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Notes of a Journey in Southern Formosa.

By J. Thomson, F.R.G.S.

[Read, March 10th, 1873.]

[P. 97] The following is a brief account of one of a series of journeys through China and Chinese territory, extending over a period of two years, and undertaken with the object of obtaining a collection of photographs of, and exact information regarding, the people and provinces visited.

I left Amoy, in company with Dr. Maxwell, in the steamer *Formosa*, on the night of April 1, 1871. We passed the Pescadore Islands at daybreak on the 2nd, and anchored off Takow, in Southern Formosa, at 2 o'clock on the same day. The harbour of Takow is approached through a narrow cleft in a bold ridge of rocks that for some distance skirt the shore. The channel over the bar is shallow, and can only be passed by vessels drawing at the most 12 feet of water. This is a great drawback to the rising trade of the place, as the majority of ships visiting the port have to anchor about a mile off, and discharge their cargoes in boats, an operation attended with difficulty and danger, owing to the heavy surf that rolls in upon the shore. We hired a native boat and landed in a sheltered bay in the rocks, as the boat could not make the mouth of the harbour. The rocks are of igneous formation, and are built up of a multitude of cells, the whole mass appearing to have been suddenly chilled while in a state of [p. 98] ebullition, presenting a series of jagged, flint-like edges, difficult to ascend. Many of the cells contain a thin layer of sandy soil, supporting a few dwarfed shrubs and grasses, and a dwarf species of date-palm, producing a fruit that never reaches maturity.

The sand along the shore is very fine, regular, and of a jet black when wet with sea-water. A hill, over a thousand feet in height, known to foreigners as Ape's Hill, rises above the northern extremity of the harbour. It derives its name from the tribe of apes that find a home in its rocky heights. They are of unusual size, and, viewed from a distance, bear some resemblance to the "mias," or orang-outan of Borneo. Among the variety of flowering plants on this hill I noticed wild mint and minor convolvulus, with a small yellow flower climbing in rich profusion about the rocks and stunted palms. I obtained a commanding view of the harbour from Ape's Hill; it forms a shallow lagoon, over 6 miles in length by 2 in breadth; bounded on the east by a richly-cultivated plain,

and protected from the sea on the west by an arm of sandy soil which joins the rocks at the entrance and sweeps round to the southern extremity in a green belt of tropical foliage. The village of Takow, and part of the small foreign settlement, are built upon this bank, which appears to have been indebted for its formation to the combined action of a river depositing its débris on the one side and to the action of the tide and surf building up the land on the other. The river is at the south of the harbour; its deep channel is now nearly dry. During the time of the Dutch occupation of Formosa, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, it probably formed an important approach inland, as it still bears the name of the Estuary of the Red Haired Race, a name commonly given to the early Dutch settlers.

The western portion of the island has been undergoing recent and rapid physical changes. I will be able to show, from what has taken place at Tai-wan-fu, that it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the present harbour of Takow has been formed within the last 200 years. The bottom of the harbour of Takow is formed of soft sand and clay, and with the bar might be easily dredged and deepened to form one of the finest harbours in the China Sea. Such appliances, however, as dredging-machines, so obviously of advantage to the rapidly growing trade of the port, are still in advance of Chinese policy.

The imports of Takow consist of opium, cotton and woolen piece-goods, raw cotton, hemp bags, nankeens, and prepared tobacco; and the chief exports, of brown and white sugar, [p. 99] sesamum-seeds, rice, sweet potatoes (extensively used as food by the natives), ground-nuts, lang-ngans, and turmeric. The increase of the trade of Takow is shown in the following quotation from the 'Customs' Gazette' for the quarter ending December 1870. The total dues and duties collected during that quarter amounted to 15,489tls. 9m. 8c. 3c., compared with 4,293tls. 6m. 4c. 5c. for the same period in 1868. This enormous increase in trade and the corresponding revenue is mainly due to the energy of the foreign traders, although partly to the slightly more liberal policy of the Chinese Government and to the rapidly developing resources of the island, which is remarkable for its fertility.

I left for Tai-wan-fu, in company with Dr. Maxwell, on the night of the 4th of April. We went on board the *Formosa*, which started at daylight next morning, and anchored 2 miles off the shore at Tai-wan-fu at 8 o'clock. The distance by sea from Takow to Tai-wan-fu is 25 miles. The surf was running high when we anchored. We, however, determined to land in a native surf-boat or catamaran, composed of a number of lengths of bamboo lashed together with ratan, so as to form a raft, to which is added a mast and mat sail. There is, also, a wooden tub placed on the raft for the accommodation of passengers going ashore; these tubs are never fixed in any way to the raft, so that when the raft is upset by a wave, a not unfrequent occurrence, the passenger is washed ashore in the tub. Thoroughly wet with the surf, we landed near the ruins of Fort Zelandia, a stronghold built by the Dutch in 1633, on an island, to protect the inner harbour.

In the Dutch accounts of Formosa[1] it is stated that Zelandia was an island where a spacious haven was formed; and further, that on April 31st, 1661, at break of day, Koshinga's fleet appeared before Taiwan, and ran into the spacious haven between Zelandia and Provintia, and anchored between the two forts. The two forts, Zelandia and Provintia, are separated by a distance of over three miles; and the haven referred to, in which the Chinese invader anchored his fleet, is now a dry, arid plain, over which there is a road, and several canals cut to communicate with the old port of Tai-wan-fu. A small portion of this plain is still flooded at high water. The water off the fort is now so shallow, that vessels have to anchor about 2 miles out.

Tai-wan-fu, the capital of Formosa, is a walled city of 70,000 inhabitants. The walls enclose a space 5 miles in circumference, planted to a great extent with fields and gardens, and [p. 100] still showing traces of the Dutch occupation in the ruins of Fort Provintia, and extensive parks, shaded with fine old trees, and groves of tall bamboo. The suburbs are intersected by a multitude of green lanes, having walls of cactus, interspersed with the brilliant flowers of the wild fuchsia and clusters of major convolvulus, and shaded by hedges of bamboo, which form a pointed arch over the path.

The inhabitants of this part of Southern Formosa are chiefly natives of the Fokien province and Hak-kas, a hardy race of emigrants from the north of China, who are daily carrying their arts and agriculture further into the territory claimed by the aborigines.

Dr. Maxwell and I left Tai-wan-fu on the 11th of April, on a visit to the Pepohoans, the half-civilized tribes of aborigines occupying the hill-country nearest to the central mountains. Our journey for the first 10 miles was over a highly-cultivated plain, dotted with farms and villages, surrounded with groves of bamboo, bananas, and areca palms. Having crossed the plain, we entered a hill-country, from which we could see the central range of mountains much more clearly than from the lower plain. These mountains are frequently invisible from ships at sea and from the western shore, as they are obscured by a veil of fine dust that rises from the plain and from the broken and disturbed country upon which we were just entering; at other times they are shut out from view by clouds of vapour rising from the land during the wet season. Many of the hills over which we had to pass presented bare surfaces of sand, clay, and limestone, supporting a scant herbage, suggesting more the idea of mounds of débris from a quarry than of the wood-clad hills I had expected to find in Formosa. The heat was intense, causing painful blisters on the feet in walking on the hot, baked clay surface of the pathway.

The land, in many places undermined by the mountain torrents, had fallen in, in great pits of irregular form. The Hak-kas, who inhabit this broken country, erect very temporary dwellings of bamboo, and mud thatched with grass, transferring these huts

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[1] 'The Chinese and Japanese Repository,' vol. i. p. 425.

and small farms, from time to time, to suit the shifting nature of the soil, usually selecting the bottom of the large pits, where the land, for the time, has found its lowest level. We noticed many channels dried and abandoned where rivers had formerly, during the wet season, torn their way through the country, depositing, in their course, huge rock boulders, affording evidence of the force and power of the torrents by which they had been moved. We rested at Pao-be for the night, distant about 20 miles from Tai-wan-fu. This is the nearest settlement of Pepohoans. The villagers turned [p. 101] out *en masse* to meet and welcome the Doctor, who had done much on former occasions to relieve their sufferings during sickness.

The Pepohoans in colour, form of face, and general appearance, resemble the Malays, although they seem to be a taller and superior type of the race. The vocabularies of the dialects of a number of the Pepohoan and mountain tribes show an affinity to the Malay language spoken in Singapore and Malacca, too striking to be the result of trading intercourse. There are differences in the dialects, easily accounted for by the division of the aborigines into tribes living apart from each other in their mountain hunting grounds.

We left at daylight on the 11th for Baksa, about 26 miles east of Tai-wan-fu. It is, however, a walk of about 10 miles from Poa-be, over a hill country similar to that described. We reached Baksa about 10 o'clock, where I obtained photographs of the place and types of the Pepohoans. The hills here are higher and more imposing, presenting in many places bold crags of limestone. The valleys are highly cultivated with rice, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts, and turmeric. Baksa Valley is one of the most beautiful sylvan spots in the island. The surrounding hills are well wooded, and the farmhouses are environed with groves of bamboo and fruit trees. On the hill to the east of Baksa there is a huge mass of limestone, known as the Hanging Rock of Baksa. The ascent is over masses of broken rock, composed of hard, flinty cells, and covered with luxuriant vegetation. There is a dark cavern beneath the enormous mass of limestone which appears to be poised on the hill with a few slender props of limestone. The natives who accompanied me, whilst engaged in cutting a trailing vine, narrowly escaped being bitten by three deadly-poisonous snakes of a pea-green colour, with flat lozenge-shaped heads. We dislodged them from the vine, and killed them before proceeding to photograph the rock.

Next morning we left for Kasampo, a circuitous walk of 26 miles over hills gradually increasing in height. I had hired six Baksa Pepohoans as bearers of my instruments and baggage. I thought that this walk would be a severe test of their powers of endurance. After the day's toil, however, they were able to join heartily in the amusements of the villagers of Kasampo. Chinese coolies could not have done the work. These Pepohoan bearers were remarkable for their cheerfulness, good-nature, and honesty; and these qualities appear to be characteristics of the race, as in the villages no precautions are observed against theft. It is only where they have been mixed up with the Chinese that they find it expedient to put locks [p. 102] on their

doors. During the entire journey, my boxes were left open and exposed day and night without my losing the value of a cash. We halted to rest at the village of Kamana, about 8 miles east of Baksa. We had again to cross over a broken, disturbed country, ascending and descending pits, of which the photograph will convey some idea. We suffered from want of water, as the streams were all dried up. The heat from the midday sun was intense, and uninterrupted by the shade of a single tree. The hot reflection from the white walls of the clay-pits made the air almost suffocating. Shortly after noon we halted, quite exhausted with the ascent of one of these pit walls. Seeking the shade of some shrubs we sat down on a rock, dislodging at the same time a nest of chocolate-coloured centipedes with bright yellow feet; they were of large size, between two and three inches long. We were too fatigued to move out of their way; fortunately they did not sting us. At our next resting-place a noxious shrub was accidentally broken by one of our party, and was found to emit a perfectly putrid odour. There is another remarkable trailing vine found in this part of the island, called "Ok-gue" by the Chinese. The fruit or seed contained in a pod is used, when dry, for making jelly. A small quantity of the seed placed in a course cotton bag, and allowed to soak in a cup of water, will transform the water into a nutritious jelly, having the colour and appearance of calf's-foot jelly. It may be mentioned, too, that the natives not only grow their tobacco, but they grow their tobacco-pipes around their huts, the pipes being formed of the roots and young stems of bamboo. Descending a high hill we entered a valley half cultivated and half covered with old forest. We were now close to the foot of the central mountain chain, and could see the mountains rise range above range, and, above all, the peak of Mount Morison, of a deep blue colour. It has an altitude of about 11,000 feet above the sea-level. The aspect of the country gradually became more grand and wild as we advanced inland.

We crossed the La-ko-li River to reach the small settlement of Pa-ah-liau. The bridge we crossed was simply made of three lengths of bamboo that spanned the stream, and were supported by, and fixed to, a pile of boulders on each bank. The bridge was raised about 12 feet above the river, so that a slip of the foot in crossing would have been serious. We, however, damped our straw sandals to make them more pliant, and got over with safety. These primitive bridges are kept in repair by the people in the neighbourhood, who find the bamboo on the bank, the ratan for lashing in the nearest thicket, and the boulders for piers everywhere around. The [p. 103] mountains, at the foot of which we were now passing, were clad in forests of gigantic trees, the lower hunting-grounds of the savage tribes, who, not content with their advantages, make occasional raids upon their less savage kinsmen of the plains, as a means of clearing up old existing feuds. The Pepohoans of Pa-ah-liau have a much more savage bearing than those nearer the coast. They are tall, straight of limb, robust, and not so dark in complexion. The women had a very striking appearance; they were all smoking bamboo pipes ornamented with brass rings, and having a small leathern bag attached for holding tobacco. An old lady tried my cigar, which was handed round the village to smoke, and afterwards carefully returned. The women bind up their hair

in a sort of cable, which they surround with a spiral of red cloth; the whole is then bound round the head to form a natural diadem. The dress is a short, tight-fitting jacket of blue calico, and a skirt of the same material, with the addition of a bright border of red and yellow, falling to the knees. This dress reminded me of what I have seen worn by the Laos women in Siam and Cambodia, and also of the coloured woodcuts in Chinese books illustrating the dress and habits of the "Miau-tsze" of the mountain regions on the mainland. The men shave the head as the Chinese do. Their dress consists of a short jacket and short trousers of calico. The neighbouring hills are covered with wild guava, which grows to great perfection.

Following the stream, I enjoyed, for the first time in the East, a feast of wild raspberries. They were of a large size, and equal in flavour to those of this country. A walk of 6 miles from Pa-ah-liau brought us to Kasanpo, where we found rest in a native hut. The villagers had been engaged in thatching a house, and the owner had entertained them with a wine feast. After dark a huge fire was kindled on the clear space in front of the hut where we lodged, and where the villagers had assembled to have a dance. The old men and women, the children, and a number of long prick-eared hunting dogs, sat round the fire. As it blazed up, the red flare sported among the quivering leaves of the bamboos and the dark forms of the surrounding palms; while, with the fitful flames, the strange figures round the fire would burst into bold relief against the black night, and again vanish into impalpable shadows. Wood and reeds were piled on until the flames rose high, and with them the spirits of the party. The young men and women clearing a space, crossed hands, formed into a crescent, and danced to the time of a plaintive minor song; the time becoming faster and faster, and with it the feet of the [p. 104 dancers, until the speed became furious, and the figures seemed to flit like phantoms through the dust that had risen in a red cloud around them; when the song was replaced by savage yells that woke the echoes of the hills.

Next day our host furnished us with an armed guide to proceed on to La-lung, a walk of 11 miles south. The guide thought it necessary to bring another armed friend, as we had to go through a dangerous pass in the mountains; he further enjoined us to observe strict silence. This part of our journey presented the grandest combination of mountain, forest, and river scenery. We were overtaken by an armed party on a fishing expedition, who, while we rested, amused themselves by shooting fish in the stream with bow and arrow, and by catching fresh-water crabs, which they devoured alive. Passing through the forest on the heights above La-lung, we were shown some fine specimens of the camphor-tree. We also noticed quantities of ratan, and on a space partly clear of underwood, a gigantic lily, standing about 8 feet high, having broad bending leaves, and a large cone of pink and white flowers. Above and around the trees were pendant with the thick, muscular-looking stems of climbing parasitic plants, passing from tree to tree, and forming a chaos like the confusion of ropes on a Chinese junk. We had a view of Mount Morison from the highest point of the ridge, where we met a Pepohoan, who had crossed the mountain from the other side of the island. He

had to pay three bullocks as black mail to the tribes inhabiting these regions, for which they gave him a safe pass through the territory. He reported the existence of a fine harbour at the foot of Mount Morison, on the eastern side of the island, a harbour unknown, he said, to foreigners. La-lung is on the right bank of a rapid stream that sweeps round the foot of the mountains. This stream during the wet season, which begins in May and ends about September, swells into a torrent of about a mile broad, forming one of the great outlets for the drainage of the southern mountains. La-lung is the nearest settlement to the habitations of the savage tribes of the mountains.

We rested at La-lung for the night. The son of our host had just lost his wife, and had gone on a visit to a friendly tribe in the neighbouring mountains to find another. Next morning upon descending the bank of the river to obtain a photograph, a large snake reared his head across our path. I despatched him with a blow across the head from my bamboo staff. He was about seven or eight feet long; too large to bring away. I was anxious to cross the river, but was persuaded not to do so, owing to some existing feud, and the fact [p. 105] that a party of hunters had about a month ago killed two men just opposite where we stood.

We started with our guides at 2 o'clock for La-ko-li, about 12 miles south of La-lung, where we expected to meet a party of savages who had gone there on a trading visit. Our path lay along what, during the wet season, forms the right bank of the river, presenting at this time a continuous precipice of 200 feet fronting its dry bed. Here, too, one meets with a remarkable combination of attractions in the scenery. At one place a mountain stream leaping out of a dark chasm, tumbling and foaming over the rocks, and again disappearing in the forest and everywhere around, one was impressed with the surpassing grandeur of the mountains, their gigantic forms softened and beautified with the luxuriant foliage of evergreen forests; or charmed to find a modest world of microscopic beauty in the minutest fissures of the surrounding rocks. La-ko-li was now before us, its hedges of cactus enclosing the huts, with their surroundings of palm, banana, laungan, and mango trees. It was nearly dark when we reached the house where we intended to rest for the night. In front, the house was adorned with festoons of boar and stag skulls, hunting trophies. A young man, over 6 feet in height, met us at the doorway; he was accompanied by his wife, a woman from a neighbouring mountain tribe. He looked savage and inhospitable, and referred us to his old father, who was smoking opium in an outer hut. We obtained shelter for the night, after some trouble. I had unfortunately to sit up till 1 o'clock, preparing my chemicals for the remainder of the journey. The water of La-ko-ki is very alkaline; the banks of one or two streams were covered with what appeared to be crystals of soda. This occasioned me some trouble in photographing, until I discovered the cause, and applied an acid remedy in Chinese vinegar.

In the dry beds of one or two streams I observed quantities of slate and shale, and indications of the presence of coal, which is now forming an important article of commerce in the north of the island, and which in process of time will enable Formosa,

as a great coal field, to contribute materially to the development and progress of the East. The country we passed through on our return route is much the same in its physical aspect as that already described.

After my return to Tai-wan-fu I travelled overland to Takow, with the object of penetrating to the savage territory further south. I was, however, stopped at Takow, as the mountain tribes were fighting in the south of the island.

Religion.

[P. 106] There are now among the Pepohoans over 1000 Christians, who build their own chapels, and who, to some extent, contribute to the support of teachers and schools. Their old religion, or fetishism rather, is dying out. It required a great deal of persuasion to induce a family in a hut at Kong-a-nah to show us their household god; they appeared ashamed of it. We found the strange object of worship in a small, dark apartment, stuck in a corner against the mud wall. It looked like a stunted May-pole. On the top there was a single stag skull, while a garland of dried grass and flowers was twisted round the pole. A small jar of water was placed in front and at the foot of the pole. This constituted the goddess. Her spouse was represented on her left by what I took to be a child's chair, made of bamboo. There is, I believe, a priestess employed in the rites of worship, as is said to have been the case before the island was ceded to the Dutch, when the greatest sins of the aborigines are described as the wearing a silk dress at certain times, the building of houses, the collection of timber, or catching of oysters.[2] "Their religious services consisted then in two acts—in sacrificing and praying, which in their temples are performed by priestesses. They place their sacrifices before pigs' and stags' heads, which are set up in their temples for the purpose."[3]

Language.

The following vocabularies were chiefly furnished by Dr. Maxwell and the Rev. Mr. Ritchie. They serve to show the striking affinity which exists between the dialects of the Pepohoans and tribes inhabiting the central mountain range and the Malay language, and their closer resemblance still with the languages of the Philippines, New Guinea, New Zealand, &c. For the purposes of this paper I will simply extract the numerals of one or two tribes, which, with slight differences, are common to the whole.

[Missing a table of linguistic equivalents.]

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[2] Without attention to the songs of the birds.

[3] A translation from 'Old Dutch Works,' by Rev. Whobscheid, pp. 9-10.