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Notes of a Journey through Formosa from Tamsui to Taiwanfu.

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[P. 258] Little is known of the interior of Formosa, and a short sketch of a journey from the Treaty port of Tamsui to that of Taiwanfu, in which the heart of the island was visited, will perhaps be of some interest. Formosa, situated about 100 miles from the mainland of China, is about 240 miles by 80 broad. The Chinese name of it, Taiwan, or Bay of the Raised Terrace, probably refers to the square flat-roofed blockhouse, Fort Zelandia, built by the Dutch when they were in possession of the island, and which is now a mark for vessels making the anchorage at the capital, Taiwanfu. The department is, according to Government statistical works, divided into the subdistricts of Komalan, Tamsui, Changhua, Kia-i, Taiwan, Fengshan, and Pênghu, or the Pescadores, of which Komalan is the only one on the eastern side of the island. The Chinese Government charts do not depict the coast-line on that side at all, the boundary being represented by a mass of mountains. The central ranges, the southern and eastern coasts, are principally inhabited by various tribes of aborigines, totally unlike in dress and features to the Chinese, who call them barbarians, and treat them accordingly. Some of the districts have been so enlarged lately by the constant encroachments of the Chinese on savage territory that last year it was deemed necessary to increase the number of governing officials; Komalan and Tamsui districts were abolished, and a department of North Formosa, with three dependent magistracies, [p. 259] established in their room. The Chinese Government forbade their people to cross the boundary of savage territory, at one time well defined; but since the Japanese expedition against the Bootan tribe of aborigines in the south in 1874, they altered their policy, and, finding themselves looked on as masters of the whole island, took active steps to improve their knowledge of it. Schemes for cutting roads through the hills were set on foot, colonists were bribed to settle in out-of-the-way places, and presents given liberally to the aboriginal chiefs, who were urged to acknowledge Chinese rule. These measures have not been altogether successful, in consequence of the persistent antipathy and mistrust shown by the savages, and the petty war goes on whenever the Chinese try to penetrate into the hills unaccompanied by a large force.

Being invited by Mr. Mackay, of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in the north, and Mr. Ritchie, of the English Presbyterians in South Formosa, to accompany them on a tour they intended to take to visit their respective stations, I started on the 10th of November, 1875, from the old Dutch fort, then used as a Consular residence, at Tamsui. I crossed the harbour near its entrance, and skirting the western side of the Kuanyin

Hill, 1720 feet above the sea, gained the table-land, which stretches some 30 miles down the coast. I halted at the little village of Doaheng for dinner, and went on 10 miles further by moonlight to the inn at Tionglek, where my companions were sleeping, they having earlier in the day left their chapel near Banka, the largest and most commercially active town in North Formosa, 8 miles up the Tamsui River, and gone by another road. The next morning we made an early start, and the air on the plateau being very invigorating, walked 8 miles before breakfast, passing many villages of Hakka Chinese immigrants from Kuangtung Province. The plain was cultivated with paddy and sugar-cane crops, and we constantly met heavy four-wheeled carts with axles, doubtless introduced by the Dutch, which were generally drawn by a buffalo, with two of the ordinary black cattle of the country on each side, yoked abreast. About 8 miles from Tekcham we reached Table Hill, or Windhill Slope, as its Chinese name signifies, which was the termination of the plateau. From this point we got a good view of the sea westward, the valley with its pretty river winding along at our feet, and clumps of bamboos on the opposite bank, which screened the town from sight. Descending the hill, we crossed the river in one of the flat-bottomed boats used here. The ferryman held on to a rattan-rope, securely fastened to stakes at each bank, as he swung his boat across the stream, which in the rainy season becomes a rapid torrent.

[P. 260] Tekcham, being the capital of the Tamsui district and containing the yamên of the sub-prefect, has acquired a sort of fictitious importance which its trade does not warrant. At the time of my journey the sub-prefect was absent in another part of his district, which stretched along the north and west coasts for a distance of, say, 100 miles, with a breadth of from 10 to 30 miles, and covering an area of 1250 square miles.

On our third day's march we soon came to the sands, which stretch some way out to sea, and make this part of the coast very dangerous for anything but flat-bottomed Chinese junks, and there had, in fact, been two wrecks of English vessels lately, as the timber lying about the shore testified. A proclamation posted at a roadside inn by one Lo, assistant commandant of the North Formosa troops, warned the people that they would be punished if they carried off the wrecked wood, on the ground that the ocean-men (foreigners) might make capital of the fact, and create disturbances. The authorities have certainly been more energetic than they were in old days in putting a stop to the evil of wrecking, although they work on the fears of the common people rather at the expense of our reputation. We passed through the large towns of Heongsan and Tiongkong, crossed a sandy shallow inlet of the sea half a mile wide, which afforded a good anchorage for junks, and leaving the large town of Oulan on our right, soon came in sight of Sinkang, our destination for the day. We were warmly welcomed by the catechist of the chapel here, who came running to meet us, and lodged us in the Mission-rooms. We had had a tedious march of 20 miles, most of the way over a desert, and had been not a little annoyed by the sand blown into our faces by the high wind. Sinkang is the last of Mr. Mackay's stations, and as it is but one day's journey from Laisia, the most northerly of the South Formosan Mission-stations,

there is a complete chain of chapels from Kelung in the north to Takow in the South. Most of the converts in Sinkang are Pepohuans, or semi-civilised savages of the plains, who are found generally established in small colonies between their Chinese conquerors and their brothers, the wild aborigines of the interior. They practically adopt the Chinese dress and tonsure, but their features distinctly show that they were originally of the aboriginal or Malayo-Polynesian stock. A simple-minded and quiet people, they are looked down on by the Chinese as huans, *i. e.* barbarians, and they do not scruple to possess themselves of their lands, under pretence of renting them, the complaints for redress to the officials being too often unattended to. On the side of the hills they are frequently cut off by the wild savages, who look upon the acquisition [p. 261] of human heads with pigtails as proofs of valour, without a certain number of which a young chief cannot get a wife. The Pepohuans are sometimes called Sekhuan, which means civilised barbarians, to distinguish them from the Chihuan, or wild barbarians, and are governed by tongsu, or headmen. The one over this tribe paid a squeeze of 300 dollars a year for his post, part to the sub-prefect of Tamsui and part to the sub-prefect of Lokong, in the Changhua district, under the jurisdiction of which latter official he more immediately is. After leaving Sinkang we passed a string of Hakka Chinese villages, the largest of which was Bali. Rice and sugar are grown in this valley, and people seemed well-to-do. We halted at midday at Tunglowan. Crossing the rocky bed of what would evidently be a torrent in the rains, we travelled up a long and very pretty valley, then over a small range of hills and towards evening came down a very steep hill to Laisia. This Pepohuan colony, which is entirely Christian, the population of which numbers 200, including women and children, is an offshoot of the huans of Posia. They said thirty or forty of them came here twenty years ago, and that they were of the Padjeh tribe, the tribe at Sinkang being called Balua. The colony consisted of two small enclosures, about 100 yards square each, well fenced in with bamboos, and further protected from attacks of savages by sharp-pointed stakes, which stuck up a few inches out of the ground close to the outside of the fence.

On the sixth day we resumed our march, and passing through the small Chinese village of Sintiam, which has sprung into existence within the last two years, struck along the base of the hills over a plain some miles wide, strewn with rocks and boulders, without any discernible path through it, and reached Toasia early in the afternoon.

As we were now going to have rougher travelling than we had had, we despatched a courier to Taiwanfu with our surplus baggage, and letters to inform the Consul of our plans. We went S.S.E. for 13 miles over a fertile plain, cultivated with sugar-cane, tobacco, ground-nut, sweet potatoes, &c., drawing gradually towards the range of hills on our left. At the head of the gorge, due east of the district town of Changhua, we were met by a party of thirty or forty tall, stalwart Pepohuans, armed with knives and matchlocks, who were to be our bodyguard through the mountains, to protect us from the savages. The gorge wound a good deal, but our general direction

was east; the jungle on both sides was very thick, and the Pepohuans now and then set it on fire. After we had gone about six miles over rocks and stones, through pools [p. 262] of water, the pass narrowing as we went, we reached a point where a big camphor-tree blocked it up almost entirely, and we had great difficulty in getting the chair through. The pass was here only 5 feet wide, and I could touch the perpendicular walls of rock on each side. The scenery was magnificent; the mountains, rising 2000 or 3000 feet almost perpendicularly on each side, were covered with camphor and other forest-trees. At one time a felled tree across our path made an arch for us to pass under, and again we were obliged to scramble along the trunk of another big denizen of the forest. I noticed one or two veins of coal on the rocks; and a stratum of conglomerate pebbles in the clay, 600 feet above us, was also remarkable. We encamped for the night in the middle of the gorge; lit a fire, and boiled some of our tinned soups in true gipsy style. Blankets spread on bundles of leaves formed our beds, and in spite of a heavy dew we got a good night's rest. We started before daybreak on the morning of the eighth day of our march, and after five more miles of rough scrambling, at which our savage friends were quite *au fait*, got to the end of the gorge. The ranges of hills now opened out, and, although we occasionally had to cut our way with long knives through the jungle, travelling was much easier work. We found a small, edible, acid fruit, like a raspberry, growing here; as well as a sweet-smelling fern, which the natives called Tanpa. We did not meet any wild savages; but were pointed out a spot where, five years previously, the Pepohuans had a fight and killed thirteen of them. We crossed one pretty broad and rapid stream, in fording which the Pepohuans were immersed up to their necks, and six or seven smaller ones; and just after dusk reached the beautiful valley of Posia, or Polisia as it is also called. Torches had been sent to meet us by some of the party, who had pushed on quicker than the others; and the Chinese chair-coolies, being dead-beat, had to give place to the stalwart Pepohuans, who, with shouts of laughter at the unaccustomed task, picked up the chair and came along over the level ground at a rapid trot which nearly shook me out of it. We slept that night in comfortable beds at the Mission-station of Ougulan, one of the 33 villages in this plain. Posia is a fertile, almost circular, well-watered plain, about 8 miles in diameter, and surrounded by wooded hills in which the wild savages roam in their hunting-excursions. The population, numbering about 5000, include a few Chinese who come to trade with the Pepohuans in rattans, deers' horns, skins, &c., for which they exchange knives, matchlocks, and gunpowder. The Pepohuans are fair shots. We were out in the woods one day for a few hours, and they succeeded in bagging three moose-deer, the [p. 263] flesh of which was excellent. The missionaries have been very successful here. Their first chapel at Gukunswa, so called from a hillock said to resemble an ox reclining, on the other side of the plain, was built in 1871; the one at Ougulan was next put up; and a third one, with an upper storey, substantially built of brick, was built at the village of Toalam in 1874. I was shown a silver cup, about two inches long, which an old man assured me had been an heirloom in his family for 200 years. From some marks on it, I believe it is really an old Dutch matchbox. They said they remembered the foreigners being in the island. We remained five days at Posia, and were continually being feasted

by the converts, a troop of whom escorted us to the bank of a river at the edge of the plain, when we took our departure. Of course we had a small bodyguard to escort us through another pass to the south, not so difficult as the one by which we had entered the plain, and as far as Ousia, a small village of perhaps 1000 Chinese inhabitants of Changchow. They then saluted us by firing their matchlocks in the air and shouting "Pahuria raki" (Peace be with you), returned to Posia. We passed some plantations of tea and before dusk reached the shores of a beautiful lake, 4 miles long by 2 broad, which went by the name of Tsui-sia-hai, of Lake of the Water Savages, a distinct tribe who live on its banks. They are a degraded race, and are employed as slaves by the Chinese, who make them carry heavy burdens, and give them samshoo, of which they are unfortunately only too fond. We found some of them lying intoxicated in their long low huts made of the bark of trees, and resembling their canoes inverted. The whole family live in the hut, which has partitions which only partially screen the women's quarters from those of the men. They tattoo their faces in broad bands across the nose, are tall, and would be well-proportioned, if it were not for a pernicious habit they indulge in of tying cloths tightly around their waists, which deform them very much; but which they said they did to keep them from feeling the pangs of hunger. They fish in the lake, paddling about in long canoes hollowed out of the trunks of trees, which reminded me of the dragon-boats common at Foochow and other parts of South China. I bathed in the lake, and found it very muddy and full of weeds. On a woody islet in the lake, we found a Chinese coffin-maker, who seemed comfortable enough with his bit of kitchen-garden and orchard adjoining his house. A Chinese scholar who lived near the lake took us in, and gave us quarters for the night. The next day, the fifteenth of our march, we travelled in a south-westerly direction over the hills, descending eventually a [p. 264] steep hill, from the top of which we had a fine view of a long valley, with a river flowing from east to west. We reached that evening the large town of Chipchip, which is entirely Chinese, and is the headquarters of a military Mandarin, name Lo, who, we heard, was in command of 500 troops, two days' journey up the valley, employed in cutting a road to Siukuluan, a port on the east coast of the island, in lat. 23° 30'. We had tried to get a Chinese guard to bring us through the hills in the morning; but as there was some difficulty about it, and we were a large enough party to awe the savages, we gave it up. We left Chipchip early the next morning, but were detained some time on the bank of a river. The ferryman had gone away, and some of the helpers swam across to get the boat. They were, however, unskilled in the management of it, the force of the current washed it down against a fish-weir and it was wrecked. This little *contretemps* obliged us to cross lower down on a raft. We passed a good many villages, one of them, Limkepo, said to contain 3000 inhabitants, had jurisdiction over 24 others in the vicinity. The valley we were travelling through wound about a good deal, and although we did not make much way in a direct line, it was getting dusk before we reached Toulak, our resting-place for the night. An underling from the district magistrate's yamên at Kagee met us here, and said he had been ordered to escort us to Kagee. He helped me in engaging another chair, my former bearers not wishing to go on to the capital, and was very attentive. We struck

the main road at Tapons, where we had a good cup of tea at the house of a Mr. Huang; passed a few villages, at the largest of which, Tamao, my companions preached for a short time while we were resting; and reached the Mission-chapel at Kagee on the evening of the seventeenth day. I sent my card to the Magistrate to thank him for his kindness, but he was not at home. I was now within two days' journey of Taiwanfu, and so I bid adieu to my companions, who were going to visit some more stations in the hills to the eastward, and journeyed on *solus* to Ungkangbay. I slept at a comfortable inn kept by a Government underling; and early on the nineteenth day, after a journey of 220 miles, reached Taiwanfu, the capital of the island. Passing through the city gate, I went for some distance along pretty lanes bounded with cactus-hedges, no house being even in sight, and eventually found myself in the hospitable *yamên* of the British Consul. I stayed here some days, waiting for a vessel to take me across to the mainland, and spent my time pleasantly in making excursions to objects of interest in the city and visiting the few foreign residents in it. I went over the square Dutch fort in the [p. 265] city, on the gateway of which can still be traced the date "Anno -- 1650;" and also over the remains of Fort Zelandia at Amping, 3 miles off, on the sea-coast. It was being rapidly pulled down by the Chinese, in order that the bricks might be used in the erection of a grand new fort with four bastions, which was being put up under the superintendence of some French officers, a few miles off, to repel the Japanese and other invaders. I made a quick passage of twenty-four hours to Amoy, in an English merchant-vessel, and was rather sorry to leave Formosa.

Mr. J. Thomson, on being called upon by the President, as one who had travelled in Formosa, and brought home a magnificent series of photographs illustrating the scenery and natives, said he hardly knew any spot in the world better calculated to illustrate certain phases of Physical Geography than Formosa. The great central ridge, running from north to south, was so elevated, and its distance from the sea so small, that during the rainy season the excessive drainage caused a rapid denudation of its slopes, and the consequent formation of a great delta on the west side of the island. The rate at which this delta had been deposited was attested by the natives at Tai-wan-foo. Not many years ago, ships could lie at anchor a mile or two miles from the coast there: at the present time they could not approach nearer than three or four miles. When the Dutch occupied the island -- about the middle of the 17th century -- Tai-wan-foo had a spacious harbour, referred to in the Dutch accounts, but it was now entirely silted up, and the distance from the former position of the harbour to the available anchorage was at present four or five miles.

The President said, when he was Her Majesty's Minister in China, he visited Formosa, and was very much struck by the luxuriance of its tropical vegetation. He believed that Mr. Veitch, and other botanists, had enriched our greenhouses with many beautiful orchids, and ornamental plants that they or their collectors had brought home from thence. When visiting the southern port, noticing that pine-apples were plentiful, he asked the Consul to send to the market to get a basketful, which he thought he might

perhaps succeed in carrying the Peking, a voyage of ten or twelve days. The Consul said he need not send to the market, for one of his coolies could go out into the lane and gather them, as they grew wild, and had no money value. He did not know that they were equal to English hot-house pine-apples, but they were fine in growth and very pleasant to eat in that warm climate. Formosa would undoubtedly become a place of some importance, if it ever pleased God to give it anything like a decent government, and if colonisation advanced into the interior. At present it was merely fringed by settlers of the worst class of coast Chinese. It was badly governed by the officials sent there; but there was a middle class between the Chinese and the wild savages, who were semi-civilised, and would live peaceably if the Chinese officials on the coast, and the head-hunting barbarians in the interior, would give them the opportunity. At present, however, they passed rather an uneasy life. The climate was tropical, and although it had been contended that Europeans did not die more rapidly there than in other places, that was because they went away when they were likely to die. The English Consul in the north told him that it was very pleasant when the weather was fine, but that it rained incessantly for six months in the year. The island was rich in coal, which in the north was now worked with European machinery. This was likely to prove of very great advantage to steamers, and to the whole of the Strait trade on that coast. China also had an incalculable wealth in coal, but hitherto the Government [p. 266] had not seen its way to allow it to be worked. If the experiment, begun in the *copore vile* of Formosa, succeeded, it might encourage them to proceed in a similar way on the mainland. The information obtained from time to time about Formosa showed that everything there was in its infancy. Rice, camphor, wheat, coffee, tobacco, tea, and sugar were all grown there; and no doubt other tropical produce would thrive, if there was a good government and colonists were encouraged to settle. As far as Europeans were concerned, however, he might say of it, as the Irishman said of Ireland, that it was the finest if not the healthiest country in the world -- to live out of.