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The History of the Loochoo Islands.

By Charles S. Leavenworth, M.A.

Some history has been made in regard to the Loochoos since the last paper on the subject was read before this learned Society by the late Dr. S. Wells Williams, of revered memory, thirty-four years ago, in the year 1871, for, during the interval, the Loochoos have become, for a time, an important piece on the great chess-board of the international politics of the Far East.

The history of the islands naturally falls into two parts: (1) Their earlier history and the dual relationship they held toward China and Japan, and (2) Their later history, including the process by which they became an integral part of the Japanese Empire. There are very few documents extant in modern European languages dealing with the first portion of the subject, and I have relied mainly on two sources.

At the *kencho*, or prefectural office, at Naha, the capital of the islands, there is a history of the Loochoos which is in manuscript. This has been compiled by successive annalists at different times and may be regarded as the official Loochooan history. Through the kindness of the officials at Naha an abstract of this was made for me, which I have had translated and have used as one source. This will

hereafter be referred to as the "Manuscript History." The second set of sources has been found in extracts from the Chinese Imperial History of the Ming Dynasty and from the Chinese work called "The General Survey of Important Historical Facts of the Present Dynasty," translations of which have been made for me by a post-graduate student at the Nanyang College. For the later period a number of documents exist in modern European languages, and interesting side-lights are thrown on the subject by the book in Chinese, recently published, entitled "The Miscellaneous Letters and Dispatches of Li Hung Chang," extracts from which I have also had translated.

The origin of the Loochooans is lost in the mists of obscurity. The "Manuscript History" says that nothing definite can be gathered from the vague record of the past. One thing, however, is certain to any observer who visits the islands—that is, that the inhabitants are not of Malay race. Their character is of sufficient weight as evidence in this regard; for their docility and amiability, and the instances of kindness shown to shipwrecked mariners, are in marked contrast to the more or less cruel and blood-thirsty nature of the Malay, as found in islands further to the south. However, this is a question which can be left to the anthropologist, and we may proceed to the narration of the earliest myths of the Loochooans.

The "Manuscript History" of the Loochoos says that, "According to some records, once in remote antiquity a god and a goddess came down from the castle of Heaven. They had three sons and two daughters. The eldest son was called Tenson, who was the first king of this country. The second son became the first noble and the third son was the first farmer." The two daughters were the first Shinto priestesses. Twenty-five generations descended from

Tenson, and the period of these rulers is called by the annalist the Age of Tenson, which corresponds with the ancient history of foreign countries. Apart from these events, the chronicler says there is no trustworthy record of the era or names of the kings. It is stated, however, that the country was divided into three parts, and the capital was founded with the name of Shuri and a castle was built called the castle of Shuri. The land was divided into districts, and these again into villages. There was an official called an *anzu*, under the direct control of the king, in each *magiri* or district. An official called a *yucho*, under the direct control of the *anzu*, was appointed in each village. There were no regular taxes, but in case of necessity a tax was levied equally upon the people. There were no regular laws, but criminals were dealt with by the village officials. They had the right of appeal, however, to the king, who gave final judgment after consulting with his retainers. Capital punishment was executed by means of an iron awl. Wheat, millet and rice were raised, and it is said that the customs of those early times were cruel and warlike.

The Loochoo Islands lie in the pathway of much larger and stronger nations of the Far East, and very early in their history we find that invasions of their territory occurred. First came the Chinese. The "Manuscript History" states that in the third year of Ta Yeh (大業) [A.D. 607] of the Sui (隋) Dynasty in China, the Emperor Yo, or, in Chinese, Yangti (煬帝), sent out a man to search for foreign lands. This person, accompanied by another, arrived in the Loochoos, but they were unable to understand the language and went back to China, carrying a captive with them. The next year the Emperor Yangti sent again to the Loochoos, advising them to yield. This was refused, and the Chinese Emperor sent an

army with other leaders, who defeated the Loochooans and returned to China with about a thousand captives.

Now turning to the Chinese records, we find it stated in the Ming Dynasty history that Loochoo never had communications with China before the Yuen Dynasty. In the "General Survey of Important Historical Facts of the Present Dynasty," however, it is said that the Loochoos are mentioned in history in the Wei (魏) and Tsin (晉) Dynasties, and that, during the Sui (隋) Dynasty, the first Chinese were sent to the Loochoos. In the note at the end of the same, a General, named Zen Ling (陳稜), is mentioned as having been sent across the seas to the Loochoos by the Emperor Yangti, of the Sui Dynasty. This man's name is the same as that of one of the leaders of the third expedition, sent by the Emperor Yangti, mentioned in the "Manuscript History." Thus it would seem that it was in A.D. 607, during the Sui Dynasty, that the first recorded invasion of the Loochoos by China took place. This date was about contemporaneous with the rise of Mohammed in more Western history.

There are vague references to intercourse between China and the Loochoos during the T'ang and Sung Dynasties, and Chinese history states that during the Yuen Dynasty the islands were asked to become a dependency of China, but it was not until later in history that a definite relationship was established.

The other great Far Eastern Empire, Japan, appears on the scene, for it is said that Tadahiro Shimadzu, the ancestor of the Daimyo of Satsuma in Southern Japan, was made lord of the "twelve islands of the South Sea," and this territory included Okinawa, or Loochoo, but the ties between Japan and the Loochoos did not become very close until long afterward. Meanwhile, the later kings of Tenson's Dynasty in the islands became less and less powerful and a new line

started with King Shunten. This King ascended the throne in A.D. 1189. He was the son of the celebrated Tametomo, of the Minamoto clan of Japanese history, and we may digress for a space to see how that leader reached the Loochoos. The beginnings of the Japanese influence in the Loochoos, it will be seen, occurred during the period of the Southern Sung Dynasty in China and are contemporaneous with Richard the Lion-Hearted of England and the Third Crusade of European history.

It will be remembered that in the Middle Ages of Japan, two strong clans, the Minamoto and the Taira, struggled with each other for supremacy, and the conflict finally culminated in the great naval battle at Dan-noura, near the western extremity of the Inland Sea, in which the Taira clan was completely conquered. Prior to this, however, the Minamoto had been defeated in a battle in A.D. 1156. Tametomo, the mighty warrior of this clan, in whom we are interested, was descended from a former Emperor of Japan and was famous for great strength and for his skill in archery. After the defeat of his clan he had escaped to the island of Hachijo and thence had made his way to the Loochoos. The reputed arrow of Tametomo is still shown at a temple near Naha in the islands. The Japanese historians say that Tametomo brought the *kana* characters, or Japanese alphabetical system of writing, to the Loochoos, and a Chinese historian says that Tametomo's son, King Shunten, gave that system to the people.

In regard to the Taira clan, which, as has been said, was finally defeated at the great naval battle, it is said that a remnant of the fugitives escaped to Kyushu, in southern Japan, and there is a tradition in the Loochoos that some of them reached the island of Yonakuni in that group, where they settled down.

There is a quaint story in the "Manuscript History" of the Loochoos, in regard to Tametomo and his wife, which suggests a Far Eastern Jonah, and I give it here verbatim as follows: "Tametomo came to the islands in order to escape from some trouble and married a younger sister of an *anzu* (that is, official) of Taira. She gave birth to a boy called Souton. Afterward, intending to return home, Tametomo set sail with his family. The party encountered a typhoon, which endangered the boat until it almost overturned. All the sailors said to Tametomo that the Dragon God (龍神) made this wind blow because there was a female on the boat, and asked him to send her ashore in order to save their lives. Tametomo was obliged to land her with her son Souton at the place called Makimate and sailed away. The woman with her little son went to Urazeye and spent some time there in a humble cottage." This young lad Souton afterward ascended the throne of the Loochoos as King Shunten, as we have already seen.

Later on in the "Manuscript History" we read of a king named Eiso, of the blood of the first king Tenson, who obtained the throne after the abdication of King Shogen, because the latter considered that a famine and pestilence, which had prevailed in the islands during his reign, were due to his lack of virtue. During the reign of Eiso [A.D. 1260], a Buddhist Temple was constructed and a priest appointed to take charge, although we read much later [in the year A.D. 1603] of the Buddhist prayer called Nembutsu as being first introduced into the islands by a Buddhist priest from Japan. King Gijokujo, who ascended the throne in A.D. 1314, was careless of the government, and three kingdoms were established, for we read of the King of Sannan and the King of Sanhoku as well as of the monarch of the original government, now called

the King of Chusan. These correspond to the divisions spoken of by the Chinese Ming historian as Shang Nan (山南), "Southern Mountain," Shang Peh (山北) "Northern Mountain" and Chung Shan (中山) "Middle Mountain." But these dissensions in the islands made it easy for the Emperor of the newly established dynasty of the Mings in great China to begin to interfere. The Ming Dynasty began in A.D. 1368, and in A.D. 1371 the Ming Emperor, T'ai Tsu (太祖) or Hung Wu, sent an envoy to the Loochoos to demand submission, and the king acknowledged himself to be a subject of China and sent tribute to the Emperor. As the Chinese historian of the Ming Dynasty quaintly records, "In the first moon of the 5th year of Hung Wu, the first Ming Emperor, an ambassador was appointed, named Yang Tsa (楊載), to go to the Loochoos to tell them about the accession of the Chinese Emperor. Tsi Don (察度), the King of Chung Shan, appointed his brother Tai Ge (泰期) and some other officials to go with Yang Tsa to China to pay audience to the Emperor. They presented China with many kinds of products from their country as tribute. The Chinese Emperor was then so glad that he ordered his officials to give to the Loochoos the Chinese calendar and many kinds of fine coloured cloth woven from a mixture of silk and cotton." At another time the Emperor gave to the envoy cloth, chinaware and iron articles, and the Chinese sent chinaware and iron goods to the Loochoos in exchange for horses. But the envoy said that the Loochoos did not care for the cloth but would like chinaware and iron kettles, so that "from that time the Chinese gifts to the Loochoos were mostly chinaware and kettles." Later on, in A.D. 1391, the Emperor T'ai Tsu sent thirty-six families of the name Bing (閩人) to the islands, some of whose descendants are still found at Kumemura,

a suburb of Naha. When a new king succeeded to the throne of the Loochoos in A.D. 1396, his appointment was received from the Chinese Emperor. These events in the Orient were occurring during the period occupied by the Hundred Years' War in European history.

It is necessary to bear in mind that suzerainty, in the Chinese conception of the term, involved something entirely different from the European idea of that political condition. China was like the Roman Empire when it had conquered the Western World, in that China was not yet acquainted with any rival for power in the Eastern World. In European history even the mildest form of continuous interference in the affairs of another country aims at control, or at least at influence, as is shown by the words themselves, "spheres of influence" and "protectorates." This is because various rivals, more or less equal, have struggled to extend their sway or influence over outside peoples. But with China the philosophy of the situation was entirely different. She had no rivals. Hence why should she trouble herself to control or influence peoples on the fringes of the world. It was, as has been well shown, her ideal to be the teacher of her civilization to these peoples and not to be their ruler or their protector. She was content as long as tribute came from them as an acknowledgment of her superiority as a teacher. When Japan appears again in a later act of the Loochooan drama we shall find that she entertained the usually received European conception of suzerainty, and hence a conflict of ideas arose between China and Japan.

To resume our narrative, a strong king, Hashi, arose in the Loochoos, who combined again into one state the three separate kingdoms which had arisen. To this king the Ming Emperor Hsüan Tsung gave, in A.D. 1430, the

family name of Sho, which continued to be used by the Loochooan kings. The further records of the Ming Dynasty history are filled with references to tribute from Loochoo, to gifts from the Chinese Emperors and to the arrival of Loochooan students to study in the universities of China. That the islanders also had some slight relations with far-lying countries is proved by the fact that references are made in the "Mauscript History" to a Siamese ship which came to the Loochoos to trade, to the sailing of an interpreter in A.D. 1467, and to a voyage of one hundred men to Malacca in A.D. 1503.

Again Japan appears on the scene of action. We must remember that it was during the Middle Ages of her history, and among the great feudal lords, the Daimyo of Satsuma was very powerful. By the geographical position of that fief, situated as it is in the south of Japan near the Loochoos, a great interest would be felt in those islands. In the year A.D. 1609 we find that the Daimyo of Satsuma, Iyehisa Shimadzu, obtained permission from the Shogun to conquer the Loochoos. He sent his forces, commanded by his two generals Kabayama and Hirata, and invaded the islands. The Loochooans were defeated and their king was carried away captive to Satsuma. He was cordially treated there and later on returned to the Loochoos. The Japanese Daimyo established a local government in the islands, took a census, surveyed the lands and collected taxes from the inhabitants. After this we find a state of dual dependence of the Loochoos both on China and on Japan. The Loochooans were content with this double allegiance, saying that they regarded China as their father and Japan as their mother. But it was an ambiguous condition of affairs, which was liable to breed trouble, as we shall see in the sequel. In order to fix the time in our minds, on a peg, as

it were, of Western history, it will be remembered that Jamestown in Virginia was founded by the English in the year 1607 and that the adventures of Captain John Smith took place at about this date. The Ming Dynasty in China was drawing near its end, and while we read the record in the dynastic history of the coming of the Japanese to the Loochoos, no effective protest was made, and China seemed content as long as she continued to receive her own tribute from the islanders.

In the records of the early period of the present dynasty we read of Loochooan students coming to China as under the Mings. During the reign of K'ang Hsi a Confucian Temple was built near Naha, and the natives continued to show fondness for Chinese literature. K'ang Hsi also established a Confucian school in the islands and helped them in many ways. On the other hand, the dual relationship still continued, for the Japanese historians tell us that while China sent an envoy at every coronation of a Loochooan king, yet the Loochooans also sent an envoy and an assistant envoy to Yedo to thank the Japanese for the accession to the throne. In Chinese history we read that, at a certain period, while the Loochooans had formerly sent as tribute gold and silver cups, gilded fans, spices, armour, swords, etc., the tribute was then fixed to be horses, sulphur, red copper, winkle shells, etc., although later on horses were exempted.

One passage of the Chinese historian is worthy of being transferred to this paper. After a voyage to the islands, the Chinese ambassadors reported that birds had been seen flying alongside the ship and two fishes swimming on either side of the ship, so that they could be considered as giving a welcome to the ambassadors of the Emperor of China. Furthermore, the waves and winds stopped in certain places where the ship passed, and this, the ambassadors averred, was

due to the goodness and merit of the Emperor, which had appealed to God himself. Moreover, since the Emperor's own handwriting was on board, God had favoured them, they said, with good fortune, and they concluded, "Kindly order your officers to put this down in the Imperial History."

A long period now elapses, filled with the records of the accessions and deaths of Loochooan kings. The "Manuscript History" ends with the accession of King Sho Iku in 1835 and concludes with the words "Since his reign European and American ships have made frequent visits." A number of foreign ships touched at the islands, and these travellers have left us accounts of what they saw there. We thus come to the time when the nations of the modern world first learned about the Loochoos.

When the guns of Perry's Expedition came thundering at the gates of Japan, with a message which was to bring a new era to the Land of the Rising Sun, the Loochoo Islands became a rendezvous for the American ships, and, in the narrative of that voyage we find a store of useful information about the group. Commodore Perry had proposed to occupy ports in the islands, but fortunately for the future of international relations this plan was not carried out. Dr. S. Wells Williams was the interpreter for Perry's Expedition, and the celebrated writer and traveller, Bayard Taylor, accompanied it. Much assistance was received from the missionary, Dr. Bettelheim, who resided in the islands at that period and whom other travellers also mention.

After the Mikado had been restored to supreme authority in Japan a new age dawned, when ambitious thoughts of a mighty destiny in the the Far East began to stir in the breasts of the Japanese, and we find that the Loochooans were forbidden to send their annual tribute to China. We can

regard this as the beginning of the second and later portion of Loochooan history.

It has been reserved for a later generation in China to feel the impulse of the new ideas coming from the Occident, and that Empire continued in the unfortunate sleep of the Middle Ages during this critical period in the history of the Loochoos. Hence, when the trouble arose over the dual relationship of the islands to the two great empires of the Far East, we find China inert and acquiescent, still holding her original theory of suzerainty, while Japan, energetic and awake, changed this uncertain condition of the group into a definite direct relation as a dependency of her own Empire only. Let us study the process, accounts of which are given by Professor Ariga in the recent work, edited by Alfred Stead, entitled "Japan by the Japanese," and by M. Henri Cordier in his "Histoire des Relations de la Chine, etc." It must be remembered that there might have been danger of some strong European Power seizing the Loochoos in case the problem still remained unsolved, and, furthermore, that there was an economic cause for Japan's interest in the islands, as she took nearly all the produce of sugar exported from the group.

In December 1871 a Loochooan junk was stranded on the southern coast of Formosa. There were sixty-six natives of Loochoo who composed the crew, and of these fifty-four were killed by the Botan savages. The Loochooan Government asked for the protection of Japan. In September 1872 the new king of the Loochoos, Sho Tai, was requested to send a member of his family to Tokyo to announce his accession and to congratulate the Mikado on his restoration to power. When the mission came to Japan the king was recognized as King of Loochoo by the Japanese Imperial Government and was made one of the peers of Japan. According to law, all

the peers must reside at Tokyo, and therefore a house was given him at the capital and a sum of 30,000 yen was granted to him. Loochoo had a national debt of 200,000 yen. New bonds were issued to cancel this debt, which were guaranteed by the Japanese Imperial Department of Finance. The European Powers and America had in general regarded Loochoo as independent and had made treaties with her. The United States had made such a treaty in 1854. The American Minister at Tokyo, in view of the changed condition of affairs, asked the Japanese Government if Japan intended to bear the international responsibilities of Loochoo. The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, in reply, stated that Loochoo had been a dependency of Japan, but by the recent transformation had been changed into a province, and that Japan would keep it intact and assume all its obligations. Other nations agreed to this new relationship of Loochoo, but the question of the attitude of China still remained open, as she could raise claims on account of the dual dependency which existed.

The murder of Loochooans by the savages in Formosa in 1871 has already been mentioned. The Japanese Government ascertained verbally that the Chinese Government did not object to calling the natives of Loochoo Japanese subjects, and, furthermore, would not object if a Japanese force was sent to Formosa to punish the savages there. It was, moreover, a question whether the Formosan savages could be considered as being under Chinese jurisdiction, or whether this part of Formosa was a kind of No-man's-land. Accordingly in 1874 an expeditionary force was prepared to be sent to Formosa, but it seemed that China would now make a protest. Then a step was taken which for a time, in the initial stages, somewhat resembled the attitude of the statesman Cavour towards Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily during the welding

of modern Italy in recent European history, that is, ostensibly disregarding it while at the same time not effectively hindering it. The Government at Tokyo, wishing to avoid international complications, commanded Yorimichi Saigo, the nephew of the great Saigo, who was the commander of the expedition, not to depart. Saigo, however, refused to listen, and said that in case of need the Japanese Government could say that he was acting without the consent of the Government. The Japanese Government, however, took the responsibility and the expedition sailed for Formosa. A detailed account of its operations there and the punishment of the savages will be found in Hon. James W. Davidson's book "The Island of Formosa, Past and Present."

China protested, and for a time it appeared that war was imminent between China and Japan. The Japanese Government then appointed Minister Okubo, Minister Plenipotentiary to China, and through his efforts and the mediation of Mr. Wade, British Minister in Peking (afterwards Sir Thomas Wade) the crisis was tided over and an agreement between the two empires was signed at Tientsin on the 31st October 1874. It is as follows, and the important phrases bearing on the status of the Loochoos are italicized:—

"AGREEMENT.

"[Preamble.] Whereas, Okubo, High Commissioner Plenipotentiary of Japan, Sangi, Councillor of State and Secretary of the Interior Department [on the one part], and [names of Prince Kung and nine other Chinese officials] of the Tsung li Yamen of China [on the other part], having discussed the subject of Articles of Agreement and fixed the manner of their settlement; and it having been understood that the subjects of every nation must be duly protected from injury; that therefore every nation may take efficient measures

for the security of its subjects; that if anything [injurious] happen within the limits of any State, that State should undertake the duty of reparation; that the aborigines of Formosa formerly committed outrages upon *subjects of Japan*; that Japan sent troops for the sole purpose of inflicting punishment on these aborigines, and that the troops are to be withdrawn, China assuming the responsibility of measures for the future; therefore, the following Articles have been drawn up and agreed upon:—

Article I.

"The present enterprise of Japan is a just and rightful proceeding, to *protect her own subjects*, and China does not designate it as a wrong action.

Article II.

"A sum of money shall be given by China for relief to the families of *the shipwrecked [Japanese] subjects* that were maltreated. Japan has constructed roads and built houses, etc. in that place. China, wishing to have the use of these for herself, agrees to make payment for them. The amount is determined by a special document.

Article III.

"All the official correspondence hitherto exchanged between the two States shall be returned [mutually] and be annulled, to prevent any future misunderstanding. As to the savages, China engages to establish authority, and promises that navigators shall be protected from injury by them.

CONTRACT.

"With regard to the question of Formosa, Mr. Wade, H.B.M.'s Minister, having spoken on the subject to the two parties, they, the said Commissioners of the two nations, have arranged for settlement, thus:—

"I.—China agrees that she shall pay the sum of one hundred thousand taels, for relief to the families of *the subjects of Japan* who were murdered.

"II.—China wishes that, after Japan shall have withdrawn her troops, all the roads that have been repaired and all the houses that have been built, etc. shall be retained for her use; at the same time consenting to pay the sum of four hundred thousand taels by way of recompense; and it is agreed that Japan shall withdraw all her troops, and China shall pay the whole amount without fail, by the 20th day of December, the seventh year of Meiji, with Japan, or on the 22nd day of the eleventh moon, the thirteenth year of Tung Chi, with China; but, in the event of Japan not withdrawing her troops, China shall not pay the amount.

"This settlement having been concluded, each party has taken one copy of the contract as voucher."

From the above it will be seen that China acknowledged the Loochooans as subjects of Japan, without making any reference to the islands as a dependency of China, and they were treated by Japan henceforth as her own territory only.

The Loochooans objected at first to this condition of affairs and still wished the dual dependency to continue. Appeals were made to foreign Powers, including China, but none of them interfered, and China herself, becoming involved with Russia over the Kuldja incident, made no effective protest. General Grant, who was at this time on a tour around the world, used his influence in 1879 toward avoiding a conflict between China and Japan over the question; and although we find many references, in Li Hung Chang's Letters and Dispatches, to the islands, nothing definite was done by China to revive her claims, which she had tacitly given up by the Agreement of 1874. In these Letters and Dispatches of

Li Hung Chang the assertion is made that General Grant promised Li to use his good offices toward arbitration in case China would prohibit the emigration of laborers to San Francisco for a certain period of time.

An attempt was made a little later to revise the unsatisfactory treaty of 1871 between China and Japan (not the Formosan Agreement of 1874), and the Japanese, while holding to their original contention that the Loochoos were an internal domestic affair of their own, proposed to cede to China two islands of the group, namely Miyako and Yayeyama, which lie near Formosa, in return for treaty revision allowing greater facilities for Japanese trade in the interior of China. A conference was held at Peking, but some hitch occurred in the negotiations, it being related that, at the last moment, the Chinese plenipotentiary said that he could not make a conclusive agreement without referring to some other dignitaries, and the matter was not discussed any further by Japan.

The last king of the Loochoos died recently in Tokyo, and no successor has been appointed. The natives of the islands were in favour of China up to the period of the Chino-Japanese War, but since that time they have been very loyal to Japan. Their devotion to that Empire is now undoubted, and with the progress of the Japanese language, Japanese education and manners and customs in the Loochoos, they seem in a fair way to be completely assimilated in time.