

# **Paul (Pavel Ivanovich) Ibis**

**16 June 1852 - 1877**

**By Samuel Stephenson**

**With a Supplemental Biography by M.F. Chigrinskii**

**(Edited by Douglas Fix)**

Pavel Ivanovich Ibis was born on 16 June 1852 in Bezenberg (Rakvere), Estonia, to a Lutheran peasant family. In 1868 he graduated from a naval academy and was made a guard (most likely of the Russian navy), subsequently sailing on the corvette "Voevoda" and the frigate "Admiral Lazarev." Ibis had a brother who was also a sailor. In October 1872 he was transferred to the "Askold" and began training for an around-the-world trip.(1) He was promoted to ensign in December 1873.(2)

The Japanese expedition to southern Formosa in 1874 had generated in Ibis an interest in visiting Taiwan. He took the opportunity to do so when the *Askold* docked at Hong Kong in early 1875, sailing to Takao and traveling to the north from 23 January to early March. Ibis was concerned to determine whether or not some Formosan natives were relatives of the Papua tribes of the Philippines.(3) Ibis fell ill during his travels in Taiwan, recovering enough to return to Hong Kong, but falling seriously ill again in January of 1876.(4) He was hospitalized in Vladistock, but the treatment was ineffective, so he was sent to Austria for further treatment. During this time he expressed a desire to travel to Germany and then to Italy, and probably did so, as he died in Pisa in 1877.(5)

## **Publications:**

Ibis, Pavel. "Ekskursiia na Formozu" [Excursion to Formosa]. *Morskoi sbornik* 152, i (1876): neoffitsial'nyi otdel, 111-149; 152, ii (1876): neoffitsial'nyi otdel, pp. 111-141.

Ibis, Paul. "Auf Formosa: Ethnographische Wanderungen" [On Formosa: Ethnographic travels]. *Globus* 31 (1877): 149-52, 167-71, 181-87, 196-200, 214-19, 230-35.

## Notes:

1. Chigrinskii, M. F., "Puteshestvie paulia Ibisa na Taiwan" [The Journey of Paul Ibis to Taiwan], *Sovetskaiia Cetniografiia* No. 2 (1982): 60-61; English translation by Victoria A. Pustynsky (Reed College).
2. Chigrinskii, 1982, p. 61; Ibis, Paul. "Auf Formosa: Ethnographische Wanderungen" [On Formosa: Ethnographic travels] *Globus* 31 (1877): 149-52, 167-71, 181-87, 196-200, 214-19, 230-35. Translated into English by Christian Buss.
3. Chigrinskii, 1982, p. 62; Ibis, 1877, Part I.
4. 4. Chigrinskii, 1982, pp. 61, 63-64; Ibis, 1877, Parts I-VI.
5. Chigrinskii, 1982, p. 60.

## Russian-language Biography by Chigrinskii

### Translated by Victoria A. Pustynsky

Chigrinskii, M. F. "Puteshestvie paulia Ibisa na Taiwan" [The Journey of Paul Ibis to Taiwan]. *Sovetskaiia Cetniografiia* No. 2 (1982): 60-64. English translation by Victoria A. Pustynsky. Edited by Douglas Fix.

In 1877, the German geographical journal *Globus* published the work of an officer from the Russian corvette "Askold," Paul Ibis, who had dedicated his travels to the Taiwanese aborigines.

Because nothing was made known about Paul Ibis in *Globus*, as well as in other journals, it became necessary to refer to archival materials. According to this source of information, Paul (Pavel Ivanovich) Ibis was born on the 16th of June in 1852 in Bezenberg (Rakvere) in Estonia. He was brought up in a peasant family of the Lutheran faith. In 1868, upon graduating from the nautical academy, he was given service as a guard. He sailed on the corvette "Voevoda" and on the frigate "Admiral Lazarev." In October 1872, in connection with training for an around-the-world trip on the "Askolda," he was transferred to this ship, where in December 1873, he was promoted to ensign.<sup>(1)</sup> In June 1876, Ibis fell extremely ill and was accommodated in a hospital in Vladivostok. His treatment there showed no results, and Ibis was sent to Austria, hoping for accelerated improvement. Ibis, however, preferred to go to Germany and then to Italy, where he died in Pisa in 1877. Ibis's only relative turned out to be a brother named Fredrick, who was also a sailor. Thus, Ibis died in the year of the

publication of his work in *Globus*, and we do not know whether the traveler was aware of the fact that his work had been published. As of yet, no other piece of information about the scholarly interests of Paul Ibis has been found.

His personal traits can be judged by the comments of Rear Admiral I. I. Butakov, who considered that "Ibis combines in himself excellent characteristics and the abilities of a naval officer in addition to perfect behavior and morality."

The only extant sources by which one might characterize Paul Ibis as a man and researcher are his travel diaries published in *Globus*. At the same time, they have become a memorial to a person who once visited Taiwan when he was only 23 years old and who died at the age of 25.

According to the words of Ibis, his interest in Taiwan was stimulated by the Japanese military expedition of 1874, but the motives for his own travels in Formosa were caused by two situations: the first was his desire to learn how the natives -- "a people who have such a stupid reputation" -- understand themselves, and second, the goal of establishing whether "a black race of Papua" live on Taiwan, as ethnographer F. Müeller had declared. Taking advantage of the fact that the "Askold" had been docked in Hong Kong in 1875 and that they were able to do without him on the ship, P. Ibis set off for Taiwan where he spent two months, January and February. This was the hot and dry period when Ibis could move among the islands relatively easily. This voyage was made possible by the well-known political stability. The Japanese had brought in troops in 1874, according to the words of Ibis, the aborigines, who had been frightened by Japanese weapons, didn't attack foreigners.

Taking a caliper, a ruler, books and "the least amount of baggage possible," P. Ibis traveled through Taiwan from the south to the north and spend time in thirteen indigenous communities, which he (not with complete certainty) called tribes.

The map of Taiwan on which P. Ibis marked the route of his travels and the contents of his small lexicon of local dialect phrases allows one to draw the conclusion that he met with several *gaoshan* ['upper mountain'] tribes: *Paivanami*, *Ami*, *Pukai*, *Paiuma*, *Bunun*, *Pinpu*.<sup>(2)</sup> The contemporary names of the villages that P. Ibis visited are difficult to establish since they have long since been changed by the Chinese, and despite the exact cartographic information provided by P. Ibis in his report, one can only speculate as to their true locations.

The description of Ibis' voyage is prefaced by a survey of the geography and history of Taiwan. First, it touches upon the peculiarities of the physical and economic geography of the island, i.e., primarily the geological make-up of the island, volcanic activity, the configuration of the coastline, bays, and ports, as well as the unique fauna, flora and climate. The camphor forests left a great impression on the traveler -- "similar to which doubtfully exist anywhere else" -- as did the western plains, one of the most fertile locales P. Ibis had ever seen. In his article, he listed in detail all that grew in this region

[and discussed] the economic culture, agriculture, and sub-tropic vegetation. Ibis gave a detailed characterization of the animal world in Taiwan, showing that the "fauna of Formosa is rich and has its own look, examples of which are the Formosan deer, raccoons and pheasants" and declaring that there were also many bats and flying dogs.(3)

Ibis' attention was drawn to the economy of the island, including its domestic trade. He advanced information on the situation of Taiwan's domestic trade, though, without reference to his sources.

The overview of the history of Taiwan given by Ibis often corresponds with that of other Chinese cartographers and European writers. Paul Ibis gives an especially detailed account of phenomena on Taiwan at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when a wave of Chinese settlers met the "kind people who granted them land and entered into barter with them." However, the traveler writes further: "Friendly relations with them did not continue for long; too great a flood of foreigners, with their greed, impertinence and arrogance called forth dissension, the roots of which lie in the bitter racial enmity that continues until this day."

Examining the development of relations between the Chinese and the aborigines, Ibis noted that the Chinese authorities, arising from the situation on the island, "did not rush to declare [Taiwan] their colony" and easily ceded Formosa to Holland (at the beginning of the 17th century) in exchange for the freeing of the last of the Pescadores islands.

Having characterized Dutch policies on Taiwan as opposing the natives against the Chinese settlers [and vice-versa], P. Ibis then focused on the activities of the Chinese commander Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), who threw the Dutch out of Taiwan (in the second half of the 17th century). In contrast to official chronicles and to most bourgeois histories [sic], which characterized Zheng Chenggong as a pirate, Ibis described him as a courageous and energetic man.

Concerning the political situation unfolding in Taiwan in his own time, Ibis demonstrated that its most important characteristic was not the racial enmity between the Chinese and the natives. Rather, [the most important matter] was the low opinion of the undisciplined (yet armed with fatal weapons and spears) Chinese army composed of "thieves and vagrants." P. Ibis considered [the army] unacceptable for battle with the aborigines. The corrupt government apparatus was unacceptable as well.

Concerning the situation following the departure of the Japanese troops [in 1874], P. Ibis wrote about the killing of two Chinese soldiers by the natives. The local [Qing] authorities did not make any response themselves, so higher levels of authority stepped in. Not meeting with a rebuff, the islanders killed another ninety Chinese and burned down a base camp. Then, an army of nine thousand was sent to Taiwan from the

mainland. The punitive expedition failed; the Chinese were not prepared for an operation in the mountains and jungles where the property of the partisan-natives lay.

The traveler Ibis wrote about the activities of the missionaries with whom he was personally acquainted. He mentions two Presbyterian missions and of one Catholic. The Presbyterians had founded schools in Taiwan, where they taught children geography, history, counting, and the Chinese language. Their textbooks, Bibles, and Psalter were all printed in the Latin [romanized] version of the Chinese language.

For the most part, the missionaries were young, educated Chinese people. As one who had been educated in European cultural traditions, P. Ibis compared the singing of the local church choruses "of Chinese and Malaysians." Their croaking and screeching, in his opinion, "called forth derisive smiles on the faces of the non-Christians." He also noted the strained relations between the missionaries on the one hand and the authorities and the Chinese population on the other.

Paul Ibis' journey into the interior actually began on the 23 January 1875 from the city of Takao (Gaoxiong). In the company of two Chinese porters, who were recommended by the missionaries, and taking gifts for the natives, which had been chosen by a German merchant, Ibis headed south towards Lutsao.

He made his first stop in Tungshan [Tang-kang], where he observed the stockpiling of fish and houses made of woven bamboo. Frequent flooding did not allow the residents to build more sturdy homes, notwithstanding the relative chilly weather.

South of Tungshan, Ibis encountered natives "of the Paium tribe, all strong people whom the traveler was able to sketch." But he did not succeed in conducting any [physical] anthropological measurement. The aborigines were afraid of calipers, considering them instruments that brought evil magic. Only when Ibis presented himself as a doctor was he able to achieve real results in this regard. The traveler wanted to penetrate the region that the Paium inhabited, but he did not receive an invitation.

He had more luck with the Paiwans from the Saprek community, who decided to guide him to their village as a "brother." For this he promised to entertain the whole village. Through the jungles and mountains along barely visible paths, Ibis, along with a Chinese porter and accompanied by the Sapreks, made his way to the settlement. Ibis's companions carried vessels made from the stems of thick bamboo the length of a human, which were filled with refreshment: rice liquor. The natives and their wives easily climbed the steep slopes, while at the same time Ibis and his Chinese porter were barely able to take a breath. Before entering the village, Paul Ibis was faced with a challenge: he had to shoot a bullet from his pistol into a bamboo stick from the distance of thirty paces, a task with which he was successful, winning the respect of the people.

**Endnotes:**

- (1) A rank in the czar's army.
- (2) The footnote in the text explains that all the Indonesians of Taiwan call the Chinese *gaoshan* (mountain-dwellers).
- (3) 'Flying dogs' is the literal translation from the Russian. Presumably, he is referring to either a flying squirrel or some other 'gliding' mammal.