrated an entire chapter to them. Article 50 of this chapter VI stipulates in particular that "regional independence would be exercised in those zones where the minorities would form compact blocks" Article 52 affirms the national minorities "would have the right to join the Peoples of their Army of Liberation". And Article 53 reassures them "of the protection customs, traditions, and beliefs, and of the development of their dialects and tongues".

After some trials the Constitution of 1954 put into practice the formation of these zones. As anticipated, they were established in proportion to the importance of the minority groups, and Article 53 marked them out as follows : "At the top we have the autonomous region, divided into autonomous wards (chou) and autonomous districts (hsieu). These last are divided in their turn into autonomous cantons (hsiang)". In 1968 there existed 5 autonomous regions, 29 chous, and 65 hsieus.

Unhappily we know little more as no foreign observer has ever been admitted to these regions.

Concerning the Miao proper, we however know that they have officially been recognized under this name, and that two dictionaries have been published for them in 1958 : a Hmong–Chinese dictionary and a Hmu–Chinese dictionary written in Roman characters as they have no alphabet of their own.

N.B. The Chinese Dynasties and their dates

– Hla	(1989–1558)	B.C.
– Yin or Chang	(1558–1051)	
– Tcheou	(1051–249)	
– Fighting Kingdoms	(5 th – 2 nd)	
– Ts'in (big wall)	(3 rd)	
– Han	(202 B.C.–220 A.D)	
– Period of the 3 kingdoms	(220–280)	A.D.
– Period of the 6 dynasties	(3 rd–4th)	
– Dynasty of the Wei in the North	(5 th–535)	
– Dynasty Leang in the South	(502–557)	
– Souci	(589–618)	
– T'ang	(618–906)	
– Period of the 5 dynasties	(907–960)	
– Song	(960–1280)	
– Yuan (Mongols)	(1280–1368)	
– Ming (Capital in Peking)	(1368–1644)	
– T'sing (Manchu)	(1644–1912)	
– Republic	(1911–1949)	
Sun Yat Sen		
Yuan Che K'ai		
Tchang Kai Chek		
– The Chinese People's Republic.	(1949–)	

IN VIETNAM

The Hmong (being the only group among the Miao to have ventured outside China they can now be called by their own name), the Hmong began to enter Vietnam at the very beginning of the 19th century. Then their flow to that country went on rather steadily, with two high peaks however : in 1800 and 1860. They infiltrated mostly by the region of Dong Van, Yen Minh, and Quan Ba, then turned in the direction of the hilly regions of the West : Lao Cay, Chopa ... and along the border of Laos : Lai Chau, Dien Bien Phu ... While some continued their migration forward, others would settle here and there on the way.

There too the invaders had to open their way arms in hands, and sometimes showed themselves merciless. One official said : "I saw a Meo take my son by the feet and break his spine against the posts of my hut."

1860 saw an attempt to penetrate no longer into the mountains of the West, but into the plains of the South. According to a report of that time, after the troubles which broke out in Yun-nan "a horde crossed the border in the direction of the delta. They overcame the troops of the mandarin ordered to stop them, with the effect that the mandarin, in his shame, had to commit suicide. Then the invaders continued on their way up to Phu Yen Binh in the area of Hanoi, committing all sorts of atrocities as they went, massacring men, women, and children ..." But this invasion on too Annamite a territory was finally repulsed by a charge of elephants.

Even when settled in a district, the Hmong often rebelled, provoked it is true by an administration often lacking comprehension. The most notable of these revolts lasted for three years, from July 1918 to March 1921, and caused immense repercussion not only in Vietnam itself, but as we shall see later, in Laos as well, up to Luang Prabang.

It was called "the war of the Sorcerers" or "the war of the Insane" by the French authorities on account of the leaders. "The Insane" indeed was a certain Pa Chay, of the Veu clan. Originally coming from Tonkin, he had taken refuge in Laos where he stirred up a revolt to establish a kingdom of his own, the capital of which would have been Dien Bien Phu. He thought himself to be inspired and used to climb a tree to receive his orders directly from Heaven. According to the Hmong themselves he would have been fairly moderate if left to himself, but he was led to excesses by his partisans. He was finally betrayed and killed either by the Kha or by one of his own followers.

Nevertheless, in the end these revolts bore fruit. The Government began to think more about the problems of the minorities, and recognized certain responsibilities towards the communal districts and cantons. Peace was re-established and a reciprocal esteem was created, so much so that when the Japanese occupation took place (1941–1945), and later in the war with the Viet Minh (1946–1954) very few of the Hmong sided with the adversaries.

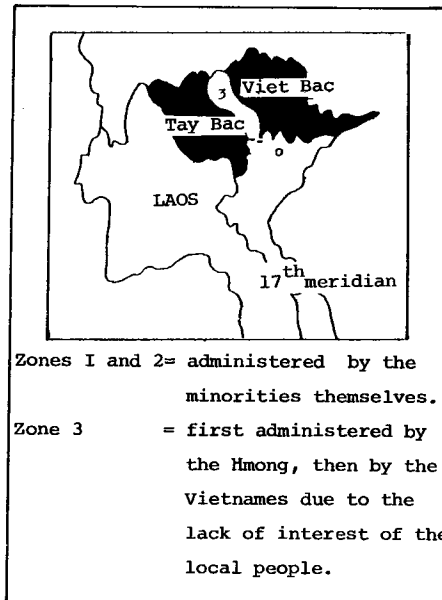
During the struggle for independence indeed, the French as well as the Viet Minh used all their ingenuity to convert the hill tribes and the Hmong for one, to their cause, realizing that if a war broke out in the mountains it could not be won without the help of the populations inhabiting them.

The French incorporated some in their famous "Groupements Mixtes de Commandos Aéroportés" (G.M.C.A.). They were trained at Cap St. Jacques by General Trinquier, to be later dropped on the mountains where they were to organize guerrilla. They proved to be specially efficacious at Pha Long and Lao Cay along the Sino–Vietnamese border, where, from April 1952, a dynamic Hmong chief, Cho Quang Lo by name, at the head of 2,000 partisans, disorganised the vital supplies of the Viet Minh coming from China. But they also distinguished themselves at the evacuation of Cao Bang Dong Khe in 1950, in taking the famous "plaine des jarres", Xieng Khouang, and Son La in Laos in 1953, with Touby Ly Foung at their head, and at the evacuation of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, where young Lieutenant Vang Pao, who later

became famous, participated with 300 of his men in the escape of 76 fellow soldiers.

The Viet Minh on their side did not remain inactive. From the beginning they had promised the hill tribes more than the French had ever given them, and in the North-West they played upon the rivalries which had always opposed the Thai faithful to France, against the Hmong who detested the Thai.

On their coming into power the Viet Minh showed themselves faithful to their promises.



The Constitution of 1960 confirmed the creation of autonomous zones based on the Chinese model. There were three zones for a time, but seeing the lack of interest of the Hmong, they were reduced to two : one in the North-West, at first called "Thai-Meo" but later "Tay-Bac"; the other in the North-East, called "Viet-Bac", comprising respectively 3 and 6 Provinces covering more than one half of North-

Vietnam. To give an example the zone of Tay-Bac numbered 500,000 persons of which 60,000 were Hmong. These zones set up their own programme, administered their own finances, and assured their own security, under the control however of the Central Government which thus could give way to intervention at any time.

To hasten the development of these zones up to then not very prosperous, from 1961 a large number of Vietnamese volunteers were mobilized to serve as leaders to the minorities. They numbered 1 million in 1966. This scheme was not always successful on account of the lack of mutual comprehension between the hill tribes and their leaders. Their camps had even to be separated. Yet, on the whole, the operation was a success. At the end of 1961 more than 70% of the families had joined the co-operatives of a semi-socialistic type. Production increased in the same proportion, and in 1965 the zone produced 50% of the buffaloes, 23% of the oxen, and 24% of the swine of North-Vietnam. The most difficult to convince however, were the Hmong. always so independent by nature.

The educational and cultural reforms were all equally spectacular. A system of writing was composed for nearly all the different dialects, so that in 1965 85% of the hill tribe people were able to read and write in their own language. In all cases the Roman alphabet was used, for the Hmong in particular. As to the Thai, they already had their own writing derived from Bali.

The four first years of the ten years given to the primary studies were actually carried out in their native tongue, and the books were drafted in the correct language.

A Central School of Pedagogy to form aboriginal teachers was created in 1953, and in 1959 there were already 2,068 teachers for the first degree, 122 for the second degree, and 13 for the third degree.

In 1964 the zones had 2,750 schools. Each commune had a school of the first degree, three or four communes had a school of the second degree, and each district a school of the third degree. To these were also added Work Schools provided with a farm and to be attended

by students who had reached 15 years of age. In 1971 the number of hill tribe youngsters studying in the High Schools of Hanoi amounted to 35,000.

Lastly, the use of tribal languages was officially recognized in the zones where the Hmong formed the majority of the population, and in the Law Courts in particular.

In 1968 Radio Hanoi announced that within three years the hill tribe people would have reached the standard of life of the Vietnamese.

IN LAOS

The Hmong first arrived in Laos shortly after their entry into Vietnam, that is to say around 1810–1820, which shows that some of them at least did not stay long in Vietnam and just passed through.

Joining hands with the Yao in the interest of their cause, they progressively infiltrated the whole north of the country, and up to this day are not found lower than Paksan in the South.

Seeking again the mountains, their first clashes were with the mountain races. At the beginning of the 19th century they fought a bloody battle with the Khmou (not to be confounded with the Hmu of China), but the blunderbusses of the Hmong quickly overcame the cross-bows and swords of the Khmou. Then they began to have troubles with the French. In 1896, at Xieng Khouang the Hmong rose in rebellion for the first time as they considered their taxes were too heavy. Happily, at the last moment, a pitched battle was avoided. From 1919 to 1921 “the war of the Insane” was carried out, as we have already mentioned. The Government finally granted them a certain autonomy, and by 1945 the Hmong already had seventeen Chiefs of Cantons recruited among themselves.

The Hmong, however, were deeply divided, and it was these divisions which explained their behaviour later on.

From the time of their arrival in Laos three families had asserted a certain ascendancy over the others : the Lao, the Ly, and the Moua. The heads of these three families were even insisting on being called “Kaitong” or Minor Kings. However the Moua declined quickly.

In 1865, there came in the quality of a carrier to a Chinese mandarin a Hmong of the Ly clan, who, ignored by the big chiefs, founded a village of his own in the district of Nong Het. He married a woman of humble class and he had three children. His third son proved himself to be exceptionally gifted, and very rapidly learned Chinese,

Vietnamese, as well as French. Being ambitious he married in 1918 the daughter of M'ble' Giau, Chief of the Lao clan and the most important Hmong Chief in the Province of Xieng Khouang. He then became the personal secretary of his father-in-law. From this marriage was born in May 1919, a son, the little Touby Ly Fong who was to have so high a destiny. But this marriage was not a happy one, and after four years of life in common, May, the daughter of M'ble' Giau, committed suicide by taking an overdose of opium. In great anger M'ble' Giau dismissed Touby Ly Fong's father from his post as secretary and cut all ties with the Ly clan.

M'ble' Giau, not having joined in the war of the Insane, the French had trusted him the control of the district of Nong Het, but when the quarrel broke out with the Ly they divided the district in two, naming Song Tou, son of M'ble' Giau, as Head of the district of Keng Khuai, and Touby Ly Fong's eldest brother as Head of Phac Boun. Song Tou, however, turned out to be an incapable chief. He preferred hunting to collecting the taxes ordered by the French, so that on the death of his father in 1935, he was relieved of his functions in favour of Touby Ly Fong's father. The entire district then passed from the hands of the Lao into those of the Ly.

Fay Dang, the younger brother of Song Tou, resented this loss of prestige very deeply. He expected at least on the death of his rival, he would be able to take up the administration of Keng Khuai. But when the father of Touby Ly Fong eventually died, it was his son, Touby Ly Fong himself, who succeeded him. This young man seemed to be full of prospects indeed. He had received his Baccalauréat degree at the Vientiane High School, then passed through the School of Law and Administration. With the help of his brother, Tou Zeu, who had also passed his Baccalauréat at Hanoi, he showed himself a remarkable administrator.

Fay Dang never forgave him, and from that day vowed that "whatever the followers of Touby Ly Fong might do, those of Fay

Dang would invariably do the contrary". He soon found his opportunity. When the Japanese occupied French Indochina from 1941 to 1945 Touby Ly Fong remained faithful to the French and in 1941 gave his support to the parachute operation in the Province of Xieng Khouang. Fay Dang joined the opposition at once.

The Japanese defeat in 1945 brought the hostilities to an end for some time. More liberal ideas too were introduced. The Constitution of 1947 officially recognized the minorities as full citizens. "All the individuals belonging to the races definitively established in this country and possessing no other nationality are citizens of Laos." The name "Meo" was completely rejected and the Hmong were called "Lao Sung" (Laotians from the heights). Tou Lia Ly Fong was elected Deputy, though still the only representative of the minority in the Assembly.

Yet the political parties were still in a ferment, and the Hmong always divided by their own opposing factions.

Having but few supporters among the Laotians themselves, Souphanouvong, as early as 1947, contacted Fay Dang and Sithone Khommadan, the chief of the mutinous Kha. Both these had been arrested, but had escaped thanks to the troubled situation. Then Independence was proclaimed on the 16th July, 1949, and in November 1950 Souphanouvong created the "Neo Lao Issara" (The Front of the Free Lao), more generally known as the "Prathet Lao" (The Lao Fatherland). Souphanouvong was elected Prime Minister while Fay Dang and Sithone were appointed Ministers. The following year, the Prince concluded a pact of friendship between the Vietnamese, the Khmer, and the Lao Movements of Liberation, an alliance which in the future would serve as a justification for the North-Vietnamese interventions in union with the troops of Prathet Lao. From 1952 the plateau of the Bolovens became once more a base for the guerrilleros regrouped by Sithone, whereas the Provinces of Phong Saly, Sam Neua, and Xieng Khouang established themselves as liberated zones under the direction of Fay Dang. In 1961 the Prathet Lao controlled nearly

all the mountainous regions of Laos, that is to say about two-thirds of the territory, and their armed forces were judged to be approximatively between 3,500 and 8,000 men mostly from the mountains, without including some 30,000 North-Vietnamese.

Meanwhile, however, an important event occurred. In 1954 France signed a peace with the Viet Minh and withdrew from Vietnam, being at once replaced by the Americans who decreed direct aid to be given to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

At this turn of events, in January 1961, the Kennedy Government took the decision to send "special forces" to train guerrilleros so as to apply the same tactics as their adversaries. Their choice immediately fell on the Hmong as they lived in the land which was to be taken back from the enemy, and which they knew like the palm of their own hand, and also because the Royal Army had given little proof of combative courage. They feared that the modern arms given to help them would be abandoned at first ambush laid by the Prathet Lao, if not sold on the black market.

The command of this army was given to a young soldier by the name of Vang Pao, who had already distinguished himself several times. Born in Xieng Khouang he had fought as a Sergeant in the guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. A graduate from the Military College of Vientiane he took part in the battle of Dien Bien Phu with the grade of Lieutenant, and at the head of 300 Hmong collaborators he had led 76 soldiers out. In December 1960, as Lieutenant-Colonel, he was the only officer to have resisted the attack by the soldiers of Captain Khong Le on "la Plaine des Jarres", all the other officers having fled. The same month he was named Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Military Region of Laos, including the Province of Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua. He then established his Head-Quarters in Long Cheng, with a support base at Sam Thong.



*General Vang Pao (left) with Laotian
Commander-in-Chief in Vientiane*

As the Laotian officers showed openly their contempt for the "Meo" whom they considered socially inferior, the army of Vang Pao was separated from the Royal Laotian Army. It was put under the direct control of the "Central Intelligence Agency" (C.I.A.), and as the United States was not officially in Laos, it was supplied under the cover of the U.S. Agency for Aid and Development (U.S. AID) destined in principle for the security of the refugees. A civil aviation company, Air America, with some 200 light planes, was in charge of the transport. The Hmong were flooded with supplies and their soldiers were better paid than those of the Royal Army, for they received the equivalent of \$ 30 a month in contrast to the \$ 5 of the latter.

Vang Pao was then ordered to form Special Guerrilla Units (S.G.U.) of 40 to 50 members each, in order to harass the enemy with lightning attacks. The attacks began in the middle of 1962 and were very effective. In a few months Vang Pao controlled a large part of the North--East, where he built 200 Air Strips for his planes and a Radar Station at Mt. Phou Pati. His aim was to create a "no man's land" in face of the enemy, so that the mountain population could not be made use of in case the land was re-taken. Every time a region was occupied its population was drawn back to safety, and the U.S.AID took care of them. From 150,000 in 1964 they increased to 800,000 in 1969.

Since January 1968 on, however, the Communists passed to the counter offensive, and little by little regained the lost land, so that in 1973 the positions of both sides were more or less the same as what they had been eleven years before.

The Hmong paid heavily for these results. Out of a total strength of 40,000 men, their losses between 1967 and 1971 amounted to 3,772 killed and 5,426 wounded. The Hmong army had reached its limits, and in the last seven years of fighting 70% of the new recruits were from 10 to 16 of age only. But even then the enemy had to fight hard.

Political and social success supplemented these military results. In this same year 1973, at Vientiane, Touby Ly Fong was made Minister of Information and a member of the King's Council for everything touching the problems of the minorities. Tougen Ly Fong, on his part, was made the chief Procurator of the Supreme Court. The Hmong had three Deputies out of 34, which was quite correct since they numbered about 10% of the population. They also had one Governor (out of 16), 4 Prefects, 24 district chiefs, and numerous village chiefs, above all in the Province of Xieng Khouang where the Hmong numbered 50% of the population in normal times. At last an elite was being prepared for the future. The Hmong at that time had 34 students taking higher studies (science, medicine, history, electronics, etc...) in over-sea universities, 25 of them in France.

As among the military so also among the Laotian and Hmong civilians there was a deep feeling of misunderstanding. The former were doubtless alarmed at the spectacular influence of the latter. General Vang Pao was suspected of conducting the war for his own purposes, and it was probable that at a certain moment the idea had occurred to him. In addition to this the appointment of Tougen Ly Fong as Procurator to the Supreme Court of Appeal brought out a controversy in which he was designated as a "Meo parasite ... without a country". The equality provided for by the Constitution did not take place smoothly.

The more recent events have put all these problems into the background.

As is well known the U.S.A. was getting tired of this interminable war and Souvanna Phouma was seeking for an "entente". On the 14th February, 1973, the Royal Government of Laos and the Prathet Lao accepted to form a Coalition Government. One year later, in February 1974, the U.S.AID made known its intention to stop aid to the refugees, and in April, 1975, the last members of the C.I.A. withdrew. After having hesitated to continue the war alone, Vang Pao resigned and fled to Udon, Thailand, with most of his high ranking officers.

Then came the fall of Vientiane. and the Hmong left "en masse" to take refuge in the Thai Provinces of Nong Khai, Nan, and Chiang Rai. At first they were well received at Nong Khai as there were many high dignitaries and former companions in arms among the group. But before the flood of refugees the attitude of the Thai authorities began to change very quickly, to the degree that the Hmong in Nan could not have survived without the quick help of private organisations.

In truth the Thai Government was in a dilemma. If according to their traditions they welcomed the refugees, they could be accused of forming mercenaries who would later be sent back to Laos to carry out subversive activities against the new regime. In addition, the refugees risked upsetting the programme of integration of the hill tribes who were being slowly assimilated into the country.

The 30th July, 1975, the officials of the Ministry of the Interior finally met the representatives of the United Nations in Bangkok and signed an agreement by which the United Nations accepted to lend assistance to all the refugees in Thailand. By May 1977 they were 113,000 in number, of which 60,000 were Hmong, that is more than half.

The United Nations undertook also to find them a place of exile, and for some of the Hmong at least this was the third time they had to emigrate to a new country after having fled from Vietnam, and Laos. To begin with the United States received 2,000 Hmong. Vang Pao, his officers, the helpers of the U.S.AID and their families. They received still more later. France, on her side, felt under an obligation to help Laos and Cambodia, and since 1976 she has received about 1,000 refugees a month, about 100 of which are Hmong. Canada, Australia, and Germany have also accepted to receive a few hundreds. Afraid by the difficulties of adaptation, the various governments hesitate to receive more, and they always choose the better educated people. For the majority there is still no solution, and the refugees left over see themselves deprived of their elite, of whom they were beginning to be so proud and who constituted their hope for the future.

In Laos the situation is hardly any better for the remaining Hmong. Those who sided the Prathet Lao saw themselves honoured. In the new Government formed on December, 4th, 1975, Fay Dang and Sithone Khommadan were named second and fourth Vice President. But for the rest the time of reckoning has come. Touby Ly Fong was sent for re-education to Sam Neua where he died of malnutrition in 1977.

A large number of the Hmong therefore go on with the rebellion in the North and the North-East of the country, and after having been guerrilleros themselves for so many years the new authorities in power have now to face them.

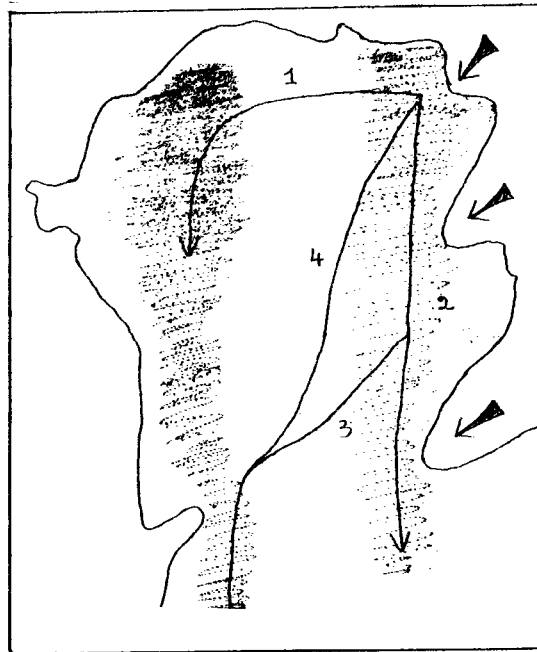
IN THAILAND

If the Hmong took little time in traversing Vietnam, they on the contrary seem to have taken a much longer time to cross Laos, for they apparently reached Thailand at a much more recent date. It is difficult however to be precise.

Questioned about it, some aged people in the region of Nan or Chiang Rai assure that they were born in the country around 1900. They also say that their parents had already settled in Thailand for some time, say about 10 years before, around 1890, and that they heard from them that the land in those days was very sparsely populated. If their witness is correct—which we do not exclude at all—then we may conclude : first that the first of them must have entered the country in a sporadic and peaceful fashion, which explained why they have been so long ignored by the Thai ; second that they must have come some time between 1840 and 1870, which impression is shared by the Tribal Research Centre of Chiang Mai which puts their entry somewhere about 1850. (1)

What is more certain is that the Hmong infiltrated into Thailand through three main gates : the first by date and importance being situated between Mouong Sai or Huei Sai in Laos and Chiang Khong in Thailand, in the extreme North ; the second between Sayaburi and Pona, lower to the South ; and the third one between Phu Khao Khuai and Loei, much closer to Vientiane.

From Chiang Khong the Hmong split into two groups following two parallel ranges of mountains running through the North of Thailand, as it was always the mountains that guided them. The first group skirted the border of Burma, then turned south towards the Provinces of Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai. The second group on the contrary descended immediately towards the South along the Laotian border, and while increasing in number owing to the other groups



Hmong migration into the-
North of Thailand

joining them from other gates, penetrated little by little into the region of Thung Chang, Poua, Phrae, Khek Noi where two villages are mentioned in January 1928 (2), and finally Phetchabun.

To these original emigrations we have to add another one less important but more recent, to the Provinces of Tak, Kampheng

(1) Chao Khao Phao Mong, 1975, page 3.

(2) Mr Robbins, in the Siam Society Bulletin, 21st Dec. 1973, page 88.

Phet, and even Nakhorn Sawan. According to what people say, this movement took place at two separate times : around 1930 from Nan and around 1950 from Chiang Khong. Settling at first in the Province of Tak, they went further down not so many years ago up to the small village of Mekali in the sub-prefecture of Lat Yao, Nakhorn Sawan Province, which thus constitutes the point furthest separated from their origin and the most southern point we know of their position in Asia.

Even as late as 1955 the Thai Government had still taken little notice of the presence of the hill tribes in Thailand. As we know the Thai are not fond of living on the mountains, which consequently are State Property ; they so let these people live there undisturbed. But suddenly the Hmong, for one, became a centre of preoccupation to the country, and this for three major reasons. First, living isolated in the mountains they were in permanent contact with the Communist insurgents hiding there. Strictly speaking the Hmong at first had nothing to do with them, but living so close to them they were suspected of indirectly supporting them. Secondly, practising a "slash and burn" method to clear their fields, they devastated the forests, leaving soil unproductive for many years, and even altering the flow of the rivers, thus angering the Thai cultivators on the plains. Thirdly, one of their main resources being the cultivation of the poppy, they had a great deal of responsibility in the opium traffic inside the celebrated "Golden Triangle" formed by the North of Thailand, the North-East of Laos, and the East of Burma. All this forced the Thai Government into action, all the more so as the greater part of the operation was being financed by the U.S.A. which was also troubled by the activities of the guerrilleros and had just come to the decision to bring pressure on opium producing countries, that they might stop the traffic at the root and help the opium cultivators to grow other crops instead.

In 1955 the Border Patrol Police were ordered to look after the minorities with a five target plan : keep the border secure, furnish medical care, built schools, develop the agriculture, and built strategic

roads. However this programme being far beyond their capacity they were partly replaced in 1959 by the Central Tribal Welfare Committee which depended on the Ministry of the Interior.

The first Development Centre was installed in the current of the year on Doi Mousseu, Tak Province, and land was distributed to the hill tribes in order to urge them to give up their nomadic way of life. A second Centre was begun in Chiang Mai in 1960, and successively, up to 1963, in the Provinces of Phetchabun, Pitsanulok, Loei, and Chiang Rai. On the 21st April, 1964, a Tribal Research Centre was established in Chiang Mai University, in order to have a better means of getting to know the mode of life and the needs of the hill tribes. Another objective sought was the formation of the staff that would have to work with the hill tribes.

Finally, on April 2nd 1965, all these activities were completed by the establishment of a programme for the diffusion of Buddhism. Beyond the teaching of this religion the programme had for object the establishing of better relations between the tribes and the people of Thailand, thanks to sending missionaries to those centres. At first situated in Bangkok, the Centre for the formation of the missionaries was transferred to Sisoda Temple in Chiang Mai, where in 1975 it already numbered 300 novices.

These measures concerned the Hmong principally, for they were the most turbulent of the minorities. The Hmong, alas, received them rather coldly.

The Law of the 9th December, 1959, forbade brusquely the cultivation of opium, thus condemning many of the Hmong to misery, for this crop alone constituted 40 % of their resources. On the other hand they were unwilling to come down to the plains which were not their natural habitation. Finally and above all, the Hmong are a people fiercely independent, who dislike being hustled, still less to be forced. The Border Police sometimes acted without much discretion, and the Hmong were very humiliated to see them come as conquerors "taking their daughters by the hands, living on the people, and asking for a chicken or a pig, while at the same time caressing the handles of their

revolvers to show that there was no choice", or "threatening to fire on sight if anyone was seen cutting down a tree."

What had to come, finally came.

Towards the end of the year 1967, the Hmong in obedience to the Communists, provoked a revolt. Here and there they burnt a school, and in way of retaliation, the Border Police shelled the suspected zones or burnt the crops with napalm. This caused a bewildered flight into the deep forests of the entire population. Even those faithful to the Government fled for fear that they too would be exterminated. Finally none were left ! It is estimated that 90 % of the Hmong of Phetchabun and Tak fled, 70 % of those of Nan and Chiang Rai, while the Hmong of Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son remained outside the conflict. It was the defeat of political methods using force. Instead of submitting, they had driven the whole population into rebellion.

Very quickly however, the Government realized the mistake. At the end of 1968 and the beginning of 1969, the same helicopters which had shot at the Hmong some months before, sent them messages by loud-speakers, asking them to surrender. In small groups and generally in the night for fear of the Communists who would not let them come out, some of the Hmong began to leave the forest and little by little they were re-settled in Centres. In the same year, the Section for the Hill Tribes Affairs, known as "Communist Suppression Operation Command" (C.S.O.C.) was formed to hasten the defection of those who had not yet surrendered.

The organisation of the Centres improved progressively. Now every Province had one main Centre from where units of people working for Social Welfare were sent to the small villages. Each unit consisted of an administrator, one or two nurses to distribute medicine, and one or two experts in agriculture charged with the experimentation of new crops : maize, cotton, cassava, coffee, vegetables, and fruit..., or to help with the breeding of buffaloes, oxen, pigs, and fish... Every village had its primary school, though functioning more or less successfully. Each Province had a secondary school with at least 200 to 300 pupils. Those who wished could become teachers in their village

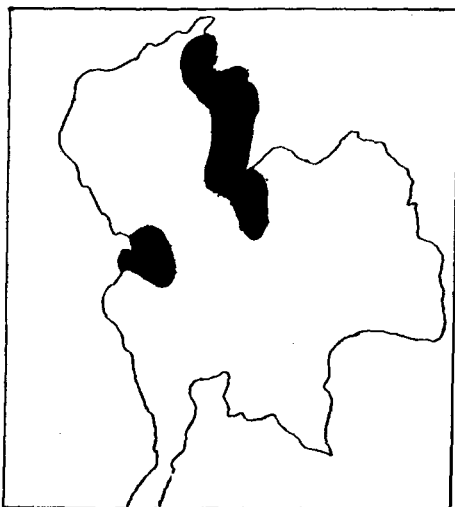
and then were given preference in the examinations. After much hesitation it was decided to accept volunteers, to ensure the self-protection of the villages. They were given arms but were officered by the Thai Army. Finally, radio broadcasts were sent out every day in 6 dialects from eight provincial centres, the most important of which being set in Chiang Mai.

However, not all the Hmong came back. After the first impulse, spectacular as it was at the beginning, the Hmong no longer gave themselves up except in a very sporadic manner. In 1968 there were 90% who rose in rebellion in Phetchabun and Tak; in 1977 there are still respectively 75% and 54% who have not surrendered. A strange thing is, it is above all the White Hmong who have remained in the forest. The Green Hmong surrender more easily.

Here we must explain a misunderstanding. If the Hmong are in rebellion it is not mainly on account of their ideology, but much more because they are a fiercely independent people, allergic to all kind of authority. In addition they understand nothing about the laws which often cost them much and give them little advantage. It is, then, not they who are the motor element of Communism in Thailand, but they rather are its victims. The leaders, who might in the first place have come from the exterior, have been definitively replaced by the Thai, who rouse the Hmong against the Thai Government, arm them, train them, and still use them.

The region of Phetchabun seems to have become the actual centre of resistance in the North, with two main bases at Khao Kho and Long Ka. It is in these forests that the Heads of the Communist Party of Thailand would be hiding, with an estimate of 16,000 outlaws including women and children, 2,000 to 3,000 armed men, and 200 students. In the area of Nan they would be about 10,000, but rather less in Chiang Rai. In Tak the Communist influence has decreased quite a lot since the Thai insurgents have left the area in 1975.

The Thai Communists do not trust the Hmong unconditionally, as they betray them when they surrender. Each therefore guard their



Hmong rebellion in Thailand

distance and live apart. The Thai insurgents content themselves by sending instructors to organize the villages, indoctrinate the people, and train them in the use of arms. These instructors have generally false names, and change quite often. The villages are organised according to the Communist system. Their goods are out in common, and while men are trained in guerrilla warfare, the women work together. Neither the one and the other go out together to avoid defections. The Hmong are free to organise skirmishes according to their fancy, and in Nakhorn Thai, Phitsanulok Province, a certain Lao Veu, of the Va clan, has made a name for himself in this kind of enterprise. But the Hmong collaborate very little with the Thai or the Karens, except in case of a common danger.

Besides the more or less important groups, there also exist many isolated cases. These live as they can, unless they finish by giving themselves up. In 1974 we met Lao Nia Kao, who had surrendered two days before. He had never been a Communist, he explained. He had never shot at anybody and had not even any arms. The attacks of 1968 had surprised him in the forest, but the very place where he lived was still peaceful, so he had remained there. That lasted for six years, The Communists patrolled the region, and they met occasionally. Every second month they were visited by two of them who chatted for a few minutes and gave them some medicine, generally out of date. Life became harder and harder. They were afraid to make too big fields for fear of being seen by the helicopters. They could not go to the market. They had neither salt nor cloth. Their clothes were falling into rags, and for two years "his trousers had a hole in the seat". He no longer cut his hair. He decided to surrender.

The situation is far from being clear, and it will probably still be so for another many years to come. Various efforts are carried on, and one of the latest to date is certainly the grant of Thai nationality to the hill tribes, by the law of October, 1974. If up to that time indeed they were citizens "de facto", they were not so "de jure".

However, everything permits to hope that the programmes will still be improved, especially as the hill tribes are under the direct protection of the Royal Family. Their Majesties the King, the Queen, and the Princess Mother frequently visit the most distant villages, and at the same time give evidence of very important human attention and aid.

If the hill tribes in general, and the Hmong in particular, are the "find" of these later years, there is hope that the Country will adopt them speedily.

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