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Life in the Luchu Islands

By DR. WILLIAM H. FURNESS, 3D.

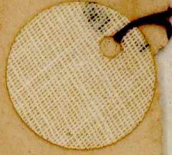
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LIFE IN THE LUCHU ISLANDS.

BY DR. WILLIAM H. FURNESS, 3D.

Each year finds the Luchu Islands more and more important, commercially, to the Japanese government, although, as yet, they are but little known to the busy world which sails past them to and from the markets of China, Japan, and the far East. After careful search, I have been unable to find any detailed account of these islands, or of the people, before the visit paid to them by Captain Basil Hall, of H. M. S. "Alceste," in 1816. His accounts of the people agree in every particular with what Dr. H. M. Hiller and myself observed in 1896 (eighty years after Captain Hall's visit), albeit during these four-score years the independent rule of a king has been abolished, and the islands are now entirely under the government of Japan. In view of this fact, the conclusion seems warranted that all changes in manners and customs in this small country are slow, compared with the rapid advance which is going on all around them. What was true in 1816 was most probably true a hundred years before.

According to their own traditions, they never have been a warlike people, and have mingled no further with their near neighbors than the payment of a yearly tribute both to China

and to Japan. Chinese influence, however, must have become marked, and no doubt many Chinese words crept into the language, and Chinese customs were introduced after the subjugation of the Luchuans by the Emperor Hongwou, the founder of the Ming dynasty, about A. D. 1372. Many Luchuan youths were, after this date, sent to China to be educated, and a castle on an island in the harbor was reserved for the use of the Chinese traders. The castle is still standing, but is now used as a rather ultra-fashionable and exclusive "tea-house."

For over two hundred years the islands were, more or less, under the exclusive rule of China, until in 1609 the Japanese Prince of Satsuma subdued them, but, for pecuniary reasons, did not forbid the payment of the yearly tribute to China. This double allegiance, as it were, to two countries continued until 1874, when the Japanese suddenly forbade all intercourse with China, and the King of Luchu was kept as a state prisoner in Tokyo.

As I have just said, the people of the Luchus are a most peaceable nation; in fact, there is no native hostile weapon of any kind or sort whatsoever to be found in the islands, and how the natives could have sprung from either the pugnacious little Japanese or the quarrelsome Chinese of those early days or of any days is a problem. Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, the eminent Japanese scholar and philologist, has made a most careful study of the Luchu language (Supplement to *Trans. of the Asiatic Soc. of Japan*, vol. xxiii), and, from a linguistic point of view, he is led to believe that the archaic Luchuan and the archaic Japanese (cir. 8th century A. D.) were derived from a common source; therefore the Luchuans are more closely allied, in point of origin, to the Japanese than to the Chinese, although, at first glance, at the present day they appear, both in language and customs, more like the latter. One of the most striking indications to me that they are of Japanese parentage rather than Chinese is the fact that they cannot pronounce the letter "l," and substitute therefor the sound "r." For instance, they do not call the archipelago on which they live the "Luchu" Islands, but "*Riu Kiu*," and in their language there is no word with "l" in it; hence the name

Luchu or *Liu Kiu* (as it is sometimes called) can hardly have been other than of a purely Chinese origin. In an article in *The Geographical Journal* (London, April, 1895), Professor Chamberlain proposes, as a theory concerning the origin of the Luchuans, that the common ancestors of the present people of Luchu and Japan came across the Korean channel and landed in Kyushu, the southernmost great island of Japan. This theory is strengthened not only by the geography of the countries, but by the trend of legend, and by grammatical affinities between Japanese and Luchuan with Korean and Mongol. These common ancestors swept eastward and northward, driving before them the savage races of which the Aino is at present the remnant. Very early in this invasion a small branch stream of invaders swept southward and spread out over the islands lying—one almost in sight of the other—far away into semi-tropical climates. Whether or not there were Aino predecessors of the Japano-Luchuan race in Luchu, Professor Chamberlain thinks that it is now impossible to say. Two local names in the Aino language have been adduced by a Japanese scholar, Kada Teiichi San, in support of this theory, but these, Professor Chamberlain thinks, are an inadequate support. He regards Dr. Doederlein's observation in Oōshima (the largest of the northern islands) of numerous hairy individuals among the smooth-skinned general masses as far more valuable grounds for argument. Both Dr. Hiller and myself, in the interior of the northern part of this same island, noted, entirely independently of Dr. Doederlein, a considerable number of men, who certainly were as hairy on the legs, arms, and chest as the average European, and far more hairy than any Japanese or Chinese. There is no known instance of Europeans having mixed with these people; but still, it must be borne in mind that for several centuries Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese ships have been cruising in the neighborhood of these islands, and a shipwrecked Caucasian crew very possibly might have disseminated their characteristics to the third and fourth generation sufficiently to make their descendants hairy by contrast with the smooth-skinned natives. We were rather inclined to this solution of the problem, owing to the fact that in a cave in the

northern portion of this island we found a large collection of human bones, of which the natives could give no explanation; and we were, therefore, led to infer that they were the remains of shipwrecked crews. The people living thereabouts maintained that these bones had been there beyond the memory of the "oldest inhabitant;" and we were also told that the legend ran that there was a dragon in the cave, and that these bones were the "crumbs" from his table. Not far from this cave was what we also inferred were the remains of foreign habitation; it consisted of a well-cut tunnel running directly through a small hill jutting downward to the sea, and separating one deep bay from another. This passageway was also a mystery to the natives, who knew of it, but were at a loss to explain either who had dug it or its use. Our only conjecture was that it had served as a means of escape between the two bays, which possibly had been the headquarters for a band of pirates in days long gone by, and of which all record is lost, except, perhaps, that which Dr. Doederlein observed stamped on the legs, arms, and chests of a few of the scions of the first Luchuan families.

We were told of this cave, with its bones, by our admirable friend, the Abbé Ferrier, the model French missionary living in the town of Nasé; then, under the protection of a Japanese police official, we walked to the northern end of the island, a distance of about twenty-three miles, and were rewarded by getting eight very well preserved skulls and many other bones. There were, in the several divisions of the cave, what we roughly estimated to be the remains of at least forty or fifty people, young and old. For the most part the bones were piled together without any arrangement, but in several places where there were convenient ledges the skulls and long bones had been gathered in groups of three and four. We would have taken many more of these bones had we not been compelled to carry them home ourselves; no native would so much as touch even the outside of the bags which we had furtively brought for the purpose of bringing back our "finds." Our most careful search for pottery or implements was unrewarded; we failed to find any link which could connect these scattered and neglected

remains with the present inhabitants of the island, who are so punctilious in their care of the tombs of their ancestors, and raise their dead relatives almost to the rank of demi-gods.

The people of Oōshima, the largest of the islands comprising the northern sub-group, are, at the present day, hardly to be distinguished from the Japanese in the southern part of Japan. Their language is quite comprehensible to a native of Kyushu, and in only a few slight differences in the fashion of dress and in the arrangement of the hair do they differ from the peasantry of Japan. Not many years ago it was the custom for all women in Oōshima to tattoo the backs of their hands, but the Japanese government is doing all it can to stop this fashion, so that the people of the two countries may tend to amalgamation. It is, however, not at all uncommon to see the beginnings or outlines of the designs on the hands of small children whose mothers are loath to give up the customs of their youth, and in the more southerly islands of Okinawa or "Great Luchu," where the modernizing influence of Japan has not yet made such advance as to change the manners and customs of the people, tattooing is still universal among the women.

Physically, the Luchuans are pretty much the same as the Japanese; short in stature, the average height being about 5 feet 6 inches; both men and women of the lower classes are stockily built, and seem capable of carrying great weights on their head and shoulder. The men of the upper class, living in the two large neighboring towns of Shuri and Naha, seem to be thoroughly indolent, and with no object in life other than to amuse themselves in drinking hot "Shoju" (a strong alcoholic drink, made of millet), and in playing on the "Jamsing" with their friends. The women of quality are never seen by foreigners, be they Japanese, Chinese, or Europeans; indeed, so seclusive are they that a Luchuan gentleman considers it rude and prying even to be asked about the health of his wife or daughters. Iwai San, the chief collector of taxes in Okinawa, a highly intelligent Japanese gentleman, told us that although he had been three years in the island, and knew intimately some of the best men in the cities of Shuri and Naha, he had never seen a high-born Luchuan lady. These ladies have sep-

arate apartments in the back part of the house, with gardens surrounded by a high wall, wherein they take exercise; when paying visits from one house to another, a sedan chair, or "Kago," is brought into the room, and my lady steps in closely veiled, and not even her chair-porters see her face.

The lower and middle class women are the drudges of the community, and do the work for all; they it is who work in the fields, and tend the crops, and when the produce is ready for market, carry it down to the town, and sit all day in the market place, patiently guarding their stall, and busily gossiping with their neighbors; the lazy husband meanwhile loaf's about the streets, shading his delicate skin with a green paper parasol, and taking occasional drinks with convivial friends. After one gets used to the Mongolian type, the women of Luchu have not unpleasing faces; their eyes are dark brown, their noses flat, but at the same time aquiline; their mouths are not large, and from a slight downward curve at the corners, give the whole face a somewhat sad expression. In comparison with their sisters of Japan, however, they are slovenly in their habits; their garments are not neat, and always look about to fall off, or blow away with the wind. The arrangement of the hair is not as elaborate as that adopted by either the Japanese or Chinese women, because in Luchu utility is the dictator of fashion, and owing to the universal custom of carrying on their heads everything from fruits to goats and living pigs, the knot of hair is tied far over on one side; but after two or three burdens have been carried it is flopping over one eye in a most tipsy manner.

This knot of hair is held together by two oddly shaped pins, the most important part of the Luchuan costume, since the material whereof the pins are made denotes the class to which the wearer belongs. When the fashion of these pins was introduced, about three hundred and eighty years ago, feudalism was in vogue in the islands, and the several classes were compelled to show their rank by the material which was used in the making of these hair-pins; thus, only those of noble birth were allowed to wear pins of gold; the feudal lords wore silver, the merchants and farmers wore brass, and the very poorest

wore pins of pewter or of plain wood. At the present day this distinction of classes has been abolished by the Japanese government, but still the people cling to the old custom. The wives of the wealthy farmers, on state occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and festivals, wear a very long pin made out of hexagonal pieces of tortoise shell, alternately black and yellow. The metal pin worn by the women is about eight inches long, quite slender in the shaft, and ending in a peculiar bowl-shaped head, like the bowl of a mustard spoon; frequent inquiry failed to elicit any satisfactory reason for this shape. We were told in Oōshima that pins were made thus spoon-shaped so that the wearer, when boiling sugar—a universal industry in the Luchus—might always have at hand a convenient instrument for testing the consistency of the mass. This is, I am afraid, a little far-fetched, and I am inclined to believe that the pins were used thus on account of their shape, and not shaped on account of their use; a pin dripping with melted sugar can hardly be deemed a desirable ornament even to a Luchuan woman. The women of Cochin China wear a pin somewhat smaller, but almost identically the same as that worn by the Luchuan women.

The head-dress of the men also is quite different from the old-fashioned head-dress either of China or of Japan; the men and boys of all classes shave a space on the top of the head about two and a half inches wide, extending from an inch and a half back of the margin of the hair, in front, to the crown of the head. In arranging the hair, the side, back, and front locks are combed together up to the crown of the head, and there tied, tight and close, to the scalp; the wisp of hair thus made is about sixteen inches long, and is stiffened with oil until it will almost stand alone; the oil used is exceedingly thick, and has not an altogether unpleasant odor of oranges, infinitely better than the rancid, noisome cocoanut oil used by the Malays. When this spike of hair has been sufficiently slicked, smoothed, and pulled—a stage in the proceedings proclaimed by the expression of abject agony on the face of the victim (often and often in the street entirely devoted to their trade we used to watch the barbers at their work)—it is divided into two parts,

whereof the larger is bent into a loop about three and a half inches high, and the smaller is wrapped around the base of the loop, making a stump at least an inch high, with the loop on the top. This loop is bent backward and down upon itself, until what was its upper curve encircles the base of the stump. To hold all this in place a silver, nickel, or brass pin, with a head forming a five-petaled flower (I think it is a somewhat conventionalized blossom of the wild strawberry) is shoved from in front through the base of the stump and holds down the curve of the loop at the back, while a second smaller pin, slightly scoop-shaped, holds the loop down at the sides. This is the universal head-dress in Okinawa, and it is adopted by small children even of four or five years of age.

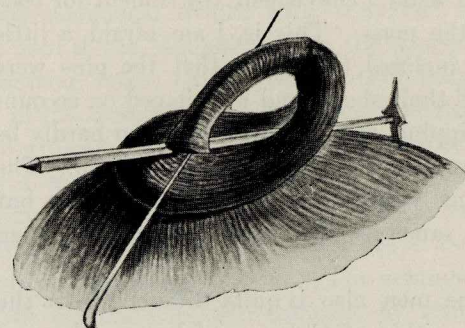


Fig. 1. Head-dress of the Men of Okinawa.

The faces of the men are so mild and gentle in expression and the costumes of both sexes so much alike that for the first few days of our visit we relied upon this form of head-dress as the sole distinction between young men and women; as a general rule, the men are far better looking than the women. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the cares and worries of life have not so wrinkled and knotted the faces of the men as the faces of the toiling and moiling women.

It is the custom throughout the archipelago for the women to tattoo the backs of their hands. The patterns are shown in the accompanying illustrations which give the designs in the three sub-groups of islands. In Oöshima the central design on the back of the hand is not of a constant pattern, but is governed somewhat by individual taste; in Okinawa, however, the designs are constant and unvarying, and, as well as we could ascertain, universal even among the women of the highest class. The meanings of these marks are vague in the minds of the

people, and of only a few could we get any explanation. In Okinawa the origin of the custom is traced to the earliest time in the following legend: The first woman who wove cloth on the island was exceedingly beautiful, and when commerce began to spring up between Luchu and Japan, the Japanese were so much pleased with the peculiar beauty of the cloth made in Okinawa, that they insisted that the weaver should be sent to Japan to instruct the people in the art. The Luchuan Council, fearing that the beautiful weaver would be claimed as a bride by some of the wealthy Samurai of "Dai Nippon," and the art be thereby lost, determined to make her less attractive, and to put on her a mark whereby she would be always recognized and reclaimed from the Japanese, in case of treachery. Her hands were accordingly freely tattooed, and she was allowed to go. The scheme proved a success; the black tattooing so cheapened her that she returned to Okinawa unmarried, and lived to a good and weaving old age. After her death she was elevated to the skies, made a goddess, and is still worshipped to this day in the city of Naha.

This legend we were told by Iwai San, to whom it was told by one of his intelligent Luchuan assistants; I am unable to say to what extent this story is current throughout the islands. It seems, however, that tattooing the hands has some connection originally with weaving; in the southernmost group of isles known as Myako-Jima, the assessment of the women depends on the tattoo marks on the backs of their hands. The assessment for the men is fixed according to the amount of millet or rice that each man can produce from his land, and a like taxation is levied on the women in accordance with the quality of fine linen cloth which they are able to make. There are about twenty grades or more of this cloth, determined by the difficulty of the pattern, and when a woman becomes proficient in weaving any one of the patterns, that pattern is tattooed on the back of her hand, and it is regarded as a great distinction and mark of honor to have difficult designs there tattooed as an enduring proof of skill. There may be, perhaps, only two or three women in a whole village with hands completely covered by these marks, but the thorn to the rose is that

with these proofs of her skill comes the increased rate of taxation.

In Oōshima there is, in addition to the marks on the backs of the hands, a peculiar design on the inner surface of both wrists; this mark, according to the old woman who executes most of the tattooing in the town of Nazé, is a combination of several features, apparently totally at random, namely: the beak of a bird, the handle of a teapot, the tail of a fish, and the head of a turtle. These component parts, I think, can be easily seen in the accompanying cut, which is reduced one-half from a tracing of the design made by this old woman.



Fig. 2. Design on the Front of the Wrists, in Oōshima.

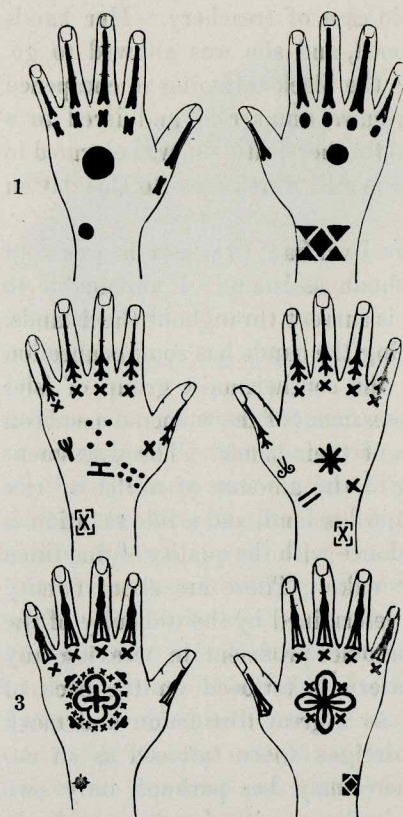


Fig. 3. Tattooing on Hands. 1. Okinawa; 2. Myako-Jima; 3. Oōshima.

The beak of the bird is on the end toward the left, the handle of the tea-pot curves outward below it, the tail of the fish is on the right-hand end, and the head of the turtle is the little flat-topped projection on top. The square-shaped design beyond the tail of the fish is always over the styloid process of the ulna, on the right hand, while in the same place on the left hand is either a round dot or a many-pointed star. The square is said to represent a bobbin whereon to wind thread. This same mark appears also in Okinawa on the back of the wrist, much larger and with more pointed corners, but the mark on the front of the wrist is

omitted. The lines on the fingers represent bamboo leaves; for the design in the centre no explanation was forthcoming; it varied too much to have any fixed meaning (that is, in Oōshima; in Okinawa it is always a round spot, larger on the left hand than on the right).

In Myako-Jima the marks are said to be the patterns woven into cloth; on the backs of the fingers is the leaf of the bamboo, below this on the knuckles is the numeral ten; on the back of the wrist again appears the bobbin; on the back of the right hand are several footprints of a bird superimposed; over the knuckle of the thumb a pair of scissors, and below these, two parallel lines, representing *Fashi*, or chopsticks. In the centre of the left hand are five dots representing five balls of rice; below this a Luchuan tea-table, and to the left of the five central marks is a trident, whereby evil spirits are kept aloof; to the six dots on the base of the thumb no significance was given.

Tattooing is not common on any other part of the body, but it is not uncommon to see criss-cross marks on the legs, arms or shoulders of both men and women, which, they say, act as a counter-irritant to rheumatism. We noticed, however, several men and boys in the small fishing village of Itoman, on the island of Okinawa, who had the trident design tattooed on their right upper arms; in some, the trident was replaced by a slanting line, with three short, straight projections on one side of it, directed downward, like the teeth of a saw; this, we were told, had the same effect on evil spirits as did the trident, which was undoubtedly true.

The tattooing is always done by women, who make a regular business of it during the months of July and August, when the hard manual work in the fields is over for a time; the operation makes the hands so sore that hard work is impossible. The ink used is ordinary Chinese ink, moistened with *shoju*. The design is pricked in with a small sheaf of needles stuck into a piece of soft wood or stiff paper, and then wrapped with cotton thread until a handle of convenient size is obtained. The ink is put on thickly, and the needles jabbed through it into the skin until all of the design has been marked out; the ink is then washed off, and the lighter spots and patches touched up a second

time. The whole of the pattern is not worked in at one sitting, but a part of the hand is tattooed in successive years, beginning when the child is four or five years old, and continued until the whole is finished. The courtesans and the women who used formerly to act in the theatres were not allowed to be tattooed; they were not supposed to work, hence they must be distinguished from the workers, and they were allowed to put only two large dots on the first phalanx of the middle fingers of both hands.

Theatre-going in Luchu is the great diversion of the people, and, just as in Japan, the pleasure-seekers take their lunch with them and spend the whole day at the play-house, eating, drinking, gossiping with their friends, and apparently paying little attention to the acting, while children romp with one another, and not infrequently climb on the forbidden precincts of the stage. The arrangement of the stage and the plays is a curious mixture of the Japanese and Chinese; there is the same scene set for all plays, and herein it is like the Chinese, but in the careful costume and in the good idea of effective acting the Luchuans approach the Japanese school; furthermore, their plays are short and concise, describing some incident of Luchu history. All the lines are spoken, or rather sung, in a monotonous, chanting tone, letting the voice drop at the end of each line, but there is not the stilted, squeaky tones of the Japanese actors nor the obtrusive din of gongs and drums, which accompany all Chinese histrionic efforts; the voices are all mild and gentle, and the orchestra consists of a low-toned string instrument (the *Jamsing*, much the same as the *Samisen* of the Japanese), a flute, and a drum, which strike up a rhythmical march at the entrance or exit of the principal actors. Nowadays all parts are taken by men and boys; not more than three or four years ago, women also took part in the plays, but with the spread of Japanese power this was prohibited and women were barred from the "boards." We were told that the actors were a much despised class, on account of their dissolute habits.

The stage is **T**-shaped, like what is technically known as a *Tau* cross, in which the transverse bar is about the same length

and width as the leg, which is directed toward the audience. The two arms of the transverse are used chiefly for the exit or entrance of armies or bands of retainers accompanying the feudal lords. On the right the arm is divided in the centre by a rustic bridge, which is supposed to pass over a rushing river; on the left there are a few genuine gnarled trees, which represent a grove. At the back hangs a broad curtain, beneath which corpses roll themselves when they have lain long enough on the stage to give the audience a realizing sense of their deadness, and from under this same curtain ghostly arms clad in black sleeves appear and remove fallen hats, or broken spears, after an affray. On each side of this curtain are doorways also closed with curtains. Through these, the majority of the players have their exits and their entrances, and they serve as the doorway to a hut or to a castle, without so much as the suggestion of a difference in the shade of color of the hangings. At the end of each play a boy hangs on one of the front pillars of the stage a wooden placard whereon is painted the name of the next play; this is the only play-bill furnished.

The theatre buildings are very ramshackle affairs, enclosed only as high as the eye-line of the passers-by in the street, and poorly roofed in overhead. The rafters and supporting pillars are, however, elaborately decorated with dingy, painted dragons, snakes, phoenixes, and pink peonies, in accord with things Japanese and Chinese. On the bare floor, or on thin mats here and there spread, the audience squat and indulge in tea and cakes, or sip hot *shojū* from little pewter cups no bigger than a thimble, all the while talking in a steady stream, apparently paying no attention whatever to the play.

The costumes are evidently the remnants of a very early day; they are neither modern nor old-style Japanese, and do not resemble any costume of China that I have ever seen; indeed, they look more like the costumes of Persia or Burmah; elaborate turbans and head-cloths are often a marked feature.

High dignitaries are always followed by a chair-bearer, or rather stool-bearer, who is invariably at hand to place a stool beneath his lord, before he addresses the rabble. In sitting down the lordly being assumes a position like the Chinese—that

is, with knees wide apart, hands resting on the knees, and toes turned out; the common people take the usual Luchuan sitting posture, which would be cross-legged were it not that one knee is elevated, as if they were about to rise. Taken as a whole the theatrical performances are far more comprehensible than the Chinese, but inferior to the Japanese in scenic effect and dramatic power, although the gentle modulation of the voices make them decidedly more agreeable to the ear.

The *Jamsing*, which plays such an important part in Luchuan life—it is played only by men—is in shape similar to the *Samisen* of the Japanese, and is tuned in the same manner, only at least an octave lower. The great difference between these instruments in Luchu and in Japan is that in Luchu the drum or body is covered with snake skin (that of the *python reticulatus*—probably imported from China), while in Japan cat skin is invariably used. The tunes which I heard were melodious, and played in perfect time to the dancing which was going on. The dancing is in the same style as the Japanese; slow, graceful movements, which represent in some inexplicable manner the seasons of the year, sunshine and clouds, ripening fields of grain, etc., etc. It is next to impossible for our Western minds to follow all the veiled significance of the Eastern dances; every wave of the hand, every movement of the fan means to them an emotion of the heart or a cry of nature. In former times there were no *Geisha*, or Dancing Girls in Luchu; the theatres with their actresses took the place of private dances; now, however, with the Japanisation of everything else in the island, this important class must not be overlooked, and several Luchu girls with talent have been educated in Japan as *Geishas*, and nowadays perform, for a “considerable consideration,” the old-fashioned Luchu dances, which heretofore have been relegated exclusively to the playhouse.

The theatres, however, are not the only diversion of the people; each little village has its own amusements in the shape of horse-races, “tugs-of-war,” and, where there is opportunity, boat-races. The horse-races are, perhaps, the favorite pastime, and every small village is provided with a public square or race-ground, whereon the people meet and gossip of an evening

and where the races are held. Luchu races are problems even to the Japanese governor, Narabara San, who has lived many years in the islands, but acknowledged to me that, although he had witnessed these races many and many a time, he has never yet been able to fathom what exactly constitutes a victory. The riders, possibly twenty or thirty in number, arrayed in fantastic and gayly-colored costumes, assemble in the public square or race-course (which is a level spot of ground, usually about a hundred yards square, hedged in with pine trees, which serve both as a boundary and also as a shelter for spectators) where they ride hither and thither, zig-zagging from one side to the other. When two or three riders come abreast, seemingly by chance, they start off at a gallop, but the one who apparently outstrips the others in the race may or may not receive the prize. Even the Luchuans whom we asked seemed to be somewhat doubtful in their minds as to what constitutes a victory; it rests probably on a number of fine technical points in the equipments of the horse and rider; possibly on the same delicate lines which dominate the negro “cake-walk.”

Boat-races were another form of public amusement in the old feudal days, but of late years are gone out of fashion. The best races were held in the harbor and canals of the city of Naha, where all the citizens of that city and of neighboring villages, divided their interests in three clubs, named the *Tomari*, *Kumimura*, and the *Idzumizaki*. The boats were manned by thirty-six men each, eighteen on a side, while down the middle, between the rows of paddlers, was a passage wherein were stationed three men, whose duty it was to walk back and forward, encouraging and exhorting the crew to put forth their best efforts. The bows of the boats were decorated with large carved wooden heads of dragons, and from the stern issued the dragon's tail; from three masts floated the colors of the club to which the boat belonged. The captain of each crew sat upon the nose of the dragon figurehead, and kept up a constant beating on a gong. The prize was awarded to the winning boat by the government, and local history reveals that these races always end in a free fight.

“Tug-of-war” contests are also popular sports with the

Luchuans of the rural districts, and we were told that the men from different villages, and also men of different factions in the same village, entered into these contests with the greatest ardor. For each of the two opposing parties enormous grass ropes are twisted at least eighteen inches in diameter, with a large loop at one end and with side ropes which can be grasped. The opposing parties, fifty or more in number, camp opposite each other all day, stirring up rivalry and excitement by gibes and sneers. At midnight, the loops on the ends of the two ropes are brought together and interlocked with a stout pole. At a given signal the tug begins. The point, marked by a flag, beyond which the pole must be dragged to constitute a victory, is only a few feet from the start, but those few feet are fought for with the zeal of desperation. The laggards and the lazy ones are kept up to their work by a force of exhorters, who, in addition to their sharp tongues, wield flaming torches, wherewith they singe the legs of those whose sinews are not sufficiently strained. Women do not join in, but stand by and "rain influence" with smiles and cheers, although from appearances I should think that the women could pull harder than the men. When the pole has passed the line, the victors, with a wild rush, invade the territory of the vanquished, and the night ends in revelry at the expense of the defeated.

Of children's games there seemed to be but few. Kite-flying is said to be very popular at certain seasons, just as it is in Japan; it has been, no doubt, imported from Kagoshima, the nearest Japanese port. Whip-tops also have their seasons of popularity in the youthful Luchuan life, and in the same unaccountable manner as in our streets, they suddenly become the fashion, and every small boy knows instinctively just when the season for spinning should begin. The tops are all home-made, whittled out of hard wood, or, better still, carved out of coarse white coral; this latter material is quite an innovation in tops, but then it is always ready to hand in these islands, so largely composed of coral, and when soaked can be cut like clay, and then hardened by drying until it is like a stone, and very light withal. The whips are just what any boy might devise—nothing more than

a stick of wood or bamboo, with two or three strips of cloth bound on for lashes. We saw no peg-tops, such as are so popular in Japan; but then, perhaps, we were not there in the right season.

The game which seemed to be in season, at the time of the year that we were in the Luchus was what is known here as *Tip-cat*; the boys of Oöshima call it *Teng* and in Okinawa it is called *Gicho*; it is played, however, somewhat differently from the way in which we play it here. The short piece of wood, known here as the *cat*, or *pussy*, is cut off obliquely at one end instead of pointed at both ends as the American boy makes it, but nevertheless the principle remains the same. In starting the play the *cat* is laid upon the ground with the oblique surface downward and then with a quick rap of the bat it is tilted up and caught in the left hand; this requires more knack than appears at first sight, and failure to make this catch loses the turn for the batsman. The bat is now laid down and the *cat* passed over to the right hand and thrown into the air about three feet; while it is in the air the bat is snatched up and the *cat* struck before it falls. The fielder tries to catch the *cat* on the fly, whereby the batsman forfeits his turn; failing to catch it, the fielder picks it up and throws it toward the batsman, who again strikes it and then measures off the distance to where it has fallen, in so many lengths of the bat; this constitutes the score. The fielder has the right to confuse the batsman by throwing in to him two pieces of wood like the *cat*, and the batsman must distinguish between the right and the wrong piece; if he strikes the wrong he loses his turn.

The game is not played in Japan, as far as I can ascertain, except in the town of Kumamoto in the island of Kyusiu, where, according to Mr. Culin's paper read before The Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, the game is called *In ten* (very similar to the name "teng" by which it goes in the northerly group of the Luchus). Mr. Culin's informant, Motochika Tsuda San, inclined to the belief that the game was introduced from Korea by the followers of General Kato who took an important part in the campaigns against Korea about eight hundred years ago. It seems more probable, however, that the

game is of Chinese origin; it is not known at the present day in Korea, and Mr. Culin also is authority for saying that it is played in Hoshan, in the province of Kwantung, China.

In the island of Oöshima, we watched, unobserved, a group of three or four small girls playing a game with little flat discs of baked clay and from what we could see of the game (we were unable to talk to the little players) it looked like a modification of the game of marbles. We found out afterward that the game is called *Hajiki* (which means in Japanese *to snap with the fingers*) and that it is played in Japan also under that same name. The game was started by each player hrowing down three or four of these small checkers upon the ground, and the one to begin was selected by the "counting-out" game which they call *Mushi-ken*, or the "insect game," in which the forefinger represents a snake, the thumb a frog, and the little finger a snail. If one player holds up a thumb and the other player a little finger, the little finger loses because the frog can eat the snail, and the loser drops out of the contest; likewise the snake beats the frog, but the snake is beaten by the snail, because the snail can crawl into a hole where the snake cannot get at him. The winner in "counting-out" starts the play with the checkers by drawing a line with her thumb nail in the ground between two of the checkers; this is only to indicate which two are in play. With her thumb she snaps one checker at the other; if she hits, she takes up the one that was hit, and again draws a line between her checker and another of the opponents, and keeps on snapping until she loses her turn by a miss. The distance was never more than four or five inches, but unevenness in the ground often makes the shots difficult.

We stood over the little group for some time, as I say, unobserved, so intent were they in their play; but one of the group suddenly caught sight of us and with panic-stricken faces they gathered up their checkers and ran. A few coppers, however, induced them to resume their places, and at the end of the game they gave us a handful of the checkers.

The game of *Hama-nage*, which is played by the boys in Korea, Japan, and Luchu, is nothing more nor less than the game of "hockey," familiar to all boys of Europe or America.

The game which is no doubt responsible for many a scolding of the small boy for unpunctuality at school is *Chang koro*, and worse yet, it is a gambling game. It seemed to consist solely in trying to turn over the counters, made of small bivalve shells, by flinging down another shell so as just to hit the opponent's shell on the edge. The shell which is thrown must, after accomplishing its object, land on the ground with the concave side down; if it fail to do this, it must be left until forfeited by the other player or redeemed by its owner. The shells represent so many copper *cash* or Japanese *sen*.

We were told that the young men occasionally engage in boxing bouts, with bare knuckles; all blows are struck with the right hand, while the left is used solely as a guard. Clinching and wrestling for a fall are considered legitimate features of the sport. *Rokshaku* is another manly sport of the order of single-stick, with a staff about six feet long. *Non-shaku* is played with a stick about three feet long to which is attached a rope. The object of this game is to disarm the opponent by whipping the stick out of his hands.

With these games and sports the youth of the islands pass their time, and, from all that we heard, they seem to spend never a moment in social intercourse with the gentler sex; wooing and love-making do not enter into their lives; there are no love matches in Luchu. Courtship and marriage are things entirely beyond their ken and are managed by their parents. When a son has reached the age of six or seven, the parents look around them, and from the children of their town-folk select a future bride suited to their son's station in life and worthy to become their daughter. Through some middleman the boy is offered to the parents of the girl as a suitor; if he prove acceptable, a day of good omen is selected, known as the *kichi-nichi* (lucky day), and on this day the contract is made and the boy's parents send a present to the parents of the girl, but neither of the principals knows anything of all these arrangements for their future happiness. When the boy has reached the age of eighteen and the girl is about fourteen or fifteen, a present is again sent to the parents of the bride; this present among the wealthy classes is usually a large sack of rice and

one "yen" (a Japanese dollar) in money, but among the poorer people, who can ill afford to lose the services of their daughter, the present must be much larger, and ten or twenty "yen" is the usual price paid to the parents of the bride.

On the marriage day the bridegroom, dressed out in his best clothes and accompanied by a crowd of his friends, sets out on foot for the bride's house. At the same time, from her house, a crowd of her friends walk out to meet the groom half-way, and as they walk they ring bells and make all kinds of din and bring with them the figure of a horse's head made out of bamboo; this they fasten in front of the groom, and for the rest of the way he must pretend to ride to the bride's house. The only explanation of this horse-play, that we could get, was that it was to give the marriage more publicity and thereby prevent bigamy. There is, however, a legend that, once upon a time, an *Anju*, or chief, committed polygamy to such an extent that at last the boys of the village waylaid him as he was going to the house of an additional bride and fastened on him a hobby-horse, and made him walk with a broken umbrella over his head. This made his offence so public, and so humiliated him, that he remained faithful to his last bride and sinned no more. There is just a shadow of possibility that this custom is related to an old Korean legend which Mr. Culin mentions in his valuable book on *Korean Games* (p. 32), wherein he states that the "*Wa Kan San sai dsu e* relates that T'au Hien, of the later Han Dynasty (A. D. 25-221), when fourteen years old, made himself a flag, rode on a 'bamboo horse,' and played. Kan Kung observed his appearance, and admired it, and granted him his daughter as a wife. His wife indignantly said: 'The boy of the T'an family plays too much. How can we give him our daughter?' Kan Kung replied: 'He has a noble aspect, which certainly presages great success,' and he gave him his daughter." The same book states that boys of seven years of age take pleasure in the bamboo horse.

When the groom reaches the house of his bride, a great feast is prepared and he pledges his mother-in-law in a cup of *shoju*; after the feast he returns to his home, but again visits the bride shortly after dark, accompanied by all his family and servants.

Again a feast is held and they all make merry until the small hours when every one in the town is asleep; both families then visit the groom's house, and here the marriage ceremony is completed by the exchange of cups of *shoju* between the bride and groom, and the bride also drinks with her mother-in-law. The ceremonies are concluded by the bride and groom reclining together on a couch for a few minutes; this is known as *misu-mori*. That same night, or rather morning, the bride returns to her father's house, and the husband and his friends go to a certain quarter of the town set apart for the hetairæ, and remain there for three days and nights. Among the higher classes, however, it is customary for the bridegroom to go to some secluded house in the country and there drink and make merry for the prescribed three days. This custom is said to dispel all feelings of jealousy on the part of the wife and inure her in advance to her husband's possible future failings. When the three days are over the bride goes to her husband's house and begins housekeeping, or rather assisting her mother-in-law, for the whole family live together until the death of the father.

These marriages, thus strangely contracted, are not, as might be readily supposed, always happy unions, and divorce in the first few months of married life is by no means uncommon, the most frequent pretext for it is ugliness of the bride, and I must acknowledge this did not surprise me; but this is not a legal ground, and if the couple manage to endure each other for a year or more only the gravest misdemeanors of either husband or wife will induce them to separate.

First cousins may marry, provided they are the children of brothers, but the children of sisters may not marry; being insular people, among whom a certain amount of intermarriage is inevitable, this rule concerning the marriage of cousins is particularly interesting anthropologically; undoubtedly experience taught them that the marriage of the children of brothers does not produce a deformed or weakened progeny. In the island of Oöshima (where I am not sure that this rule is enforced) we observed, it is true, a great many children afflicted with hare-lip, but in Okinawa, where this rule obtains, the

inhabitants one and all seemed to be particularly strong and healthy.

In the burial customs and the observances of mourning there is no doubt a great proportion that is borrowed from the Chinese and the Koreans; but since all things are changing under Japanese influence, it is, perhaps, worth while to record here what we heard and saw of these customs during our stay in Great Luchu.

When a husband dies, the widow continues to live in the house of her father-in-law, but she retains the property that her husband left, and, unless she is very young, or of the very poorest class, does not marry again. For fifty days after the death of her husband, the widow discards her metal hair-pins and wears pins made of bamboo, and adopts a mourning costume of white cloth. When the body has been laid in the family tomb, the door of the vault is sealed up, and in the small enclosure just outside, a thatched hut is built wherein the widow or widower lives secluded for seven days, eating barely enough to sustain life, and mourning incessantly in the most extravagant manner. We were told that it was not an infrequent occurrence for widows to die of grief while mourning in these little huts outside the tomb. For fifty days after leaving the hut at the tomb, the mourner, either widow or widower, remains at home in absolute seclusion, never leaving the house except early in the morning and after dark in the evening, when a visit is paid to the tomb. On these occasions the mourner is draped from head to foot in a grayish-white cloth, and must be attended by some near relative as a guide. At the expiration of these fifty days the bamboo pin is changed for a wooden one, and the daily visits to the tomb are discontinued; it is customary at the end of this period for the widower to mingle with his friends once more; but a widow remains in seclusion for the rest of her life. For three years no pin but a wooden one can be worn by man or woman, and the clothing must be of white cloth until the ceremony of washing the bones in *shoju* has been performed. On the third anniversary of the death, the tomb is opened, and the assembled family clean and wash the bones in *shoju*, and place them in a separate

urn on a shelf at the back of the inner room of the vault. The hair-pins which were buried with the corpse are at this time removed and made over again for the younger members of the family, but a father's pin is the direct inheritance of his son, and is not re-made.

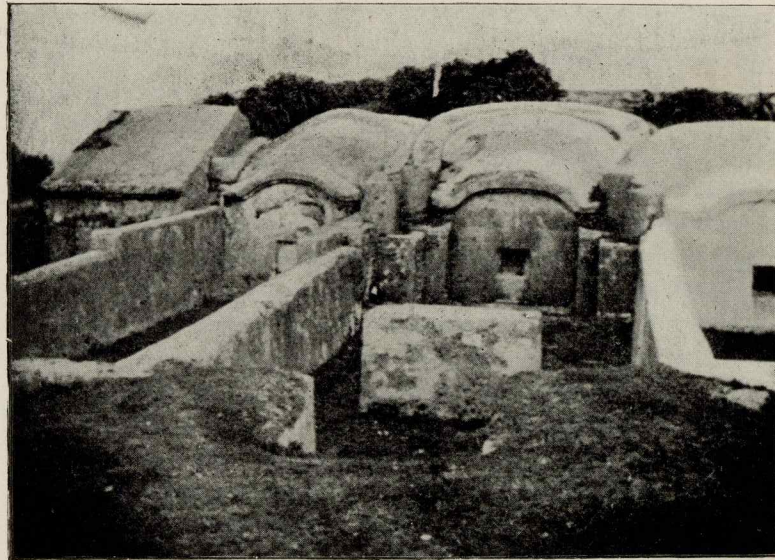
Burial takes place from twelve to twenty-four hours after death, and during the time that the corpse is in the house, and while it is being taken to the grave, the relatives and dear friends indulge in paroxysms of grief, which are conducted in the most theatrical and extraordinary manner. As soon as it is evident that death is near at hand, the eyes of the sufferer are closed, and so held until life departs; then the family at once put on clothes made of banana fibre, of a yellowish color, and the lamentations begin. In the burial of the better classes thirteen *kimonos* of silk (a material worn in the Luchu islands only at marriage and after death) similar in shape to those worn by the Japanese, except that they are a little shorter in the skirt, are put on the corpse, one over the other, varying in color from white, which is always the outermost, to red, blue, green, yellow, and purple. The peasantry put on only seven. On top of the coffin are placed the sandals last used; a small and prettily-made bag, containing all the teeth which have dropped out during life, and have been carefully preserved; also the parings of the nails just before death; in addition to these the body is provided with a pipe and tobacco-pouch, a teapot and some cakes, and a towel. On the day of the funeral the friends and relatives assemble in the house, and, sitting round the coffin, they utter loud lamentations, and seem to vie with each other in giving vent to the most abandoned grief.

One day, while strolling through the dwelling portion of the town of Naha, our attention was arrested by seeing a crowd of men all clad in the yellow banana-fibre clothes of mourners, and, hearing prolonged wailing in a house near by, we stopped to see what we rightly conjectured to be a funeral procession. We stood a little to one side, and soon the procession appeared; first came two men with flat drums and large brass cymbals, which they beat lustily, and following them were two children weeping and wailing in such an agony of grief that they

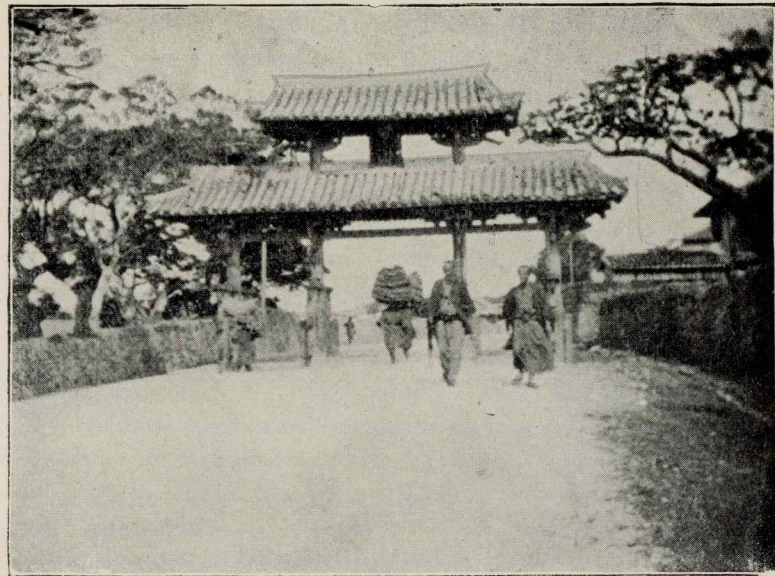
had to be supported by an attendant on either side. These children were the heirs of the deceased, and for children so young they were really adepts in the art—for it is an art in Luchu—of mourning. Behind them came the hearse, or *Gan*, carried on poles on the shoulders of four men. The *Gan* is about four feet long by three feet wide, and has latticed sides and a roof like a temple or a Chinese pagoda, with bells at the four corners; it is the property of the town, and is loaned as occasion requires. The dimensions may seem small, but then it must be remembered that, except in the upper classes, the usual position in which bodies are buried is with the knees drawn up to the chin; this position is also frequently adopted in burials in Japan.

Behind the *Gan* staggered four chief mourners, clad in the yellow of mourning and wearing on their heads flat straw hats about two feet in diameter. Each of these mourners, bent with woe, had two men to support and almost drag him along; genuine tears accompanied the woe-begone facial contortions, and not only coursed down the cheeks, but also flowed freely through the nasal ducts, producing a flow of mucus many inches in length, which, although a sight to us most repulsively intolerable, to the Luchuan mind is the very efflorescence of abysmal woe. Professor Chamberlain states that these men, thus proficient in the art of "crying through the nose," are professional mourners, and are only hired to attend funerals. Although this was indignantly denied by two Luchuans whom I interrogated, I am inclined to take Professor Chamberlain's version of the matter. It must have taken years of practice to produce the astounding results obtained by these four mourners in this one instance.

Behind the professional mourners (let us call them) staggered five or six women, the members of the immediate household of the deceased, completely hidden beneath veils of banana-fibre cloth, so that their faces and the method of their crying could not be seen. They, too, had to be supported by attendants, and what was presumably lost in the way of nasal tears was made up in loud and prolonged wails issuing from beneath the draperies. A crowd of friends clad in mourning robes solemnly and decorously brought up the rear.



Family Tombs, near the City of Naha.



The Gateway of Propriety.

At the tomb a priest of the *Zenshu* sect of Buddhism (the religion of Okinawa) says a short prayer and rehearses the many good qualities which the corpse is sure to have had during life, and the body is laid to rest in the family vault, with the head pointing toward the north.

I would not be for a minute understood as dealing lightly with any ceremonials wherewith our common humanity accompanies grief; I therefore add that it is quite possible that portions of our own solemn funeral ceremonies might, in turn, strike the Luchuan mind as savoring of insincerity, or even of absurdity. For instance, as this funeral procession passed, we took off our hats to show our respect; but the action was greeted by a group of small Luchuan boys nearby with laughter and derisive jeers.

The whitewashed tombs form one of the most characteristic features of the Luchuan landscape, dotted as they are, here and there, in every direction, through the fields wherever sloping ground furnishes a favorable locality for excavation. Architecturally, they are no doubt derived from the Chinese, but they are perhaps made with a little more care than is generally seen in China, except in the cemeteries near large cities. The roof the vault, which is dug out of the side of a hill, is horse-shoe shaped in outline, and is higher in the middle and in front than it is at the sides; in front of the door is a sunken yard, walled in on all sides, and in the centre of this is a slab of masonry or of solid stone about four feet high, six feet long, and one foot thick, forming a sort of screen in front of the opening in the tomb proper. Inside the vault there are two rooms with low stone shelves on all three sides, whereon the jars containing the bones of the deceased are placed. The opening into the vault has no door, but is loosely walled up. On the outskirts of the city of Naha there is an extensive collection of these tombs, but otherwise there seems to be no regular cemetery, and every man builds his tomb wherever he happens to have ground, and the fields are cultivated to the very edge of the vaults wherein "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." There is nothing which a Luchuan holds in greater reverence than the family tomb, and the usurious money-lenders take

advantage of this sentiment, and never refuse a loan where the family vault is offered for security.

This is but a very brief outline of what might be written of this gentle, little, secluded community who live and die in peace, while the rest of the old Eastern World, which we seem just at present to think is new, is squabbling and fighting both at home and abroad. On account of the exquisitely peaceable nature of the people one of the Chinese emperors christened the country "The Land of Propriety," and, duly proud of this title, the king caused to be built outside of the royal city of Shuri a great gateway, which to this day is called the "Gate of Propriety."

With the advent of Japanese civilization and the contentions which inevitably follow reforms may the name still remain appropriate, and no improprieties of "trade's unfeeling train" ever pass beneath that gateway!

