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GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE REPORT

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CH'E-LI AREA OF SOUTHERN YUNNAN

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CH'E-LI AREA OF SOUTHERN YÜNNAN

Summary

The village of Ch'e-li in southern Yünnan Province has been important historically as the capital of a small buffer state called Sibsong Panna, which existed as an independent principality until the current century. The present site of Ch'e-li was selected by the Chinese as a hsien (county) administrative seat some 40 years ago when Chinese administration was first extended to the area. About 3 miles south of Ch'e-li is Chienghung, which continued to be the residence of the hereditary rulers of Sibsong Panna until the Chinese Communist regime. In January 1953 the Chinese Communists created a so-called Tai Autonomous District, with Ch'e-li designated as the seat of administration.

The topography of the Ch'e-li area consists of rugged, dissected mountainous terrain interspersed with small basins used chiefly for growing rice. Although considerable portions of the uplands are forested, large areas have been denuded and their forests have been replaced by scrub vegetation and grass.

The Tai Lu are the most important ethnic group of Ch'e-li and the surrounding areas. They farm the fertile lowlands, and their villages dot the basin margins. The Tai Lu economy is based upon the cultivation of rice, supplemented by local village handicraft industries. The various mountain tribes who live in the uplands adjacent to the Ch'e-li basin are shifting agriculturists who burn patches of forest on high mountain slopes to plant their crops. Markets held every fifth day in larger lowland villages are attended by Tai Lu and mountain peoples. Although

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Chinese currency has been introduced during the present century, bartering is still an important means of commodity exchange.

Recent reports indicate that the Chinese Communists have imposed rigid economic controls by fixing prices on goods that are sold and by taxation through appropriation of rice above a fixed quota. The silver coins favored by the local inhabitants have been requisitioned by the Chinese and replaced with standard Chinese Communist paper currency. The Chinese Communists have encouraged the production of the exportable commodities of the area -- tea, cotton, and camphor.

The Buddhist religion is the predominant faith of the Tai Lu but is diluted by quantities of primitive spirit worship. A Protestant mission station was built at Ch'e-li about 40 years ago; most of its success seemed to be among the Tai Lu social outcasts. In conjunction with the mission's activities, a leper colony also was established near Ch'e-li. Education traditionally has been in the hands of the Buddhist clergy, and many Tai Lu boys spend several years in the village temple, where they learn to read and write. Tai living in the vicinity of Chinese administrative centers may speak and understand Chinese.

Health conditions in and near Ch'e-li have been notoriously poor, with malaria, typhoid, plague, and leprosy common diseases. Conditions may have improved somewhat since the Chinese Communist occupation.

Highway construction activities of the Chinese Communists have been concentrated upon the road from Ch'e-li north to Ssu-mao, the southern link of a highway that leads eventually to the provincial capital, K'un-ming. The Ssu-mao--Ch'e-li link is believed to have been

completed during late 1953; a westward extension to Ta-lo on the Burma border is nearing completion. These roads reportedly are little better than fair-weather, single-lane routes. Many of the trails and tracks in the Ch'e-li area are being cleared and widened. Native paths in mountainous areas, particularly those constructed by Akha tribesmen, provide well-concealed foot trails away from the lowlands.

The Chinese Communist occupation of the predominantly non-Chinese areas of southern Yunnan has changed the traditional political and economic orientation of this region. As a result of the establishment of so-called autonomous administrative units implemented by native cadres who are thoroughly trained in Communist doctrine, political control is believed to be extensive in all of the basin areas of Sibsong Panna inhabited by Tai Lu. Additional Chinese Communist objectives include economic integration of southern Yunnan and eventual cultural assimilation of its non-Chinese peoples. Hill and mountain areas inhabited by hill tribes are less susceptible to Chinese control than the Tai Lu areas and are less likely to be influenced by Chinese propaganda.

A. Orientation

Southwestern Yunnan traditionally has been one of the most physically isolated and politically independent regions of China. Its terrain presents a mosaic of highly dissected mountainous country that is difficult to traverse, with mountains reaching elevations of 6,000 to 8,000 feet and occasional small elongated river lowlands and intermontane basins. In southern Yunnan is an area of approximately 15,000 square miles, known as Sibsong Panna,* bordered on the west by Burma and on the east and south by Laos (see Map 13382). Sibsong Panna is a Tai name, literally meaning 12 valleys or groups of valleys along with their adjoining hill lands, and has both regional and political implications. In the heart of Sibsong Panna is the village of Ch'e-li and its adjacent river basin. The valleys and plains of Sibsong Panna are inhabited by the Tai Lu people, a Tai-speaking group, ethnically related to the Shans of Burma, the Thai of Thailand, and several other Tai groups found in southern China and northern Indochina. Smaller numbers of mountain-dwelling tribespeople inhabit the upland areas.

Although the village of Ch'e-li is the focus of this study, information on surrounding areas has been included as pertinent to an understanding of the historical, sociological, political, and economic conditions in Ch'e-li. Aerial photographs used in this study were taken in 1944; all ground shots, with the exception of Figure 14 (1923), were taken during 1934-35. Except for possible new construction in Ch'e-li,

*Various spellings of the term Sibsong Panna are encountered. The Chinese rendering is Hsi-shuang-pan-na. Other renderings include Sibsongpanna, Shih Shong Ban Naa, and Hsiphawng Panna.

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there have probably been no significant changes within the area, and the photography is believed to be representative of conditions today.

1. Historical Relationships of Sibsong Panna

As a political entity, the principality of Sibsong Panna existed for many centuries as a nominally independent buffer state. The traditional capital of the king of Sibsong Panna was Ch'e-li, and the outlying panna or valleys were ruled by subordinate Tai Lu princes. The relationships of Sibsong Panna to China were similar to those of other tributary states with non-Chinese populations. Although local administration was characteristically left to the native rulers, occasional tribute was paid to Chinese authorities. During the 19th century, however, Chinese political control over Sibsong Panna was extended and Chinese magistrates replaced Tai Lu princes in areas north and east of the Mekong River; west of the Mekong the Tai Lu domains remained isolated and independent of Chinese authority. As recently as 1895, there were discussions between the British and French concerning the possibilities of establishing Sibsong Panna as a buffer state between their respective colonial territories of Burma and Indochina.

In many parts of Sibsong Panna, much of the 19th century also was characterized by considerable fighting and general lawlessness caused by the long and bloody Moslem revolt in Yunnan (1855-1872), a series of petty disputes and conflicts between various factions of the Tai Lu nobility over succession to the throne, and Chinese political and economic expansion. At the turn of the present century, western visitors to

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Sibsong Panna commented upon the desolation and destruction that characterized much of the area.

Following the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, more orderly and peaceful conditions replaced the anarchy and lawlessness of the previous century. By 1941, all of Sibsong Panna had been organized into Chinese administrative units -- hsien (counties) or preparatory hsien. At that time, however, there were only a very small number of Chinese in Sibsong Panna -- mostly officials, soldiers, and traders. Despite a superficial Chinese administrative organization, the tribal chieftains continued to exert considerable autonomy in local affairs.

2. Organization of the Tai Autonomous District

Historic Chinese objectives in Sibsong Panna (and in other areas with non-Chinese populations) were not basically altered by the Chinese Communist assumption of power in 1949. These objectives included military and political control and eventual assimilation of non-Chinese peoples into the fabric of Chinese society. To accomplish their goals in Sibsong Panna, the Communists first organized several so-called "people's governments" at local village administrative levels. These served as "models" to the local populace and as training centers for the indoctrination of native political workers or cadres. Favorable prices for locally produced goods, extension of education and medical services, and several similar measures were used to convince the local inhabitants of the good intentions of their Chinese "brothers."

By January 1953 the Chinese Communists apparently felt that sufficient groundwork had been laid to permit organization of a Tai

Autonomous District, similar to other "autonomous governments" created in areas inhabited by non-Chinese peoples. Ch'e-li was designated as the official capital of the people's government. A person called Chao Ts'un-hsin (also known as Chao Khun Sin) was appointed chairman of the people's government. He is presumed to be a member of the princely family of Sibsong Panna, but the lineage of the royal family is so complex and confusing that his exact identity is difficult to determine. Other princes of the ruling family, together with some of their followers, fled to the Burma border area after the Chinese Communist occupation of Yunnan.

Recently, political control has been extended to local levels of administration, principally through organization of people's governments at the panna level. Local autonomous units have also been established for mountain-dwelling tribes. Native cadres have been trained, and former native officials with pro-Communist leanings have been utilized in various capacities to implement Communist programs.

Considering the length of time that the Chinese Communists have occupied the area, it is probable that active pro-Communists are present in all major villages of Sibsong Panna and that political cadres have penetrated into some hill and mountain areas. The presence of strangers or other unusual events in the lowlands would undoubtedly be reported rapidly to Chinese Communist security forces. At present, travel in the hills and mountains might be safer, but eventually Chinese Communist agents and officials will certainly reach all parts of Sibsong Panna. Announced goals of the Tai Autonomous Government have included defense

of the "fatherland" and efforts to "smash sabotage activities." Presumably these goals have been stressed in the dissemination of political propaganda to the people.

B. Physical Characteristics

1. The Area in General

The Ch'e-li area consists largely of hill and mountain country, with occasional river basins where cultivation of irrigated rice is possible (Figures 1 and 2). Although the elevation of Ch'e-li and its adjoining river basin is about 1,850 feet, mountains approximately 20 miles to the south and west reach heights of slightly over 6,000 feet. The major river is the Mekong, which trends northwest-southeast through the area, bisecting Sibsong Panna into eastern and western sections. Along the course of the Mekong (about 200 to 300 yards wide opposite Ch'e-li), there are no lowlands of appreciable size, and banks 15 to 25 feet high rise sharply from the river's edge. Except for occasional interruptions caused by tributary streams and their basins, slopes are steep and merge into hills a mile or so from the river.

The vegetation of the Ch'e-li area varies to some extent with alignment of the hills. Many of the warmer southern- and western-facing slopes have been partly cleared of their original forest cover by hill tribes who practice shifting agriculture (Figures 1-3). The partly cleared mountain fields usually are abandoned after a few years, and the subsequent second growth is composed of various mixtures of scrub forest, tangled bamboo brake, and tall grass. During early spring the brush and grasslands are set afire, making the air thick with smoke and haze (Figure 3). North

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Figure 1. The Mekong River, looking south towards Burma and Laos. Steep forested hills rise abruptly from the river. In the foreground, patches of cleared land can be seen on the mountain slopes. Ch'e-li and Chieng-hung are located on the south side of the prominent bend of the Mekong.

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Figure 2. About 15 miles south of Ch'e-li is the important Tai-inhabited basin of Meng-ham. To the west (right) are Ch'e-li, Chiengnung, and the Ch'e-li basin.

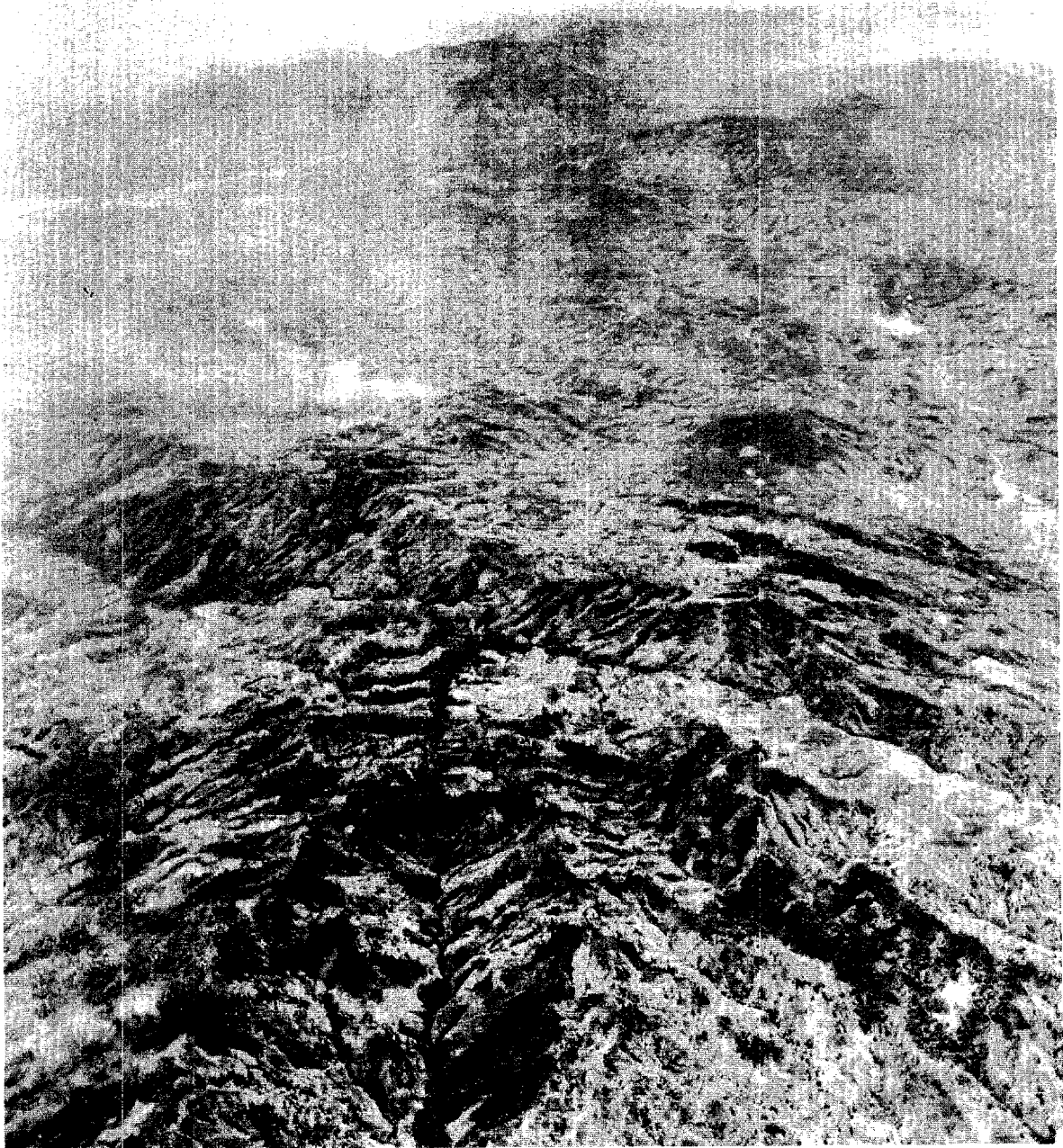


Figure 3. Rugged mountain country about 12 miles northwest of Ch'e-li. Note the large areas in grass and scrub vegetation and the smoke from fires set by hill tribesmen to clear new forest land. At the lower right is a small hill-tribe village -- probably Akha or Lolo.

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and east facing slopes are more likely to retain their original cover of tropical evergreen rain forest, [REDACTED]

25X1C

25X1C

The climate is monsoonal with approximately 60 inches of rain annually, nearly all of which falls between May and October. The weather is dry and cooler from November to April; winter nights and early morning hours are often so chilly that local inhabitants wear quilted jackets and woolen shawls. During the cooler months, thick mists hide the lowlands and the Mekong River at night and sometimes do not disperse till midmorning, thus affording cover to anyone crossing the river.

A number of wild animals are found in Sibsong Panna. Herds of elephants graze in isolated areas, and tigers are fairly common. Westerners in the Ch'e-li area in 1944 reported that large fires were needed at night to prevent marauding tigers from carrying off their pack animals. Tigers may also venture into the outskirts of the village. Among the other large animals native to the area are bears and leopards.

2. The Site of Ch'e-li

The present site of Ch'e-li dates from about 1915, when Chinese administration was first introduced in Sibsong Panna west of the Mekong. About 1917, a missionary to Ch'e-li reported that "Chinese officials are building a new town 3 or 4 miles up the river from the old one" This is the site of the modern Ch'e-li (Figure 4). In order to differentiate between the two, the old town is referred to in this report as Chienghung.* The site of Chienghung on the steep banks of the Mekong

*Ch'e-li is the Chinese name for this location. The Tai rendition is either Chienghung or Chiengrung. Early British reports used the name Kiang Hung or Kenghung. Chinese sources are not consistent in the use of Ch'e-li; occasionally Chiang-hung or Ching-hung will be given as an alternate.

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Figure 4. Village of Ch'e-li, looking north. At the right is the road from Ssu-mao. Note the Chinese court and moat. This photograph should be compared with Map 13405. Approximate scale 1:10,000.

(Figures 5 and 6) and the obvious difficulty of constructing roads to the site undoubtedly influenced Chinese selection of a new location for their administrative offices. In contrast, land in the immediate vicinity of Ch'e-li is comparatively level, and the crossing of the Mekong from the east is not difficult. The site chosen was that of an older city, long since destroyed. Today only portions of a moat remain to identify the bounds of the ancient city. From the air, Ch'e-li and Chienghung can easily be pinpointed by the prominent bend of the Mekong and its large sand spits (Figures 1, 2, and 5).

Except for its somewhat larger size, Chienghung is much like other Tai Lu villages in this area. According to the 1944 photography, it has about 100 huts of thatch-and-bamboo construction. Several larger structures can be identified as Buddhist temples or "palaces" of the king of Sibsong Panna. An observer visiting Chienghung in 1944 commented that the royal residence was a large, barn-like structure -- somewhat weatherbeaten -- supported by 7 rows of 16 wooden columns.

The most noticeable structure in Ch'e-li (as of 1944) is the Chinese court (Figure 4). An area approximately 300 feet square is enclosed by a wall, which has holes for the placement of guns. Within the courtyard are several brick buildings. A number of other buildings outside the court appear to be of the more solid Chinese-type rather than Tai thatch-and-bamboo houses; these buildings have not been identified. The group of several long narrow buildings several hundred yards south of the court may possibly have been used to house troops. The other identifiable structures in Ch'e-li comprise the former Presbyterian

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Figure 5. Looking north across the braided channels of the Mekong. At the lower center is Chienghung. The photograph was taken in winter; in summer the river rises and covers most of the sandspits. Approximate scale 1:20,000.

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Figure 6. Tai village of Chienghung, former residence of the kings of Sibsong Panna. The larger structures are Buddhist temples or a "palace" of the Tai Lu king. Enlarged from Figure 5; scale approximately 1:10,000.

mission station located near the river at the northern edge of town (see Map 13405). In 1944, westerners in Ch'e-li reported two stone buildings ("large green shuttered buildings") when referring to the mission station. Several other sizeable buildings whose functions and identities are unknown are shown on Figure 4; some may possibly be permanent market stalls. At the southern edge of town are about a dozen Tai Lu houses.

The changes that have taken place in Ch'e-li since 1944 -- the date of the photography used in compilation of Map 13405 -- are unknown. It is unlikely that significant alterations occurred between 1944 and 1948. Thereafter, the organization of the Tai Autonomous District with Ch'e-li as its administrative center undoubtedly resulted in an influx of Chinese officials. The buildings within the Chinese court presumably housed hsien offices and officials before 1948 and probably are still used for similar purposes. Since Ch'e-li is the local military headquarters, new buildings are likely to have been constructed to accommodate troops. No other information is available concerning additional buildings that have been erected or old ones that have been demolished or altered.

3. The Ch'e-li Basin

All important towns of Sibsong Panna that are inhabited by Tai are associated with one or more river basins or plains used primarily for rice growing. The Ch'e-li (or Ching-hung) basin, about 2 miles southwest of town, is associated with a small tributary stream, the Liu-sha Ho, which enters the Mekong about 3 miles south of Ch'e-li (Figures 1 and 7). The major basin extends for about 6 miles west (average width about 1-1/2 miles) along the south side of the Liu-sha Ho and has two smaller adjoining basins. The two smaller basins are 3 to 4 miles long and vary in width

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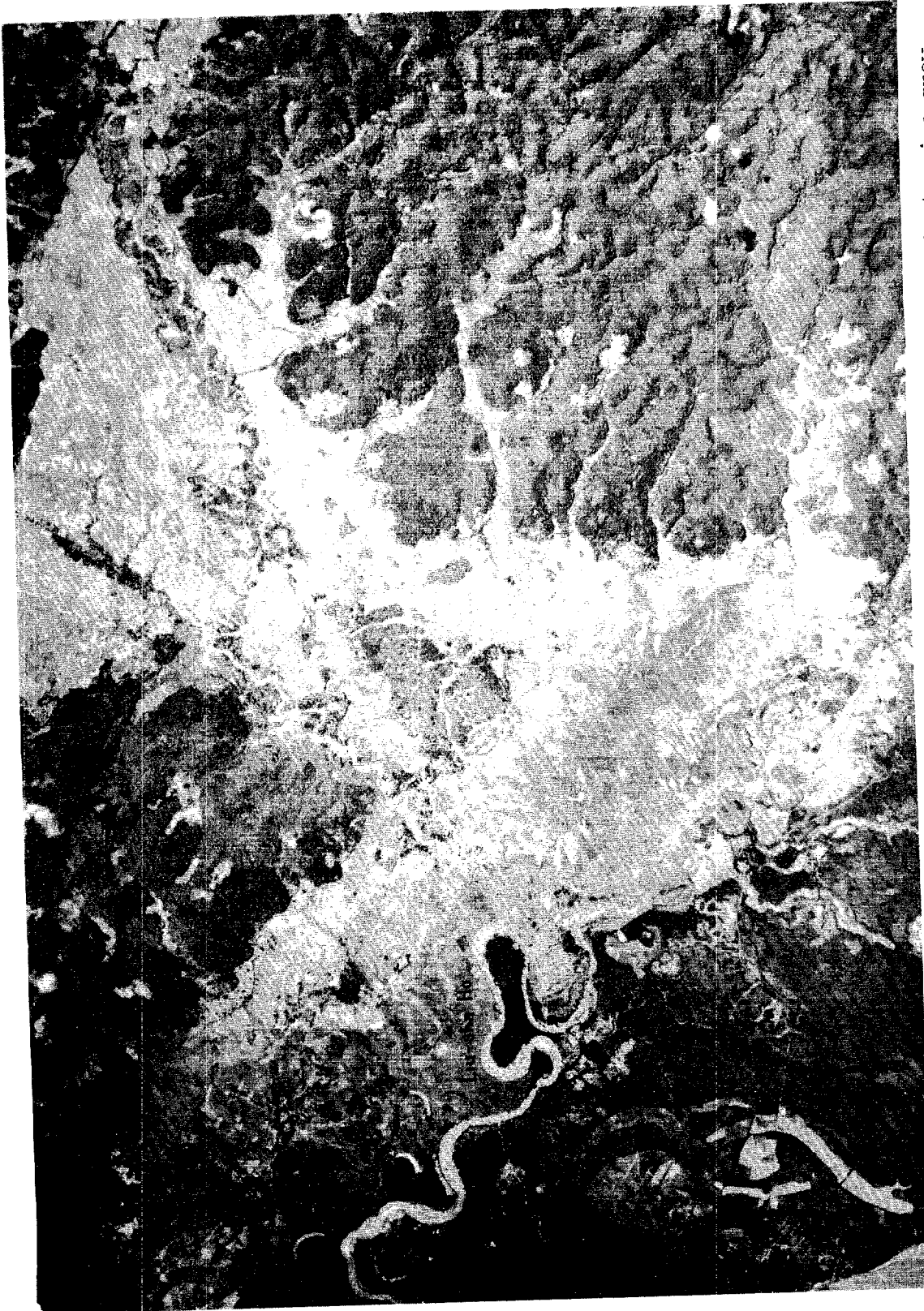


Figure 7. The Ch'e-li basin, looking south. The basin is devoted almost entirely to rice growing. A number of Tai Lu villages are located along the basin margins and streams. Ch'e-li and the Mekong are at the lower left. The Ch'e-li--Fo-hai road (1944) follows the north bank of the Liu-sha Ho. Scale approximately 1:58,000.

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from 1/2 to 2 miles; they are associated with tributaries of the Liu-sha Ho that enter from the north and south. The entire Ch'e-li basin has an estimated area of 12 to 15 square miles. Low wooded hills surround the basin and merge into steeper mountain slopes in the distance. Here and there, narrow fing-like extensions of lowland reach back into hills. Occasional patches of higher land near the basin have been cleared to raise upland rice, tea, cotton, or other nonirrigated crops.

C. The People

1. Ethnic Composition and Numbers

The Tai Lu are the most numerous and important ethnic group of the Ch'e-li and Sibsong Panna area. They are found only in the fertile river plains and basins. The Tai Lu are one of several Tai-speaking groups who inhabit northeastern Burma, Thailand, southern China, and northern Indochina. Despite the widespread distribution of Tai peoples, their various dialects are mutually understandable; and communication between a Bangkok Thai and a Tai Lu of Sibsong Panna, for example, is possible at a "basic" Tai level. The dialect spoken in Ch'e-li is very similar to that used in northern Thailand and Laos.

The Tai Lu build simple bamboo-and-thatch houses raised on piles and generally surrounded by bamboo fences to keep the animals from straying (Figure 8). The houses are clean and vermin free in comparison with those of the mountain tribes. The costume of a Tai Lu man generally consists of full trousers, a black or blue jacket similar to those of the Chinese, and a large, light-colored turban occasionally topped with a large straw hat. A Tai Lu woman wears a tight-waisted jacket

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Figure 8. A typical Tai Lu house on poles, with adjoining platform used for performing household tasks. Supplies are stored in the gable.



Figure 9. Weekly market scene, possibly in Ch'e-li or Chienghung, with market stalls in the background. The women are wearing typical Tai Lu costumes.

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usually of dark blue, a sarong-like skirt striped horizontally, and a loosely wrapped head turban (Figure 9). Silver ornaments are often worn.

In and along the margins of the Ch'e-li basin (as of 1944) are approximately 50 Tai villages. The majority are located on slightly higher ground along the margins of the basin (Figure 10); a smaller number are situated on the banks of the meandering streams; and an occasional village is found in the basin proper (Figures 7 and 10). Most villages consist of 10 to 40 houses, but a few larger ones contain 50 or more dwellings. The average household has about 4 members. Tai Lu villages are partly screened and hidden by clumps of trees (Figure 11). The individual villages are connected by paths, and an occasional path leads back into the hills, generally along or near the crest of a ridge.

The several mountain tribes are much smaller numerically than the Tai Lu and live in widely scattered settlements in the hills and mountains. Except on market days and during the summer, when a small number work as farm laborers for the Tai Lu, the tribespeople remain in their mountain retreats. The most important group in the vicinity of Ch'e-li is the Akha. Akha villages are large and are usually located at elevations above 4,500 feet, often only a few hundred feet below the crest of a main ridge (Figure 3). In shape and material, their houses are similar to those of the Tai Lu and, depending upon the terrain, may or may not be raised on piles. In physical appearance the Akha are shorter, darker, and more robust than the Tai Lu. Clothing of the men

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Figure 10. Northward extension of the Ch'e-li basin about 2 miles northwest of Ch'e-li. Note the villages along the basin margins and the terraced rice fields at the upper left. Approximate scale 1:20,000.

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Figure 11. The rice basin of Meng-lung, 50 miles south of Ch'e-li. The arrangement of basin floor, village hidden by trees, and mountains in the background is characteristic of Sibsong Panna. The mountains in the background form the Yünnan-Burma boundary.



Figure 12. Akha women returning from market. Their beaded, elaborately decorated costumes are distinctive. The headdress varies and may be an ear cap (as shown), a high conical cap, or an enormous ball-shaped turban.

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consists of plain dark-blue jackets, trousers reaching to the calf of the leg, turbans, and silver bracelets. The costumes of the women are quite elaborate and distinctive, as shown in Figure 12. A very few representatives of other tribes -- Lolo, Lahu, Miao, and Yao -- may be found in the hills near Ch'e-li. In their villages the houses are not raised on poles like those of the Tai and some Akha groups.

Occasional Chinese agricultural settlements are found in the mountains near Ch'e-li. Such villages can be identified by their clay huts, which are unlike the predominantly bamboo-and-thatch structures of the Tai Lu and mountain tribes.

No accurate information is available concerning the total population of Sibsong Panna. Recent Chinese Communist reports would indicate a population of about 150,000 Tai Lu in Sibsong Panna, plus 50,000 mountain tribespeople. According to Chinese hsien statistics of 1934, the population of Ch'e-li Hsien totaled about 41,000. Of these, about 27,000 were Tai Lu people, 7,000 Akha, and 1,600 Chinese.

The total population of the villages of Ch'e-li and Chienghung combined probably does not exceed 1,000. Photography taken in 1944 shows about 100 homes in Chienghung and somewhat less than half that number in Ch'e-li. An observer in this area about 1940 stated that Ch'e-li has been reduced to a population of 50 households but it is not clear whether the reference was to Ch'e-li or Chienghung. This observer further reported that the former name of Ch'e-li was Ching-te and that the term "Ching" was applied to centers with a population of over 10,000, which would indicate that the population of the area as a whole was much larger at an earlier period.

Observers in the Ch'e-li area often have commented on the depopulation of the area. For example, a reconnaissance road survey from Sau-mao to Ch'e-li made in 1943 listed a number of Tai Lu villages, and in many cases the number of houses reported was greater than the total population of the village. The civil strife and warfare of the 19th century probably was a cause of depopulation, but more important factors are the high incidence of malaria, typhoid fever, plague, leprosy, and other diseases. The prevalence of these diseases has been the major deterrent to Chinese settlement of the subtropical rice basins of Sibsong Panna and adjacent areas of Yunnan.

Health conditions were reported to be very poor in Ch'e-li in 1943. About that time the introduction of western drugs in limited quantities improved conditions somewhat. Further improvement may have occurred since the Chinese Communists take-over. Lack of adequate medicines and ignorance of the local people regarding sanitary measures have been handicaps to major improvement in health standards.

2. Economic Activities

The principal economic activity of the Tai Lu in the Ch'e-li area is sedentary agriculture. Irrigated rice, the major subsistence crop, is planted in May and harvested in October. The Mekong rises in the spring and provides sufficient water for flooding the paddy fields in the Ch'e-li basin. Sugar cane, taro, and various vegetables are grown in garden plots. Fruit produced in the groves that surround each village include bananas, mangos, and citrus fruits. Tea, cotton, and camphor are the three most important commercial crops of the area. The production

of tea is of particular importance, and frequently tea from the Ch'e-li area is exported to Tibet.

Upland slopes near the villages are used for grazing and for non-irrigated crops. Among the domestic animals of the Tai are cows, buffaloes, pigs, and chickens. Horses and mules are used as means of transportation and as pack animals. The Tai Lu fish to a considerable extent in the Mekong and its tributaries and are accomplished boatmen (Figure 13).

To supplement their income, many villages engage in various simple handicraft industries such as the making of bamboo furniture, pottery, and paper. In addition, special types of food such as rice noodles, pipe tobacco, wine, and bamboo shoots are prepared for sale or barter at the village market. An individual village will specialize in a particular food speciality or handicraft item.

Markets are held in the larger villages and are so distributed that they occur about every fifth day in any individual village. The market stalls are set up at a fixed place either in or immediately adjacent to the village (Figure 9). Market days are colorful affairs, attracting not only the Tai Lu from neighboring villages but also numbers of mountain tribespeople dressed in their colorful costumes. In Ch'e-li and Chienghung, several hundred to more than 1,000 people may attend the larger markets. In addition to stalls of fresh vegetables, rice, and specialty food, Chinese peddlers offer for sale sundry goods such as cloth, knives, needles, and soap.



Figure 13. The Mekong, probably opposite Chienghung, showing a Tai Lu dugout near the opposite bank. Hills covered with scrub vegetation rise abruptly from the river.



Figure 14. Tai Lu men and women going to market on a chilly winter morning wearing woolen shawls and jackets. In the background is a Buddhist temple, possibly in Chienghung.

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Prior to 1912 the only coinage used in Ch'e-li was a round and slightly dented piece of silver. Subsequently, provincial authorities in K'un-ming issued for use in Sibsong Panna half-dollar silver coins with both Tai and Chinese inscriptions. Paper notes were introduced about 1925 and, as the result of inflation and other currency manipulations, many of the half-dollars were drained from the Ch'e-li area.

Despite the introduction of coins and paper currency, commodity exchange continued to play an important role in the local economy. A common daily exchange in 1940 was one catty* of chicken for one catty of cotton. Bartering has been particularly important among the hill tribes, with salt and cloth particularly valued items. Other goods useful for trading and for establishing good relations include the following: safety pins, spools of thread and needles, small mirrors, medicine (sulfa and quinine), bolts of blue cloth, and gaily colored embroidered ribbon. The last is said to be highly regarded by Akha girls. In recent years, sulfa and quinine have become particularly prized commodities.

Only fragmentary information has been received concerning changes affecting the economy of the Ch'e-li area that have been instituted by the Chinese Communists. As of 1953 the following conditions reportedly prevail: (1) tax agents appropriate, without payment, all rice in excess of a small per capita allowance; (2) no storage of food is permitted beyond immediate needs, and market purchases are limited; (3) livestock and chickens are enumerated; (4) garden produce and livestock can be sold at the market but only at fixed prices; (5) no slaughter of animals

*One catty equals 1-1/3 pounds.

except through regular market channels is allowed; (6) meat markets are open only every fifth day; and (7) the Communists are attempting to collect all silver coins and replace them with standard Communist paper currency.

Under the Communist system, a number of State trading companies have been organized and control all trading activities. Reports from minority-inhabited areas indicate that the Chinese Communists have subsidized prices in an effort to raise living standards and to win the favor of local inhabitants. According to the Chinese press, a State-operated "department store" in Ch'e-li has for sale items such as cloth, tea cups, and bowls. Chinese press releases also announce that some 5 State companies and 10 trading teams are currently operating in the Tai Autonomous District. The Chinese are encouraging increased production of Sibsong Panna's exportable commodities -- tea, cotton, and camphor.

The changes in the economy of Sibsong Panna are consistent with Communist policies elsewhere, and their reported imposition indicates the extent of Chinese control in the country. Although silver coins are being requisitioned, it is possible that they still may be prized by tribesmen in the more remote mountain areas.

3. Religion and Education

Buddhism is nominally the religion of the Tai Lu, but strong admixtures of animism (spirit worship) permeate traditional Buddhist practices. The larger Tai Lu villages have their own Buddhist temples (Figure 14), and Chienghung is said to have 8 or 10. Many temples are merely thatch-and-wood structures similar to the houses but larger; a few are more

elaborate stone structures enclosed within a court. A limited survey (1940) of Tai Lu villages in the Ch'e-li basin indicated that about 60 percent of all Tai Lu males had entered Buddhist temples for varying periods of time. Entrance is made when the boys are small. In addition to the study of Buddhist doctrine and various menial tasks, they are taught to read and write the Tai Lu language. The Yuan script, the sacred language of Tai Buddhism, is taught. While in the temple the boys wear the same dress as adult monks -- dark-yellow sheets draped so as to leave the arms and one shoulder bare. At the age of 20, the boys are free to leave and marry.

A Presbyterian mission station, an outpost of the Presbyterian missions in northern Thailand, operated at Ch'e-li after 1917. It has been reported that the mission's greatest success was with Tai Lu who through witchcraft had been made outcasts -- an indication of the influence of spirit-worship among the Tai Lu. A lepers' village under the guidance of an American physician was established near Ch'e-li, apparently as a part of the mission's work. A Chinese Catholic missionary was known to have been operating in Sibsong Panna during 1943-44.

It is not known what restrictions, if any, the Chinese Communists have imposed upon religious practices. Reports from China indicate that the Chinese Communists have initially tolerated the traditional religious and cultural practices observed by non-Chinese peoples.

Before the introduction of Chinese administration in Ch'e-li, education was solely in the hands of the Buddhist clergy, and the temple served both as a religious and educational center. Afterwards, schools

for studying Chinese were established, and 9 such schools were in existence in Ch'e-li Hsien in 1940. It seems, however, that only a very small percentage of the Tai Lu actually attended these schools. Because of their Buddhist training, many Tai Lu are literate. Chinese is often a secondary language, particularly in and around Chinese administrative centers.

Chinese Communist propaganda stresses the need for educating the non-Chinese people. Although there has been no specific information concerning Ch'e-li, it is likely that schools have been established and include liberal dosages of Communist doctrine mixed with the 3 R's.

D. Transportation and Communications

1. Roads and Trails

Until the recent road-building activities of the Chinese Communists, little had been done to improve the wretchedly poor transportation system in the Ch'e-li area. In the past, as a result of insurrection or desire to expand trade, Chinese provincial authorities occasionally cleared and widened ancient caravan trails. Invariably, however, these improvements were short-lived, and the roads soon deteriorated into difficult trails and paths traversable only by mules, ponies, and men.

The most important route from Ch'e-li leads north to Ssu-mao (see Map 13382) and from there eventually to K'un-ming -- a total distance of about 350 miles. A westward extension of this route leads through Fo-hai (Meng-hai) to Ta-lo on the Burma border, where connecting trails and roads lead to the important market and trading center of Keng Tung in eastern Burma. Other trails lead south and east from Ch'e-li into

Laos and Thailand. In addition, Akha tribesmen have constructed many wide, well-concealed paths in the mountainous areas, and an individual could travel for many miles along these paths without descending into the valleys. The paths are steep and often rugged, but men on foot carrying loads could use them.

The major Chinese Communist construction effort has been the building of the K'un-ming--Ch'e-li highway. According to the Chinese press, the last section was completed in December 1953. Crossing the Mekong has always been a problem and caused delay, but the Chinese may possibly be constructing a bridge across the river near Ch'e-li. The condition of Ssu-mao--Ch'e-li sector of the K'un-ming--Ch'e-li highway is probably little better than a single-lane, fair-weather road. The westward extension to the Burma border -- about 90 miles -- has been under construction and may possibly be completed. It is thought to be merely a single-lane, fair-weather road.

Other routes from Ch'e-li include a caravan trail leading south along the Mekong to Meng-ha, and from there south and west to Mong Yu in Burma (see Map 13382). Both of these routes (Ch'e-li--Ta-lo and Ch'e-li--Mong Yu) connect with the motorable road leading south from Keng Tung into northern Thailand. They are the customary trade routes from Thailand to the Ch'e-li area.

The only other important motorable route in the Ch'e-li area is the Ssu-mao--Cheng-yüeh road. Chen-yüeh is about 45 miles due east of Ch'e-li, and a fair-weather pack-trail connects the two locations. Caravan trails lead south from Chen-yüeh to Meng-p'eng (Meng-pung) and Meng-la and

connect with the system of trails in northern Laos. It has been reported that the Chinese are clearing and widening some of the tracks and trails within the Meng-p'eng, Meng-hsing, Meng-pan, and Meng-la areas.

Some of the wider and more heavily used trails and tracks are jeep-able during the dry season. Others could be traversed only by mules or ponies, and some are mere foot paths. Only the more important known trails have been marked on Map 13382. Undoubtedly, a number of lesser trails lead from Laos and Burma into Sibsong Panna and are familiar to local inhabitants, traders, and smugglers.

During the rainy season, all routes become treacherous and difficult to traverse as a result of washouts, swollen streams, and mud. Although travel is greatly limited during the rainy months, it is not impossible. After the rainy season, considerable clearing, repairing of bridges, and filling in of washouts must be done to permit use by carts and other vehicles.

The Mekong south from Ch'e-li has had almost negligible value as an avenue of transportation. A number of rapids downstream from Ch'e-li preclude use of craft other than native dugouts, but most of the rapids can be navigated by canoe. The Mekong, however, can be crossed at practically any point. The current varies from 2 or 3 knots in the widest reaches to about 15 knots in narrow rocky sections. Many rocks that are submerged, especially at high water, give rise to dangerous whirlpools. During the dry season the Mekong occupies only about one-fourth to one-third of its bed, exposing large areas of sand and rock.

2. Telecommunications

Although definite information is not available, single-line circuits may connect Ch'e-li with Fo-hai to the east and Ning-erh to the north. There are known to be connections between Ning-erh and K'un-ming.

E. Summary of Current Conditions

Since the Chinese Communists first occupied southern Yunnan, they have been engaged in an extensive program to weld this remote and traditionally independent region into the framework of New China. Politically, the establishment of a so-called "autonomous people's government" -- utilizing the boundaries, capital, and administrative organization of ancient Sibsong Panna -- has enabled the Chinese Communists to pose as guarantors of the traditional independence and local self-government enjoyed in the area. A facade of local self-government has been maintained by employing a few of the Tai nobility in the new government and numbers of Tai and other nationalities in various minor governmental roles. In reality a few Chinese Communist officials and cadres, reinforced by military detachments, hold positions of actual authority; and all decisions of importance are relayed through the Communist chain of command.

During the past year, press reports stating that the Communists have organized local panna governments (reportedly 9) indicate that large numbers of native political workers have already been trained. Many of these political workers are enthusiastic young people who have been intensively trained in Communist doctrines. Since political workers operating in the

outlying basins of Sibsong Panna, it may be assumed that the Communists control nearly all of the Tai Lu-inhabited lowlands and that each village is politically organized and susceptible to Communist control.

Indoctrination of the people is carried out by various means, including the establishment of schools and the political training of native recruits in the local militia. Daily political indoctrination courses are part of the military training. The establishment of health centers in this disease-ridden area has been reported and is likely to improve Chinese--non-Chinese relations.

The extensive road construction and repairing activities in the Ch'e-li area are measures designed to effectuate control and improve Communist military capabilities in the border area. The organization of State trading concerns and the sending out of trading teams into the hinterlands are indications of the Chinese Communist efforts to integrate this area with the rest of Yunnan Province economically.

The hills and mountain areas near Ch'e-li probably have been least affected by Chinese Communist measures. Although it has been announced that one Yao and one Akha local people's autonomous government have been organized, there are probably remote mountain areas that have not been organized politically and where no pro-Communist individuals have penetrated. Nevertheless, the training of native cadres continues, and Chinese Communist efforts to bring even the remote hill tribesmen under political, economic, and social domination will undoubtedly continue.

APPENDIX

SOURCES AND GAPS IN INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence on the Ch'e-li area is extremely limited and inadequate. Although occasional reports deal with Sibsong Panna in general, specific information on Ch'e-li is seldom received. The area is poorly mapped and locations or alignments of rivers, mountains, towns, and roads are only approximate on existing maps. Important gaps in intelligence include the degree and extent of Chinese Communist controls and the reactions of local inhabitants to Communist domination.

Of the recent reports dealing with Chinese Communist occupation of Ch'e-li and surrounding areas, the most useful information is contained in Sources 1 and 2. Both sources are evaluated as

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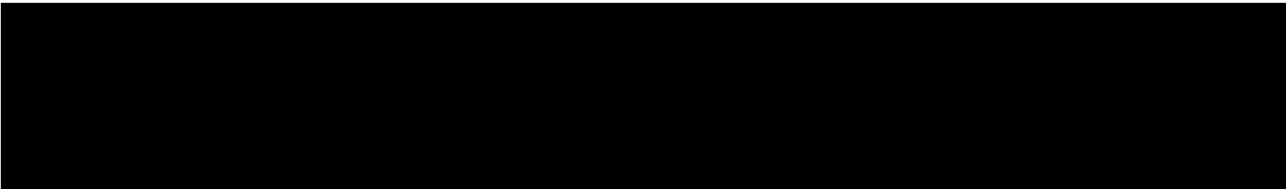
General information about the people, living conditions, and economy is found in Dodd (3), but the early date of the information limits the usefulness of this source somewhat. Von Wissmann's report of observations in southern Yunnan during 1934-35 (4) provides considerable ethnic, sociological, and topographical data. Wiens (5) is valuable because Chinese sources have been exploited in the brief treatment of the area. Detailed information regarding the economy and political history, based upon 1940-41 field work, is contained in Chen (6). Some information is given by Smith and Clark (7) in their book reporting OSS operations carried out in southern Yunnan during World War II.

Only a short selected list of basic sources is appended. In addition, a large number of intelligence documents, Chinese Communist press

releases, and various other sources have been exploited in the preparation of this study.

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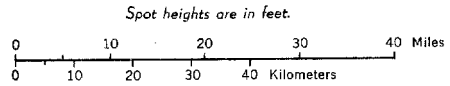
General Sources



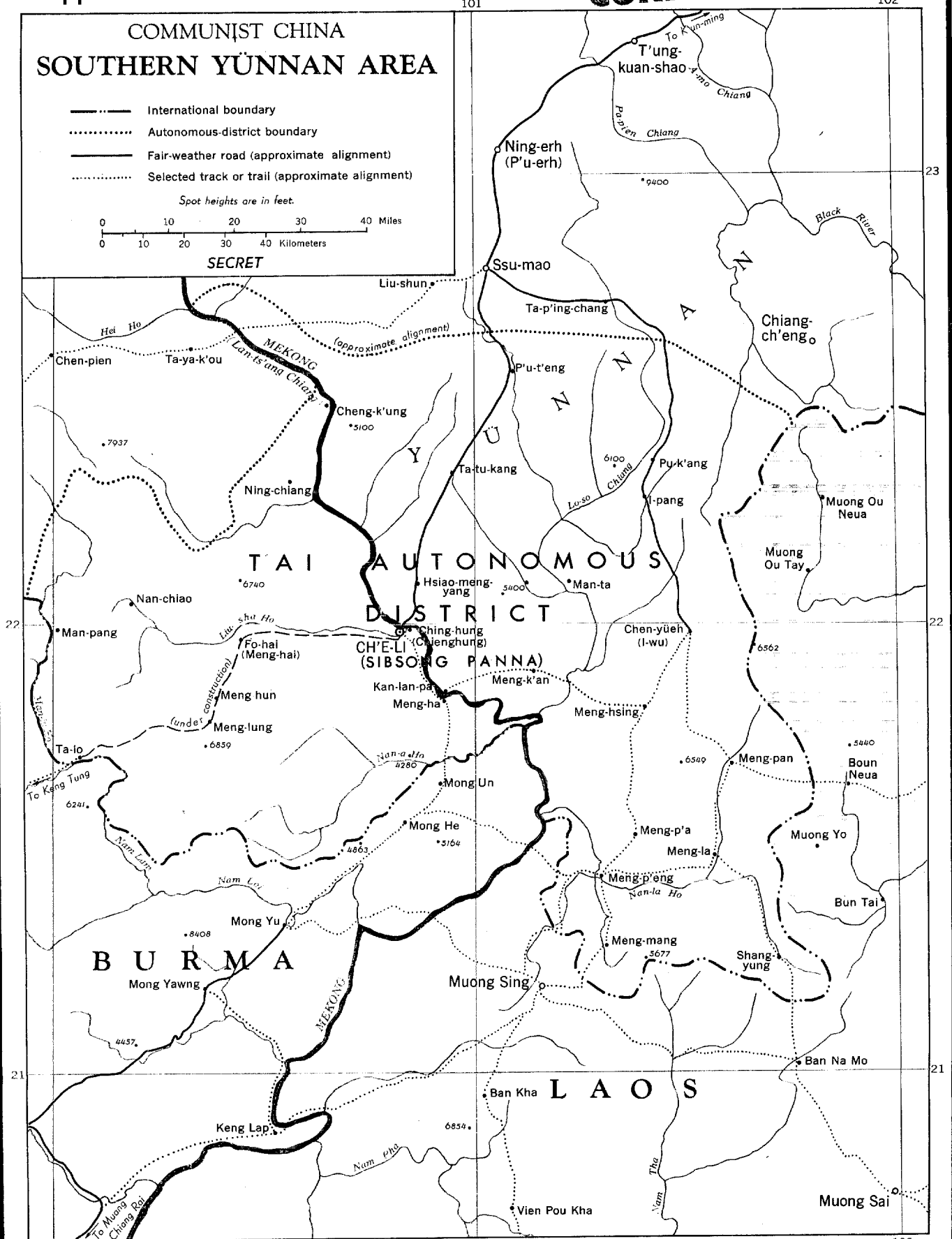
3. Dodd, William C., The Tai Race, Elder Brother of the Chinese, Cedar Rapids, 1923.
4. Wissmann, Hermann von, Süd-Yünnan als Teilraum Ostasiens, Berlin, 1943.
5. Wiens, Harold J., China's Southward March into the Tropics, Office of Naval Research, Washington, 1952.
6. Chen, Han-seng, Frontier Land Systems in Southernmost China, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1949.
7. Smith, Nicol and Clark, Blake, Into Siam, Indianapolis, 1946.

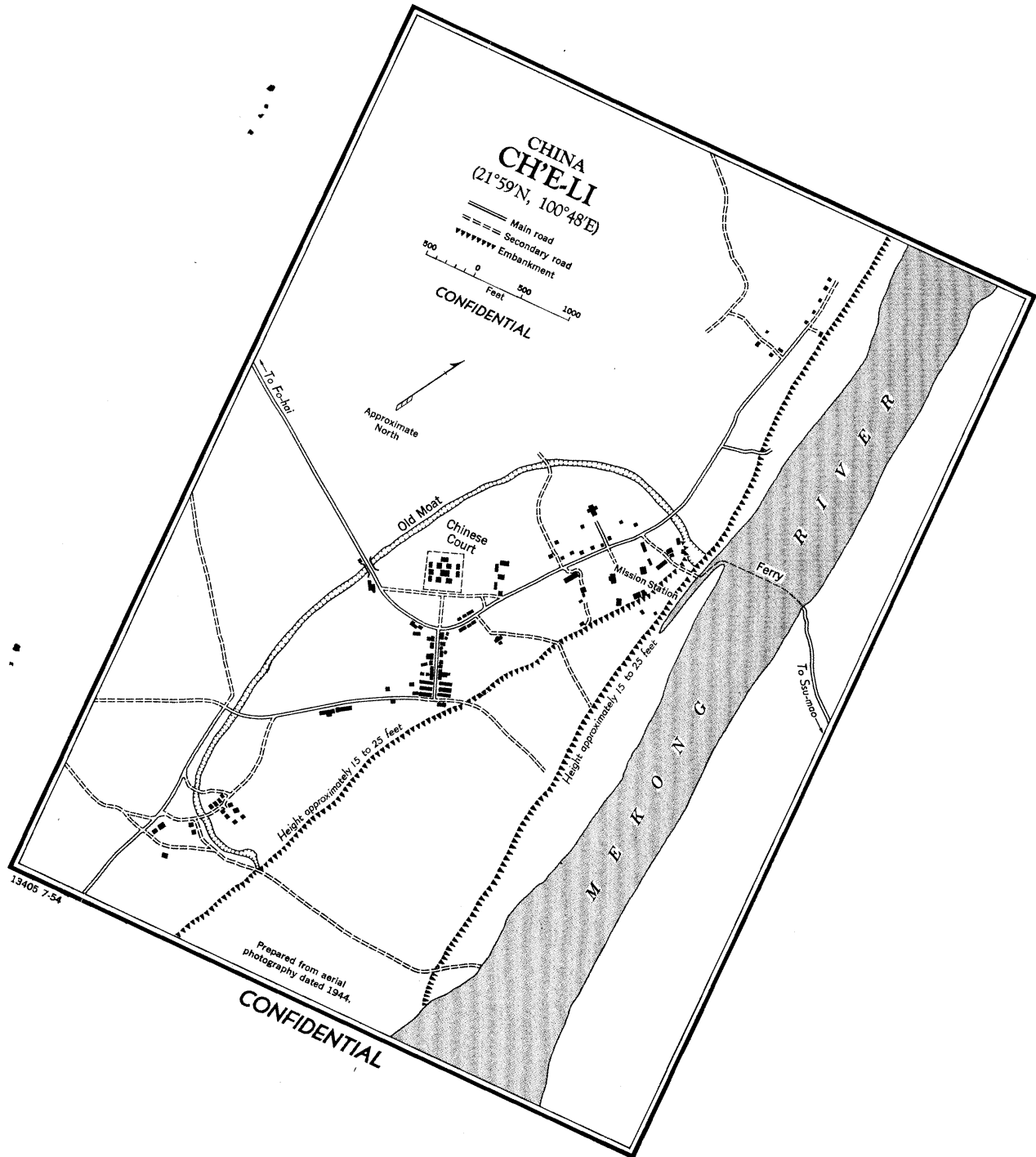
COMMUNIST CHINA SOUTHERN YÜNNAN AREA

- International boundary
- Autonomous-district boundary
- Fair-weather road (approximate alignment)
- Selected track or trail (approximate alignment)



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