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Report on the Central Silk Districts of Japan

Author(s): Mr. Adams

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MR. ADAMS'S *Report on the Central Silk Districts of Japan.* 339

On the south side of the Pangani River, the Wasegura people (Wasegua of Wakefield), met with by Burton and Speke in their journey to Fuga, appear to have advanced up the valley of the M'Komafi tributary of the Pangani, to as far as Gonja and Baramo, and the lower country between Pare and Usambara.

The Wandorobo, a vassal people to the Masai, are scattered in permanent villages over the central table-land.

XII.—*Report on the Central Silk Districts of Japan.* By
MR. ADAMS, Secretary to H. M. Legation in Japan.

Yeddo, Aug. 7, 1869.

I LEFT Yeddo on the 22nd of June, 1869, accompanied by Messrs. Davison, Piquet, and Brunat, silk-inspectors, belonging to three different firms in Yokohama, and by Mr. Wilkinson, of this legation, as interpreter.

We travelled on horseback, and, as has been usual in the expeditions into the interior of Japan, which have been taken from time to time of late years by members of the diplomatic body, we were attended by a mounted escort, consisting of ten yakunins, supplied by the Government. One or two of their number started before us in the morning, and gave warning of our approach to the officials of each post-town in the day's route. Much trouble was thus avoided with respect to the transport of our baggage and provisions, and on reaching our resting-place for the night we found the officials and the keepers of the "honjin," or hotels, prepared to receive us.

On the road we met with great civility, both from the retainers of Daimios through whose territories we passed, and from the yakunins of the post-towns and villages. Our escort were also uniformly attentive to our wants, and the Government had even inserted in the 'Official Gazette' a formal notice of our intended journey.

In order to show our route more clearly, I annex a tracing of a Japanese map.* The original map, though not strictly accurate, is sufficiently so for the present purpose. I also annex a table containing the names of a number of towns and villages through which we passed, and the distance between them in "ri," as nearly as they can well be computed from the do-chiu-ki, or road-books. A "ri" is calculated to be 2.442268 English miles, so that during our journey we rode from 280 to

* This refers to the map in the original Report; the map annexed to this paper has been constructed on the basis of the Admiralty Surveys.—[Ed.]

290 miles. Owing to the practical knowledge of my companions, and to their acquaintance with Japanese merchants at each of the principal silk depôts, we experienced little delay in obtaining the information we desired, and we were thus enabled to cover a large extent of ground in the fortnight.

Before proceeding farther, I wish to state that I am indebted in a very great measure for the substance of this Report to my three companions, Messrs. Davison, Piquet, and Brunat, they having kindly placed at my disposal the copious and valuable notes which they had collected. Mr. Wilkinson acted as our interpreter, and I am sure that I am expressing the sentiments of the rest of the party by testifying to the ability and willingness with which he discharged his task.

The silk districts of Japan are confined to the principal island, and may be divided into three groups: the Northern, designated under the general name of Oshiu; the South-Western, including those of Echizen, Sodai, Mashita, &c.; and the Central (the object of our journey), which produces the Mayebashi, Shinshiu, and other varieties of hank silks, as well as the silks of Kôshiu and Hachôji.

We found the worms in general in the chrysalis state, and saw numbers of trays of cocoons baking in the sunny streets. Still, near the borders of Musashi and Jôshiu, and on the 30th of June at Kaminosuwa, in Shinshiu, we observed some late worms in the stage between the third and fourth casting of the skin. At Annaka, in Jôshiu (26th June), many were just ready to spin. At Uyeda (28th and 29th June), and other places in Shinshiu, and in parts of Kôshiu (first days of July), the moths were beginning to emerge from the cocoons, and to lay their eggs. Reeling was going on almost everywhere. In Musashi, Jôshiu, Shinshiu, and Sagami, is produced the greater part of the class of silk which is tied up in hanks, and sold under the name of Shinshiu and Mayebashi hanks. In Kôshiu the silk was formerly always made up in bundles; but since the decided preference shown by foreigners for the above two descriptions of hanks, much of the Kôshiu silk is made up in that form, instead of in bundles as before.

It has long been known that some regions of Japan are more favourable than others for the production of eggs. Mountainous districts, at a distance from the sea, appear to be the most propitious; and the Japanese rearers of silkworms, whom we questioned on the subject, invariably informed us that their seed came mostly from Shinshiu. None but the poorer class of peasants, as for example those in Kôshiu, rear silkworms hatched from their own eggs; so that in general the silk of the five provinces in question may be said to have a common origin,

and the seed to be renewed year after year from Shinshiu. The difference in the quality manifestly results from the difference in climate and soil, and in the culture of the mulberry, the rearing of the worm, and the reeling of the silk.

Our route to Mayebashi lay through an extensive and well-cultivated plain, among the products of which are rice, both paddy and upland, grain, buckwheat, hemp, rape, and a great variety of beans and other vegetables. We first observed the mulberry some 12 ri from Yeddo, in the neighbourhood of Konosu; and we subsequently met with it almost universally, except upon certain high levels, where the Japanese had doubtless found by experience that the cultivation of its leaf, and the rearing of the worm, were rendered too uncertain by the frequent variations in the temperature. Near the borders of Musashi and Jôshiu the soil became more sandy and stony, and the country is traversed by a number of streams, mostly of little depth. We crossed the broad River Tone, the largest in the Kwantô, and then visited Mayebashi and Takasaki, the headquarters of the Jôshiu silk district. The former town is the seat of the Daimio Matsudaira Yamata no Kami, from whose retainers we experienced marked civility.

At Mayebashi we were conducted to a house where an office (Aratami Sho) has been recently established for the inspection of the silk of this Daimio's territory. We were told that there were fifteen merchants in the town, and seventeen in the country round about; that they formed a species of guild; and that they bought all the silk which was reeled in the territory. This silk, we were informed, was henceforward to be inspected at the office, where all foul hanks would be rejected, and a distinguishing mark put upon the remainder, which would then be despatched to Yokohama, to a newly-appointed agent of the name of Hikishimaya. After my return, when in Yokohama, I met this agent, and ascertained that he had already established himself there for the purpose above-mentioned.

After visiting Tagasaki we left the plain and entered a mountainous region, which we did not finally quit till we approached Hachôji on the 5th of July. As we rode up the valley to the Usui Tôge we observed a much larger quantity of the mulberry; the trees bordered many of the fields, and occupied the whole of some. They were larger than most of those which we had already seen, varying from 3 to 6 feet high, some being even considerably taller. The aspect of the country, with its sandy, stony soil, and its hilly character, reminded my French companions of that in which silkworms are reared in France.

After crossing the Usui Tôge, a high pass which divides Jôshiu from Shinshiu, we proceeded down a valley to Uyeda,

one of the centres of the renowned silk district of Shinshiu. The town is situated in a large basin, which is bounded by hills of considerable height, some snowy summits appearing in the distance. The River Chikuma flows past it and falls into the Aka, one of the largest rivers in Japan, which runs into the sea at Neegata. The air in the whole of this high level was clear and bracing, and there was a healthier look about the inhabitants. Large tracts of land are devoted to the culture of the mulberry in the immediate neighbourhood of Uyeda.

In the little village of Nagase, which we passed soon after leaving Uyeda, all the silkworm cards are fabricated during the spring. The season was over for this year. Our route to Kôfu, the capital of Kôshiu, was by rough, stony roads, across the Wada Tôge to Kaminosuwa, where we received much attention from the retainers of Suwa Inaba no Kami, the Daimio of Takashima. Thence we continued through poorly cultivated valleys, which abounded in huge boulders, and where the broad, rocky beds of the streams, and strong stone breakwaters running out from the banks, testified to the violence of the torrents in rainy seasons.

Kôfu, the centre of the Kôshiu silk district, is situated in a large plain, surrounded by mountains. It is a town of some extent, and possesses one of the castles lately belonging to the Shôgun, but now held in trust for the Mikado by the Daimio Akidzuke Ukiô no Ske, President of the House of Representatives sitting in Yeddo. The plain is full of paddy; and when we were leaving it, and began to ascend again, we came upon a quantity of vines, trained on horizontal trellis-frames, which rested on poles at a height of 7 or 8 feet from the ground. Crystals are found in some of the surrounding hills.

The quality of Kôshiu silk has been found to vary considerably in different years, and even that of a single year is often of several qualities. The cause of this is manifestly to be sought in the climate. Mist covered the tops of the mountains during all the time we spent in this province—a contrast to the clear weather we had enjoyed at Shinshiu. Such a misty atmosphere in April and May, combined with the sudden returns of cold so common in this country, cannot but be prejudicial both to the culture of the mulberry and the rearing of the worm. The cocoons which we examined at Kôshiu were often of an inferior description; the villages are poorer, and the inhabitants have a less healthy appearance than those of the more favoured Shinshiu. We continued our journey through hilly country, and over two passes, till on 5th July we dropped down into the plain, and arrived at the well-known town of Hachôji, within the Treaty limits.

On the 6th July I returned to Yeddo, and my companions to Yokohama.*

TABLE OF ROUTE.

							Ri	chō.
<i>Nakasendō</i> —								
June 22.	Yeddo to Warabi	..	..	..	..	..	4	8
23.	Warabi to Kōnosu	..	..	..	..	..	6	22
24.	Kōnosu to Kumagaye	..	..	..	..	..	4	8
<i>Cross road</i> —								
June 25.	Kumagaye to Sakaimachi	..	..	..	..	..	7	0
25.	Sakaimachi to Mayebashi	..	..	..	..	..	6	18
<i>Nakasendō</i> —								
June 26.	Mayebashi to Takasaki	..	..	..	..	..	3	0
26.	Takasaki to Annaka	..	..	..	..	..	2	24
27.	Annaka to Oiwake	..	..	..	..	..	9	24
<i>Echigo road</i> —								
June 28.	Oiwake to Uyeda	..	..	..	..	..	8	0
29.	Uyeda to Oya	..	..	..	..	..	1	18
<i>Cross road</i> —								
June 29.	Oya to Nagakubo	..	..	..	..	..	3	18
<i>Nakasendō</i> —								
June 29.	Nagakubo to Wada	..	..	..	..	..	2	0
30.	Wada to Shimonosuwa	..	..	..	..	..	5	8
30.	Shimonosuwa to Kaminosuwa (Takashima)	..	..	..	..	..	1	18
<i>Kōshiukaidō</i> —								
July 1.	Kaminosuwa to Daigahara	..	..	..	..	..	8	28
2.	Daigahara to Kōfu	..	..	..	..	..	7	8
3.	Kōfu to Hanasaki	..	..	..	..	..	10	6
4.	Hanasaki to Yose	..	..	..	..	..	8	23
5.	Yose to Hachōji	..	..	..	..	..	4	17
<i>Cross road</i> —								
July 6.	Hachōji to Haramachida	..	..	..	..	..	5	0
6.	Haramachida to Yeddo	..	..	..	..	..	8	0
							117	32

XIII.—*A Journey to the Western portion of the Celestial Range (Thian-Shan), or "Tsun-Lin" of the Ancient Chinese, from the Western Limits of the Trans-Ili region to Tashkend.* By N. SEVERTSOFF. Translated from the Journal of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, 1867, by ROBT. MICHELL, F.R.G.S.

THE earliest description of the Central Asian Uplands, the northern part of which, between the Chu and Syr-Daria, I surveyed in the year 1864, is to be found in the writings of the Buddhist monk Huen-Tszan, who journeyed through the whole of this region more than a thousand years ago (from 629 to 645 A.D.). I quote him here, because it is difficult to convey in a

* In the original Report of Mr. Adams a detailed account of the mulberry-tree and silkworm follows the above sketch of his journey.—[Ed.]