

Prophet and to say, "There is no God but Allah!"

The dramatic power of this scene of despair, in which the martyr, already conscious of his martyrdom, nevertheless discovers that he is still a man, and is overwhelmed with sorrow at his inability to save Sakkina, is the saving grace of the play. It compensates for the bad conduct of the public and the actors, which eventually gets on a European's nerves. The spectators are so hypersensitive and fanatical that they greet every episode of the drama with howls, wails, contortions, and by throwing objects — sometimes stones — at the actors who take unpopular parts. Even intermissions and refreshments do not cool them off. Moreover, the actors murder their parts ridiculously. The two that played Yezid and Shimir wept like calves when they ought to have been heaping insults upon Hassan and Hussein. Not infrequently,

in scenes where weapons are used, they wound each other seriously in their excitement.

When we consider that Ali, Persia's great national hero, never knew that country except by name, and did not even get as near to it as the Tigris; and that his sons Hassan and Hussein were only temporary refugees there, having fled thither to escape from the Caliph of Bagdad; and when we consider that the first of these sons died peacefully at Medina on his bed of sheepskins, having sold his claim to the Caliphate for a good round sum, and that Hussein, who was a more adventurous spirit, betrayed his word to the legitimate Caliph not to revolt against him, we realize how far legend and history can diverge from each other. But that is always so. In Persia, as elsewhere, when they have no heroes, they make them; and fictitious heroes are just as good as real ones on the stage.

ANAM NIGHTS¹

BY LEON WERTH

SAIGON. An imitation Europe intervenes between me and the Orient. The city's monuments are Renaissance Parthenons; and I lodge in a house with a Louis XIII balustrade and macaroni capitals.

One seldom sees high governmental and bureaucratic Europe in the street. It hides in its palaces and parks, or passes quickly in a motor car. Middle-class Europe is visible from the side-

walks, however, taking its refreshments, not only in cafés, but on front lawns and porches, behind a garden fence.

Around me sit several Europeans, at a table cluttered by bottles, glasses, and chunks of ice. I do not know how many bottles there are, and have not time to read all their etiquettes — 'Noily Prat,' 'Gentiane Suze,' 'San Rafael,' 'Cinzano,' 'Mandarín,' 'Veille Cure,' and many others. Besides, there is 'Cognac Martel,' with which my companions mix in proportions

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varying to their taste 'Périer' mineral water. Many an Anamite probably fancies that the French language is comprehended in a single word — 'Martel-Périer.'

This colony loafs listlessly, in true colonial style. Beyond yonder railing are a gentleman and a lady — enormous people. Their skin is not yellow, as people imagine in Europe, but an unhealthy white — the white of soured milk. The huge woman wears thin, almost impalpable, silk. The eyes of both twinkle in the folds of their fat faces with haughty insolence. Insolence? No. I, a European newcomer, interpret as insolence what is simply a glow of satisfaction at belonging to a superior race and representing the power and civilization of another land. Vanity, which in an individual is merely ridiculous, becomes something almost portentous as a mass manifestation. The white colonial's prestige as a European makes him a sort of arrivist god.

Under stifling, almost livid skies, across which thick woolly clouds drift lazily, flows the Saigon River, bordered by dwarf trees. A freighter lies at a wharf taking cargo. Near by is an Anamite jewelry shop, where two lines of workmen, down either side of the establishment, bend over tiny tables making elaborately ornamented bracelets of red gold, and common jewels set with red stones. In a barber shop a *guo* moves the punkahs by pressing his feet on a pedal. In a neighboring store a woman performs the same function with her hand. This monotonous labor does not weary the natives. Time means nothing to them. The barber not only cuts hair and shaves faces, but also cleans ears with tiny forceps. In some cases he is also a dentist, and advertises the fact by exhibiting samples of bridge work in his window.

In front of a miserable hovel a blind

old Chinese woman sits on a taboret. A little naked, pot-bellied boy plays at her feet. This is also a shop, though it has no wares inside. Its entire stock of goods is exposed on a little shelf without the door, and consists of lime to chew with betel, a few half-decayed bananas, and white rice-cakes. That is all. Behind the shelf sits a smiling Chinaman. Yet from the darkness behind, where the eyes are unable to distinguish objects distinctly in the obscurity, a dull golden glow indicates an ancestral altar.

The Chinaman shows me his wares, drawing aside the curtain of the little box where he keeps his rice-cakes. He does not expect me to buy anything, but he has divined my curiosity. He speaks to the old blind woman, who likewise smiles. It is not until later that I discover that the Chinese and the Anamites are not accustomed to receiving a glance of friendly interest from a European.

Dusk in Saigon. A dull sky of sombre purple. Sadoos, drawn by dwarf ponies, move hither and thither through the flowery avenues of the city park, under rigid palm trees with horizontal fronds, which seem almost painfully correct. In Europe we should prophesy a storm. Here a hurricane always lurks just over the horizon — and never comes. This heavy sky, yon threatening clouds, this storm-boding sunset, are not gloomy. Gloom is a quality of the West. The dominant note here is an indescribable languor. Nature is both exuberant and indifferent.

I return to my cottage. A little gust of wind greets me, but it is warm and velvety wind, and spaced at regular intervals as from a lazily moving fan. Neither the punkah nor the wind brings relief from the heat. Three vendors and a *guo* have set up on the

curb to sell a few bits of dried fish. Charcoal is glowing in a brazier. One of the vendors sings. It is night.

Cholon. Paris Street is white with electric glare, and coolies cluster in front of the restaurants patronized by rich Chinese and pleasure-bent colonials, where the stairways are lined with mirrors and huge porcelain vases. By craning my neck a little I can see the smokers from the street. I catch a glimpse of bare feet curiously immobile. Upon entering, those who are just emerging from their torpor stare at me as if I were the left-over of a dream, a lingering fragment of an illusion. Farther down the street glisten the bare legs and chests of Chinese shopkeepers and their clerks and porters. Two stand leaning over the balustrade that separates their establishment from the street, like bronze statues of Egyptian scribes. Are they alive or sculptured?

Rest and labor, immobility and movement, synchronize in the East. Within the same shop some are sleeping, others eating, others selling goods, others playing dominoes, others doing sums in a loud voice. One rattles an abacus. Nothing apparently is done in any particular time or order. Life has no air-tight compartments. In front of the shops men are washing themselves — dashing water from tubs over their faces, chests, and legs. Between the street and the shop-fronts are little portable stoves, operated by deft cooks, where food is prepared. Squatting on the ground is a circle of workmen eating fish soup. In a room just above them rich rice merchants drink champagne.

A strident, deafening racket crashes into my ears. Stringed instruments, wind instruments, percussion instruments, sound all together. It is neither a symphony nor a tom-tom, but an

avalanche of discord cascading into the street from the open windows of a night restaurant. The rattling of dominoes on the tables punctuates the noise, and in the distance rises the treble voice of a singing girl. These little singing girls constantly pass in sadoos, like bright bouquets of flowers tossed into the street. In front of the houses Chinamen, singly or in groups, squat on the ground, loll on mats, or swing in hammocks. Here is a family circle, where the children have their little mat apart. From the balcony of the restaurant where I sit, the opposite side of the street seems to be divided into longitudinal sections. It is like looking into a row of houses from which one of the front walls have been removed. Each interior resembles the stage of a theatre. I see cooks, and bare-shouldered men, white jerseys, short cotton trousers. A hot night! A Chinese woman hobbles past, her deformed feet unbound and unshod, staggering like a sick person. In an apartment directly across the way four, five, six, — I do not know how many, — are sleeping on a huge camp bed. A man comes in, opens his valise, and begins to shave in front of a little mirror. I watch all this from my green and red restaurant balcony to the din of cymbals and the tom-tom.

It is 9 P.M., but a jewelry shop across the way is going at full blast. Ten workmen sitting in a row still bend over their benches like pupils in school. Pleasure, repose, labor, seem to flourish side by side. Below me street peddlers are shouting their wares — oranges, litchi nuts, slices of durian, green drinks and yellow drinks served in glasses, and that strange beverage in which little grains keep forming tiny gas bubbles. In the middle of the pavement a group of Chinese workmen and two women are playing cards. They sit squatting in a circle,

ready to take to their heels the moment a policeman comes in sight. In this country only Europeans are allowed to gamble. The law sternly forbids the Chinese of Anam, and above all the Anamites themselves, to indulge in this passion. That would be an offense against European morals, and above all against the authority of the Government. Yet not far from here is Soc Trang, an important Chinese settlement, where gambling is common. The policeman of that district, whose salary was ninety-five piastres in the days when a piastre was worth two and one-half francs, subscribed for more than one hundred thousand francs of government bonds.

As soon as they saw me the card-playing Chinese started to run away. I was a European. A European produces the same effect here that a policeman does upon a pushcart peddler in Paris. I motioned to them reassuringly, and they resumed their game and forgot all about me. The masses in the Far East are quick-witted. They understood at once that I was neither a policeman nor an official.

The avenue leading to the theatre is bordered by barracklike restaurants. You pick your way between Chinamen squatting or seated on the floor cleverly manipulating their chopsticks. A European eats with a fork. He stabs the tines into his meat or loads them with a cargo of vegetables the way a laborer lifts a forkful of hay, which doubtless seems very gross and greedy to those who eat more delicately. The Oriental, deftly using his chopsticks with a single hand, picks up with them the tiniest objects. His manner of eating is necessarily an art. His skill suggests that of a perfectly functioning mechanism. At first blush you can hardly imagine a person eating greedily with these implements. But the impression changes when you see a Chinaman

devouring rice, his staff of life. Holding the bowl in front of his open mouth, he places his chopsticks together and shoots his food rapidly into the waiting orifice. Surely this is not a dainty way of eating; but before the European passes too severe a judgment, let him try to imagine the impression an Anamite of some refinement receives the first time he watches a big-moustached white man noisily inhaling soup.

I am invited to dine with some Chinese merchants. We first gather around a table where tea, instead of Martel-Périer, is served. Several varieties are brewed in teapots and poured into cups whose saucers exactly fit over the top like covers. When drinking you move the cover a little to one side, in order that none of the aroma may be lost. I tasted four or five varieties of tea, but my palate was not delicate enough to detect the subtle differences between them. We then dined on sharks' fins and crabs, roast turkey-skin, beets and ham, roast suckling pig, Peking mushrooms with turkey tongues, stuffed pigeons, and rice fried with ham. I sat between two Chinese, a young man and an old man. The young fellow spoke French, even the most difficult sentences in the phrase-book, as if it were a dead language.

Little dancing girls served the drinks. They wore white striped bloomers, silk tunics over long embroidered jackets, and silk slippers; and their hair, which hung down over their shoulders, was confined by a band around the forehead. They were heavily painted, and looked as if they might be fourteen or fifteen years old. These singers form a guild and live in a sort of boarding house kept by a matron. As the windows of this place are always open, passers-by can see them painting and primping for their evening work. They learn music when twelve years

old. At fourteen a Chinaman can buy one for about three hundred piastres. They have a distinct social status, something like that of actresses in the West.

The restaurant where we dined was divided into small compartments by low partitions about the height of a man's shoulders. Most of them were occupied by Chinese playing dominoes, which they slapped down on the tables so as to make a loud noise. Intermingled with this rattling were the sound of stringed instruments and the voices of the singing girls. The latter are also general entertainers. I caught a glimpse of one fanning a domino-player while she discreetly leaned against the shoulder of the man on the other side. Their make-up caused them to resemble the dainty masks in old Chinese sculpture. Indeed, all these singing girls suggest dolls rather than human beings.

I studied the patrons with interest. This was a night restaurant, and I could not avoid contrasting the coarseness of such resorts in Europe, the brutalized faces, empty laughs, hysterical shrieks, and sentimental silliness, with the Oriental impassiveness I saw before me. The surrounding faces, if not expressionless, wore an aspect of concentration. The only noise was that of the music and the domino-players. The guests took their pleasures gravely, almost austerely.

Cholon is a commercial city, and only Chinese merchants were present. My table companion described with obvious pride the business ability of his fellow countrymen and their shrewdness in trade. 'A Chinaman,' he said, 'comes here with a valise and ten piastres, and, almost before you know it, has a thriving establishment of his own.'

Chinese employees are quick and industrious. My companion told me of a wholesale rice dealer who man-

aged a very large business with the help of only two office men. 'The Chinese,' he continued, 'know how to take care of themselves. They are honest, and their word is as good as their bond. If they need goods, they simply write to Canton and Peking for them, and their orders are filled by the first boat.'

Even a newcomer realizes the truth of this. Whenever I walked through the streets of Cholon I was reminded of those nests of boxes, one inside the other, which are sold in the bazaars. You open one and always find another smaller one within. Thus a complete gradation exists, from great importing and exporting firms down to itinerant street vendors, each forming a part of a highly organized system.

I visited a Chinese hotel, where Chinamen and Anamites come to escape the noise and the light of the fashionable restaurants and to talk or smoke opium. Above the white room-partitions, which did not reach the ceiling, ran an open latticework. The only furniture was a bed with a mosquito net and a wooden bench with a couple of cushions. I entered from a gallery which opened upon an alley, where there were street lights with Chinese characters painted on the globes. The landlord spoke French with great rapidity, dropping his *r*'s. His vocabulary was limited, but he was quick-witted, and knew how to smile in a thousand different ways — amiability incarnate. A chambermaid entered my room, dusted the wooden bench with a feather duster, set down upon it a white pot of tea still hot in its coconut container, and noiselessly departed.

I returned several times to Cholon, sometimes in a bus and sometimes on foot, following the waterside past cane huts where ancestral altars glittered

dimly in dusky interiors. Now and then a human form would outline itself dimly in the deepening darkness, preceded and followed by two teetering lights — a Chinese peddler with two boxes swinging at the extremity of a pole over his shoulders.

Cholon, with its porcelain shops, its teashops, and its pharmacies stocked with mysterious drugs in black and golden boxes! Cholon, with its restaurants, its clusters of Chinese coolies,

its ambulatory kitchens, its stands of Malabar hacks drawn by dwarf horses, and its funeral shops, resplendent with gilt and silver paper burned in honor of the dead! At the latter one can purchase for the defunct bright paper trunks and shoes, paper garments in imitation of red and purple silk, and all the imitation splendor of the Orient! How cheaply, with their make-believe, do these Far Easterners attain the picturesque!

THE GERMAN FILM¹

BY C. A. L.

[THE *Manchester Guardian* has been running a series of articles on the cinema in different European countries. We are printing here the two discussions of Germany and the final installment of general conclusions.]

NOBODY who visits Germany and gives any detailed study to her film conditions can come away without a profound respect for the courage of the industry and the shrewdness which she has brought to bear on the problems before her. Of all the film-producing countries of Europe she is the only one which has emerged from the financial chaos with both individuality and strength. Her theatres are full, and she is building new ones. Her studios are busy. Stars and producers and camera men of every country are gathering together in Berlin, and through the whole industry there is running a

new sense of promise — less of power than of potentiality, less of present prosperity than of determination for good things to come. Germany has never made the mistake of nursing her injuries, never forced a prolonged spirit of hostility where no hostility exists. There is no getting away from it — she is an hospitable and friendly country, whose genuine respect and liking for England, whose shrewd appraisal and appreciation of America, coupled with her solid belief in the internationality of commerce, have given her a start on the road to recovery that the more bellicose nations will find it hard to overtake.

I think the real secret of Germany's position in the cinema lies in her treatment of the great American *fact*. The Latin races have underestimated it, have played with it and flirted with it, and the thing has swept them away. We in England are so busy fighting it that we have no energy left to con-

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