THE TALI DISTRICT OF WESTERN YUNNAN

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In the far south-west of China, among the tangled mountains of western Yunnan, there is a long blue lake lying at the foot of snow-topped mountains, between them a strip of fertile rice land. This is the district of Tali, just north of the Burma Road. The road actually passes through Siakwan, which is the subsidiary township of the Tali district, and a short branch connects the city of Tali 10 miles farther up the lake. The topographical features of this region are sharply defined: the plain, narrow and flat but intensely fertile and closely cultivated for rice; the lake, Erh Hai, which forms the eastern boundary of the district; and lastly the massive wall of the Ts'ang Shan range, one of the highest in Yunnan proper, which shuts off the plain from the west.

Beyond the lake to the east and south there are other lower ranges which are in fact the watersheds of the Yangtze, Red river (Yüan Kiang), and Mekong. The Red river, which flows out at Haiphong in Indo-China, actually rises in these southern ranges. The Erh Hai, the Ear Lake, fed by the northern Erh river, drains by way of the southern lower Erh into the Yangpi, which is a tributary of the Mekong, and the Tali district is thus within the basin of the latter river.

This is so unexpected, in view of the configuration of the ranges in this area, that many maps still show Erh Hai as draining into the Red river. When the height of Ts'ang Shan to the west compared with the relative insignificance of the ranges east of the lake is considered this would indeed appear to be the natural course of the river. In fact the lower Erh breaks out round the southern end of the Ts'ang Shan range through a very narrow gorge called Lung Wei Kuan, the Dragon's Tail Pass, where the stream at one point is actually bridged by a huge boulder wedged between cliffs. This gap has recently been widened to permit the construction of the Burma Road, which follows the line of this gorge and thus avoids a crossing of the Ts'ang Shan range. These mountains, although they attain 14,000 feet, and are thus the highest for many miles in any direction, are not a watershed of any importance. They divide the Erh Hai from the Yangpi river. Across the lake the low eastern mountain is the watershed of the Yangtze and Mekong, one of the main divides in south-eastern Asia.

I do not know whether the geological cause of this anomaly has been ascertained, but an untrained observer may remark that whereas all the ranges east and south of the lake are limestone formations, Ts'ang Shan, alone among the mountains east of the Salween, is granite. The exceptionally precipitous character of its slopes, particularly on the western side, suggests that it represents an upheaval of underlying rock which has broken through the limestone cover of the Yunnan plateau. The character of the forest which covers the upper part of the mountain is also different from that found on the nearest mountain of comparable height on the eastern side of the lake, the 11,000-foot Chi Tsu Shan, which is covered with chestnut woods but has few rhodo-
dendrons and cedars, whereas Ts'ang Shan has no chestnuts and is thickly overgrown with rhododendrons and conifers.

The plain of Tali, 30 miles long, but never more than 3 miles wide, penned in between the mountain and the lake, can be reached on land only from three points. The northern entrance is at Shang Kuan, the Upper Fort, where the slope of Ts'ang Shan is riven by a deep narrow cleft running down almost to the lake shore, here only a few hundred yards from the foot of the mountain. The gap between the cleft and the lake is closed and defended by the old walls of the decayed fortress. Shang Kuan was always the weakest spot in Tali’s defence, but the other entrance to the plain, at Siakwan, seems to be designed by nature to render the Tali plain almost impregnable. From the west the traveller, or invader, must pass through the Dragon’s Tail Pass, which two men could have defended, since the old track was only just wide enough for one laden mule to pass, and twisted round sharp bends. From the east access was easy until Siakwan itself is reached, but there the actual entrance to the plain was barred by the swiftly flowing Erh river at the exit of the lake, and the single bridge is defended by the double fortress of Siakwan built on both banks of the river enclosing the bridge.
Ts'ang Shan itself is crossed by only one difficult mountain path, impassable in winter, and never fit for mules or horses. This little-known wood-cutter's track is in fact now hardly ever used, and yet tradition says that it was by this third route that the Mongol army of Kubla Khan, long baffled by the defences of Tali, finally broke into the plain and conquered the ancient kingdom of Nan Chao, of which Tali was the capital.

Although so inaccessible by land, the Tali plain is everywhere open to communications by the lake, and indeed a large proportion of the commerce of the district is carried by boat. The shores of the plain are flat rice fields fringed with willow thickets, occasionally with still lagoons or narrow creeks. Many of the villages are built on the shores of the lake on newly reclaimed land so that the greatest possible acreage of old fertile land may be left free for the all-important cultivation of rice. For the same reason the villages farther from the shore are built along the lowest rock-strewn slopes of the mountain, a wide expanse of unbroken cultivation dividing the two groups of settlements.

With the exception of Siakwan at the southern end of the plain Tali city is the only town in the district, although the large village of Sichow near the northern end is almost to be ranked as a market township. The large number of villages, more than two hundred in all, are connected with these market centres and with each other by winding paved paths useful only for pedestrians or mules, for there was no wheeled traffic anywhere in western Yunnan until the recent building of the Burma Road. These villages, the homes of the Min Chia people, a non-Chinese race with a distinct language, vary in size from small groups of five or six houses to large settlements with three or four hundred inhabitants. They are entirely agricultural or fishing communities, all shopping and marketing being done at Tali or Siakwan or at certain markets held on fixed days at convenient points in the countryside.

Although seen from the mountain the plain appears absolutely flat, it is in fact a gentle slope from the mountain base to the lake shore, very carefully graded so that each field nearer the lake is a little lower than the next, permitting the canalized mountain streams to be diverted into innumerable small channels which irrigate every field on the plain. Rice, as is well known, has to be planted out when the fields have been flooded, and as the Min Chia lack any pumping apparatus, and the level of the lake in spring is well below that of the plain, this flooding of the fields is accomplished by using the water from the mountain torrents which are swollen by the melting snows of the Ts'ang Shan. The Min Chia are therefore largely independent of the monsoon, which often does not break until the end of June. In point of fact the water supply from the streams is not really quite sufficient for the whole plain, so that the fields nearest the lake, which at first sight seem to be the most desirable, are of less value than those nearer the mountain which get the first use of the stream water.

There is no record of when this vast work of scientific irrigation and terracing was first undertaken. For more than a thousand years the Min Chia have certainly cultivated their rice in these fields, but whether they originally entered the plain as conquerors who then established a planned system of irrigation, or whether the original marsh was slowly reclaimed and terraced
Eastern shore of Erh Hai and Tachi village

Tali City
as the population expanded, cannot now be determined. There is some evidence to show that the waters of the lake have slowly receded, and some tradition pointing to the present lakeside villages being later settlements than those inland, but the absence of ancient and accurate maps make this at best uncertain.

The Tali plain has certainly been inhabited for thousands of years. The city of Tali, itself founded in the seventh century, was preceded by the older city of Tai Ho, the site of which can still be seen near the village of the same name on the road to Siakwan. Above Tali, on a spur of the mountain, there are ancient earth and stone works in which small pieces of a primitive pottery, probably neolithic, have been picked up.

The eastern shore of the Erh Hai is not part of the administrative district of Tali, but it is both geographically and economically, as well as ethnically, part of the same region. In sharp contrast to the flat western shore, the bare rocky hills rise steeply out of deep water along the whole eastern side of the lake. Only at four or five points where small valleys drain into the lake are there any settlements, or any cultivation. These eastern limestone hills are dry and largely denuded of soil. The rainfall is much less, and the hours of sunlight much longer, for the immense wall of Ts’ang Shan shuts off the sun at four in the afternoon in winter at Tali, and at six in summer. Where there is soil the sheltered valleys of the eastern shore produce some of the finest fruit in China, several kinds of pears, peaches, and mandarin oranges, which are brought by boat to Tali and the villages of the western shore, where they are often bartered directly for rice, which is very little grown on the eastern side of the lake.

The inhabitants of this area being unable to get a sufficient livelihood as farmers, have turned to what are subsidiary occupations for the Min Chia of the Tali plain. The men of the eastern shore are the boatmen, boat builders, and fishermen of the lake. Although their bare hills produce no timber, they fetch this from the Tali side or from the wooded hills beyond their own range, and they have established a virtual monopoly of boat building. The Min Chia boats, some of which have a length of 40 feet, and a beam of 6 feet, are peculiar craft, evolved during the centuries by a people absolutely remote from any other stretch of navigable water. There are boats of an inferior and different pattern on the Kunyang lake at Kunming (Yünnanfu), 300 miles and more from Tali, and there are of course boats upon the Irrawady at Bhamo, also more than 300 miles from Tali. These are the only and nearest neighbours to the Min Chia boats of the Erh Hai.

The Min Chia boats are not caulked, or nailed together, but built of fitted grooved planks which are cemented over to make them watertight. They have no keel, but a very large rudder which projects far below the bottom of the boat and has to be shipped when approaching shallow water. They are propelled by sails made of grass mats similar in design to the sails of Chinese junks, but all rigging, sheets, and cordage are made of raw cow hide. These boats can sail fast, fairly close to the wind, but are helpless without a wind, since the oar has never been developed beyond a rudimentary paddle. When wind is lacking the Min Chia, to whom time is no object, either drift idly in deep water, or pole slowly along the shallow western shore until enough
breeze springs up to cross the lake. The weather in summer is admirably suited to these methods, since there is usually a light breeze from some direction, but in winter there are sudden and very violent squalls from Ts’ang Shan which are highly dangerous and much dreaded.

The lake has made the Min Chia a race of watermen, but oddly enough although they live among and under the shadow of great mountains this people show very little aptitude for the life of mountaineers. The characteristic occupations of the mountain dweller are ignored or underdeveloped among the Min Chia. They have very few flocks of sheep, and these are grazed only on the lower slopes where the pasture is not so rich as it is farther up. The woodcutting industry is also largely neglected and despised. The Min Chia get most of their building timber from across the lake by purchase, not from their own mountain forests. Stone and marble is indeed quarried from the mountain, and in the opinion of the inhabitants of Tali, that is its sole value. This is the more curious, as any one who climbs the Ts’ang Shan mountain can see that for a people who have only limited natural resources at their disposal the mountain holds many possibilities.

The Ts’ang Shan rises like a wall above the plain of Tali. There are no foothills, hardly any gradual slopes, at best only a half-mile or so of rock-strewn uneven land before the steep ascent begins. Consequently all the small valleys soon become inaccessible. As soon as the foot of the real mountain is reached these valleys become narrow gorges down which the streams drop in cascades and waterfalls, and none of these valleys can be followed for as much as a mile, usually very much less. Although these rocky valleys afford no road to the summit they are well worth visiting for their own secluded beauty and the rich growth of flowering shrubs and lesser flowers which grow along the stream banks. The ways to the higher levels lie up the ridges of the spurs which divide these gorges. The ascent is therefore everywhere steep and arduous. The tracks made by grass-cutters, women and boys, who go up to cut the rich grass of the mid-levels for fodder for the mule caravans in the city inns, are narrow and often deeply hollowed out by the summer rains. The lowest part of the mountain, above the grave-strewn rocky margin of the plain, is now covered with a pine forest mostly of quite recent growth, few of the trees appearing more than forty years old at most. The local people say that the ancient forest had almost wholly disappeared about half a century ago, and that the present re-afforestation, which has now clothed the first 1000 feet of the mountain with a thick forest of pines, has been accomplished by government action mainly since the establishment of the republic, that is in the past thirty years. The size of the trees would seem to confirm this. Wood may be cut on this part of the mountain only by licence from the city magistrate, and this regulation seems to be effective in checking the peasants’ natural tendency to cut down trees.

The pine forest on the lower part of the mountain extends to about 8000 feet above sea-level, that is the first 1500 feet of the mountain itself. There is very little undergrowth on this part of the mountain except small white rhododendron bushes which have large blossoms, and the common pink and red azaleas which cover most of the mountains in Yunnan as thickly as heather in Scotland. Irises and gentians are the common flowers on these levels with
Lower Erh river below Dragon's Tail Pass

In the Dragon's Tail Pass

Dragon's Tail Pass at Siakwan: Burma Road on left
Estuary of Upper Erh river at Shang Kuan

Bridge over Upper Erh river near Shang Kuan
occasional wild tea bushes, rock orchids, and a white flowering thorn bush which is something like our blackthorn or hawthorn.

Near the upper limit of the pine forest there is a temple which is, so far as I know, the only habitation anywhere on the Ts'ang Shan mountain proper. The Min Chia would appear to have such a strong aversion to living on the mountain that even those who earn their livelihood by woodcutting or as shepherds, for whom it would be much more convenient to be near their work, invariably live in the villages at the foot of the mountain and make a daily ascent to work of several thousand feet, returning down the steep paths every night. Chung Ho Ssu and Wu Wei Ssu, on the very lowest slopes of the mountain, are the only two temples now inhabited on Ts'ang Shan. The first is Taoist, the second Buddhist, but both have well-kept shrines to the mountain god, an ancient Min Chia deity to whom little clay shrines are raised at the points where every track begins to climb the mountain. There are also some ruined temples and rock shrines, all comparatively low down, which were destroyed by the Moslem insurgents in the great rebellion of the sixties. To the habitants of Tali of the leisureed class the climb to Chung Ho Ssu, 1500 feet at most, represents the extreme of hazardous mountaineering. Very few Min Chia except the woodcutters have ever been any higher, and most are entirely unaware of the character of the higher parts of the mountain at which they have looked every day of their lives. It is only in quite recent years, indeed mostly since the arrival of Chinese students and university men from the war zones in eastern China, that the local youth has been tempted to venture into the unknown regions higher up.

At about 8000 feet the character of the scenery changes abruptly. The pine forest thins out and is succeeded by a long climb up grassy slopes almost entirely treeless. If it were not for the ever expanding view over the plain and lake and the lower ranges beyond, this would be a dull stretch of hard going. The sunken paths are very rough and in summer tend to be also very wet from rainwater which pours down them after every shower. This part of the mountain should afford excellent pasture for sheep, but as it is rather too high for the sheep to be driven up and down each day, and the Min Chia will not establish themselves on the mountain itself, all this fine grazing goes to waste, or is at best cut by the village women and carried down for mule fodder. Even at this higher level the stream valleys are still mostly inaccessible ravines in which one can occasionally glimpse fine waterfalls hidden among a dense tangle of rhododendron and other flowering shrubs. The paths still follow the spine of the spurs dividing these gorges.

The famous Tali marble quarries are found in this middle zone of the mountain. The vein is about 30 feet thick and is mainly pure white. This ordinary white marble is quarried for tombstones, paving, and ornamental building material. The fine polished plaques which make astonishingly beautiful pictures of mountain scenery are cut from a very small vein of grey and coloured marble which lies embedded in the main vein of white marble. All the quarrying is done by hammer and chisel without any explosives. When a block is to be cut the quarrymen drill a number of small holes in line and drive wooden wedges into them. The wedges are wetted and left for the hard frosts of a winter night. By these simple methods the skilled men can split off a
block of marble, or of the building granite quarried lower down, with astonishing accuracy. Some of the pieces are of great size. It is in fact on record that the great carved slabs of marble, 10 feet long and 4 feet wide, which adorn the steps of the Forbidden City in Peiping were quarried from this remote mountain side, and then carried or dragged by human labour over the hundreds of miles of savage mountain country which lie between Tali and the Yangtze. Thence by river these costly ornaments were slowly brought down to Nanking and by the Grand Canal a further 1000 miles or so up to Peiping. This story would seem incredible were it not fully recorded in the Tali District History. This interesting book gives details of the extravagant demand for large pieces of marble made by the early Ming emperors, who it must be remembered were the first Chinese dynasty to rule Yunnan. The power of the newly founded dynasty was irresistible, but the Chinese are in a real sense a free people who will not submit to anything wholly unreasonable. So, after the first four or five huge pieces had been cut and dragged to Pahsien (Chungking) or Changsha, places about 800 miles from Tali by the shortest routes, the Yunnanese staged a little sabotage. When further orders for more and even larger marbles were sent from the distant and indifferent court, they were obeyed, after a fashion. The pieces were cut, but were broken in transit before they had got very far. This method of passive resistance was followed until the court moderated its demands both for quantity and size.

To-day large pieces, though not on the imperial scale, are still quarried for the adornment of temples and for the tombs of the wealthy. But the largest pieces of stone still quarried are not of marble but of granite, for building and for millstones. Near Tali one may see these grinding stones 6 feet in diameter and nearly a foot thick, cut from a single piece out of a granite boulder. Pieces of granite 15 or more feet in length are cut to make ties for bridges and as edge pieces for the verandas which surround a Chinese house.

Seen from the plain the upper levels of Ts'ang Shan seem to be bare dark rock, but this is an illusion due to the clear air which annihilates distance and destroys the just sense of proportion. In actual fact the higher parts of the mountain are clothed in a dense forest of bamboos, and higher still of cedars, magnolia, and tree rhododendrons, so that where to the distant view the mountain seems barest it is really the most forested.

This forest is divided into two clearly defined zones, the bamboo thickets which begin at about 11,000 feet, and the true forest which covers the last 2000 feet of the mountain up to the crest-line itself. As far as the bamboo thickets there are still clearly defined tracks and paths; for the Min Chia come up here to cut bamboos for brooms and fencing material. The bamboos are not of the large, big-stemmed variety which are found in Szechwan and other parts of south China, but a densely growing feathery type about 7 or 8 feet high. The thickets are almost impenetrable where there is no path, and uncomfortable walking where there is one. This level of the mountain is in spring and summer almost always under mist and thin drizzle, so that the soaking bamboos shower the passer-by with a cold douche at every step. In winter this part of the mountain, indeed everything above 10,000 feet, is of course under deep snow and inaccessible to the Min Chia, who possess no clothing or footwear suitable for mountain climbing in snow.
Even as late as June or the end of May there are still big banks of unmelted snow in the shadowed hollows of the rain forest, and these provide the poorer Min Chia with a curious source of income. From about the beginning of April, when it is full hot summer on the plain, with day temperatures up to 80 degrees, the wayfarer is delighted to find women selling a delicious mixture of snow and honey at points along the dusty roads. The snow, packed tightly in mat baskets and wrapped round with loose woven palm fibre cloth, remains firm and frozen even in the warm air of the summer for a day or two, which is quite long enough for the stock to be sold out. The snow is scooped out with a rice bowl and then covered either with liquid honey or melted brown sugar, making a sort of primitive ice-cream which is very delicious and refreshing.

The last forest zone of the mountain, from 12,000 feet to the crest, is entirely different from the lower and middle slopes. All here is dense forest of cedars, ilex, magnolias, and above all many kinds of magnificent rhododendrons, red, white, pink, and yellow. Under this forest, which is hung with moss and lichen from the almost perpetual drizzle and cold mist which shrouds it in summer, there is a profusion of wild flowers, but of kinds which are perfectly familiar to us from an English garden. Here on a wild mountain top in south-west China there are pansies and violets, roses, crocuses, hyacinths, and primroses, and near the very crest of the mountain, among thickets of golden rhododendrons, I have feasted on delicious raspberries and black currants very like those at home. One seems at last to have climbed right out of China into a neglected English garden.

There is no real path through the rain-forest zone. Woodcutters who come here make their way through the thickets to find a suitable tree for felling, but as no Min Chia ever wished to go to the top of the mountain for its own sake, one has to find one's own way to the last and most unexpected beauty of the hidden forest, the Hsi Ma T'ang, the "Horse Washing Pool," a still, ice-cold mountain tarn surrounded by dense thickets of golden rhododendrons, and lying only a couple of hundred feet under the crest itself. The tarn takes its name from a legend which says that a divinity of the past made a road on the crest of Ts'ang Shan along which he galloped his horses and washed them in this tarn. No horse of mortal origin, needless to say, could ever be brought up to this inaccessible spot. The story about the road along the crest does at least show that some Min Chia must have wandered up to the summit, for when the crest-line is reached the source of the legend is plain. The crest of Ts'ang Shan is a relatively flat platform about 6 feet wide overlooking an almost vertical drop on the western side. This ledge makes an excellent and comparatively easy walk along the crest which could perhaps be continued for miles over the peaks which do not rise far above the general line of the summit ridge.

The view from the crest of Ts'ang Shan, when one can see it, is perhaps the finest in Yunnan. Eastwards, over the plain and lake lying like a map below one, there is the wild confusion of ranges which form central Yunnan, visible for nearly 80 miles to the An Nan Kuan pass above Yünnyi on the Burma Road. The view to the north is bounded by the immense shape of Yu Lung Shan, the snow mountain of Likiang, which with its twin Ha Pa Shan over-
hangs the great gorge of the Yangtze. Yu Lung Shan is also about 100 miles from Tali. But it is to the west, towards the Mekong and Burma that the view is longest and most impressive. The western ranges are entirely dominated by Ts'ang Shan, which can be seen like a wall on the eastern horizon from the Salween–Mekong divide above Paoshan, nine days' journey from Tali, or more than 180 miles by road.

This panorama is very rarely to be seen in summer when the climate on the upper part of Ts'ang Shan is vile. Mist and cloud hang round the crest for most of the summer months, and as the upper levels are deep in snow in winter an ascent then is only possible if mountaineering equipment is available. It is therefore in the brief weeks of early autumn, after the monsoon rains have stopped, but before the snow has fallen, a season when the air is exceptionally clear, that the ascent of Ts'ang Shan should be made for the view; but the flowering shrubs and wild flowers are for the most part out of season so that for natural beauty the best time is early May or late April. At this time, just before the monsoon breaks, the skies are relatively clear, though there is not the sparkling crystal quality of the Chinese autumn. There will still be some snow, but not sufficient to hinder the climber. The flowers and shrubs are then at their best, and I know of no place more breath-takingly beautiful than the Hsi Ma T'ang shining in the May sun with the golden rhododendrons which surround it back'd by great drifts of snow.

The question of the fauna of Ts'ang Shan is not one on which I can throw very much light. There are certainly deer, and also wolves, which do not hunt in packs, and are considered comparatively harmless to adults. I have seen these animals on several occasions, but they always seemed anxious to avoid man, even though none of the Min Chia woodcutters ever carry firearms. The Min Chia say there are no tiger left on Ts'ang Shan, which seems strange, for one can see no reason for them to have disappeared. Leopards are also supposed to be either extinct or nearly so. Personally I would take these opinions with caution. A few years ago a tiger was killed near the city of Fenyang in Shansi, north China, in a country which foreign sportsmen from Tientsin and Peiping were accustomed to visit year after year, and in which the presence of tigers was supposed to have been definitely disproved. Equally the Min Chia seem never to have heard of the giant panda, and foreign visitors have always considered that there are none of these animals in Yunnan, where there was supposed to be no suitable country for them. It always seemed to me that the bamboo thickets on the upper level of Ts'ang Shan, which extend upwards for 1000 feet or so, and along the range for nearly 30 miles, might be a stretch of country in which pandas would be found. The only evidence I can offer for this opinion is by an unfortunate chance inconclusive. Shortly before I left Tali in the autumn of 1938 I had to make a journey to Kunming, and on my return I was told by the resident C.I.M. missionary, Mr. W. Allen, that in my absence a Min Chia woodcutter had been to my house, and then to the Mission with two small cubs for sale. Mr. Allen's description of these cubs tallies in every way with pictures of the panda cub that I have seen, and he was convinced that they were giant panda cubs. The woodcutter's story was as follows. When cutting bamboo in the thickets which I have described he came suddenly
Ts'ang Shan in summer

Ts'ang Shan in winter

Ts'ang Shan from Tali
Hsi Ma T'ang

Rain forest near crest of Ts'ang Shan

Buddhist temple: Wu Wei Ssu
upon "a large animal which at once bounded away into the bamboo and vanished." It left behind it however these two cubs which the woodcutter put in his basket and brought down to sell. Hearing of me he had thought the foreigner a likely customer, and as the mission could not take the cubs he took them down to Siakwan and sold them to a Chinese medicine shop. They no doubt disposed of them through the ordinary trade channels, as it is in any case unlikely that the cubs could have been kept alive without proper care for more than a few days. Mr. Allen unfortunately, being a very busy man, did not remember to photograph the cubs when he saw them. One must add that the Min Chia woodcutter himself professed to have no idea what these animals were, and no other Min Chia seemed to have heard of the giant panda either. This would be more impressive negative evidence if one did not know that the Min Chia are not at all a hunting people and that those I knew were not even aware of the existence of deer on the mountain although these can sometimes be seen quite low down.

In conclusion I would suggest that a tract of country so remote and so rough as the Ts'ang Shan higher levels may contain many surprises both for the zoologist and the botanist. It must be remembered that Ts'ang Shan is not only very much higher than any other mountain for more than 100 miles in any direction, but is of a different geological formation from these neighbouring ranges, and therefore has a different flora.

Now that Tali is connected by the Burma Road with Kunming to the east and Rangoon to the west the trickle of western visitors who have hitherto passed by will in time grow to a steady stream. The course of the war in the near future may well bring many a British officer to the scenes which I have described, and if the calls of military duty permit, some of them may find relaxation in the rare beauty of the Tali district or investigate the possibilities of sport in the hidden ravines and dense thickets of Ts'ang Shan.

DISCUSSION

Before the paper the Chairman (Sir Francis Younghusband) said: This afternoon we are to hear Mr. Patrick FitzGerald, who two years ago gave this Society a most interesting lecture upon the Yunnan–Burma Road. Mr. FitzGerald is an anthropologist, and during his long residence in Tali he learned much of the geography of that interesting region of Yunnan, in south-west China. This afternoon he is to deal with the interesting lake basin in which Tali lies.

Mr. FitzGerald then delivered the lecture printed above, and a discussion followed.

The Chairman: I hope you have all enjoyed the lecture as much as I have. It is fifty-four years since I first went to China, and it has been the greatest pleasure to get again in touch with that wonderful country. The Min Chia of Yunnan are not Chinese, but they remind me very much of them.

The Chinese are remarkable for their extraordinary contrasts; they are the most industrious people in the world, and they make use of every possible thing in the most economical way; and yet they have all sorts of odd prejudices, one of which is that they do not drink milk in any form. That is astounding in a people who economize in their food in every other way. And this afternoon we have heard of the Min Chia, with magnificent forests and pasture land within