

THE MALAY PIRATES, WITH A SKETCH OF THEIR SYSTEM AND TERRITORY. *United Service Journal* No. 101, April 1837. COLONIZATION OF THE EASTERN ARCHIPELAGO. *Ibid.* No. 104, July 1837.

Unless the writer of these articles, which are both obviously the production of the same pen, had set out with announcing that he possessed a "practical acquaintance" with the habits and country of the Malays, and that he had been "placed in a situation to see much of their manners and customs," we should certainly never have suspected him of having at any time been a denizen of these regions. As a proof of the accuracy of his observations with regard to external objects, it will be sufficient, we think, to instance his account of the vessels used by the Malays. "The bottom" he says is almost flat—they have only one large sail, composed of thin laths of split bamboo which fall together as they are disengaged, like a Venetian blind—they are such *bulky machines* that beating to windward with them is out of the question—when chased, their only chance of safety is to run before the wind, and their appearance is literally that of floating hen-coops! Such is his description of the prahus of these Malayan pirates whose exploits he has depicted in such terrific colours—and which would certainly answer quite as well for the description of an ancient Carthaginian galley as for the *Lanchang* and *Camb* of the Malays. In the *cabin* of these vessels too we are told that "the men and cargo are promiscuously stowed." Only imagine the crew of a Malay boat sunk up to their chins in a cargo of a raw sago, or rolling about in one of black pepper, sweltering and choking amid the heat and dust which it emits, and, after paying them a proper tribute of praise for such powers of endurance, who will deny that the individual who witnessed such things must have been "placed in a situation to see" what no body else ever did? In delineating the national character of the Malays, the writer too seems rather to have followed the vulgar opinion prevalent with respect to it, and which has allied their name to every extreme of treachery and ferocity, than to have either drawn from a practical knowledge of the people, or adopted the less prejudiced views of authors who possessed the best means of judging of their actual disposition. The pirates among them, and they abound, are beyond doubt blood-thirsty enough—but where did any one ever hear of pirates who were not remarked for their cruelty? In a national point of view too the Malays, it is undeniable; are easily excited to violence, and prone to revenge under insult, or wrong, actual or supposed; their sanguinary fury, when such instances of provocation occur, often wreaking itself upon every one in their way, and receiving on such occasions the well-known and distinguishing term of *running-a-muck*. But the Malays are notwithstanding morally superior to the Bengalees—they possess frankness and honesty, with a certain simplicity of character—and on many occasions shew themselves sensitive on the point of honor—virtues and qualities which are unknown to the degenerate tribes of Bengal. To affirm, like the writer before us, that "even a domesticated Malay is like a wild beast half-tamed," we should have held to be the rash assertion of one who took the nation by report, or spoke from a few partial facts, and not the sentiment of one who had himself been an observer, and wrote from his own experience. These are opinions which no one carries away with him after a long residence among Malays. This writer indeed pays them the compliment of comparing them with the Northern Sea-kings of the olden time—the worshippers of Thor and Oden—of whom he says "they strikingly remind us"—the unsparing ferocity, chivalrous and unconquerable valour of the ancient Scandinavian *Vi-kinger* being fully exemplified in the person and exploits of the modern Malay free-booter! The latter it appears are notable for their great "spirit of enterprise" and for having occasioned "many a dear-bought victory to the arms and discipline of Europe." Undoubtedly the most exaggerated notions of the character of Malay piracy are not peculiar to the writer in the *United Service Journal*—and in periodical publications much nearer at hand, we have seen the most absurd ideas propagated on the subject—a mere rabble *hufflitt*, for such they are, having been held up to view as a race of free-booters whose daring achievements rivalled or surpassed the most famous exploits of the old dreaded Buccaneers of the Spanish main—quite as fierce a set of fellows, we dare say, as the ancient Sea-kings of the North. We should like however to have seen an instance cited where European arms and discipline were only able to carry away a *dear bought victory* from Malay pirates. Late examples tell a very different tale. During the recent cruises of the *Andromache* and the *Wolf*, not a single case occurred where the combat between the boats of these ships and the pirates was for a moment doubtful, notwithstanding the great superiority in point of numbers which was always on their side. The Malays in fact never

stood up to a regular fight, be their numerical superiority what it might, when they could run away—and when held to bay, and unable to escape our fire, they generally sprung into the water, instead of standing up to return it from their own vessels. Some desperate individual acts on these occasions are only exemplifications of that cat-like valour which will die fighting when driven into a corner. The same superiority of European arms and discipline was exemplified at the other extremity of the Archipelago, when Captain ELLIOT of the Spanish Marine at the Philippines, with only two gun-boats attacked and dispersed a fleet of more than 20 pirate prahus, sinking two of them. Within the last 18 years there is, we believe, only one instance of a vessel in command of Europeans having been attacked at sea and carried by pirates. We allude to the case of the late Mr. THORNTON, off the Java Coast—who was in a small brig which was manned by natives, and it was not until all the ammunition on board was expended that she became a prize—while the instances are numerous in which even native junks and other trading vessels have beaten off a superior force of pirates. The exaggerated reports which have gone abroad as to the formidable character of the Malay pirates are we think only calculated to do mischief. Our free traders from Europe, on their way thro' these Straits and seas, under the influence of these reports, and ignorant of the real state of the fact, either manifest on some occasions a pusillanimity which makes them contemptible—or render themselves ridiculous by pouring their six-pounders into every cock-boat they see, under the mistaken notion that it is a pirate all ready to attack them. These accounts too of the "desperate fury" of the Malays and their "unconquerable valour" would only have the effect of intimidating the crews of our merchant-vessels, few in number as they always are, when a proper occasion for resistance or attack arrived; and, although our ships ought ever to be in a state of preparation, they should know the real state of the fact,—that the Malay pirates are a disorderly and contemptible rabble, who have seldom or never been known to stand the exchange of many hard blows for the sake of booty, & who never would dream of attempting to board a ship at sea manned by Europeans who shewed a resolute bearing. Yet, the dangers of these seas are said by the writer in the *U. S. Journal* to be such as "to raise the rate of insurance"—a statement altogether without foundation, and fit to bear company with the other rhodomontade about the sea-kings of the North. When he adds that "we invariably burn, sink or destroy all Malay vessels that are found with arms on board" he furnishes a further specimen of the sort of information which he possesses as to what is going on in these seas.

Of the religion of the Malays this writer observes. "It has been said their religion is Mahomedan, *however they came by it*"—and he goes on to remark that "like most of their sect, they will drink wine, when it is offered to them, to an immoderate excess" altho' professedly abjuring it. This is a trait which we never before heard ascribed to the Malays—and which our "practical acquaintance" with them has never afforded us an opportunity of seeing displayed, whatever the advantages of this writer's situation may have done for him. We see however that he is puzzled to make out how they came by their religion, and contends that, unless credit be given to some tradition which prevails among them about one *Juhan Shin*, after various conflicts with the Emperor of Hindostan, having finally fixed his throne as first Sultan of the Malays at Acheen, from which they spread themselves over the Archipelago "it will be difficult to account for their being Mahomedans." We certainly do not see why, even were we to dispense with this important tradition altogether, there should be any difficulty in accounting for the introduction of the Mahomedan faith among the Malays—and we are certain that if this writer knew anything at all of the best histories connected with the subject of which he treats, he could not have failed to find this difficulty solved, without the aid of such legendary lore as he places his reliance on. We thought it had long been a settled point that the intercourse between Arabia and the countries of the Archipelago, originating as it no doubt did in commercial objects, was the means of introducing Islamism among the Malays; and that the Arabs were the first Apostles of the true faith in the Eastern Islands—and the writer in the *U. S. Journal* we are sure has the merit of being the only person who at this time of day would venture to raise a *difficulty* on the subject by a reference to the exploded fables of Malayan history.

He considers the Malays to be of Tactar origin, but intimates that opinion is divided on this subject, and that some maintain that the whole of the inhabitants of the Eastern islands are one people and indigen us, and that the Malays are "really of the same stock with the Battas, Laws (where are they?) Dyaks, Papuans, Javanese, and other inhabitants of the interior, who are sunk into the very lowest depths of human ignorance and barbarism"!!! We feel a curiosity to see the works in which such profound and original views are advanced and supported. As to that *practical acquaintance* with the countries and people of the Archipelago which enables a writer to class together the Javanese—the most civilized nation of Polynesia—with the other savage tribes mentioned as "sunk in the lowest depth of human ignorance and barbarism," it certainly cannot be too much admired.

This however is not the only point on which the writer in the *United Service Journal* aims at startling by the novelty of his facts. "There is no doubt" he says, "that the whole of these islands were once under the dominion of China, when they must have

flourished in great prosperity!" An assertion displaying grosser ignorance of the nature of Chinese intercourse with the Archipelago could not be advanced. It may be safely asserted that not one of these islands was ever under the dominion of China—and there is no doubt that the Settlement of the Chinese in most or all of them was posterior to that of the first Europeans, who pioneered the way for them, and that it was in parts of the country under European protection, and thus rendered a safe residence, that they first began to colonise. The commercial intercourse of the Chinese with these islands, it is well authenticated, commenced at a much more remote period—but authentic history proves that their Settlements on *Formosa*, on the *Philippines* and in *Java* were all subsequent to the establishments of the Dutch or Spaniards in these countries. As to their acquiring dominion over the whole Archipelago it must have been in some account.

"More old than Mandeville's, and not so true" that this writer obtained his information of this singular fact—altho' he is more probably indebted for it to his own imagination, prolific as it is of novelties in this department.

In what condition, indeed, to contribute to the information of the public, regarding these countries, can a writer be who says, that "the Dutch compelled the *Javanese* to root up their coffee plantations, their cloves and nutmegs, restraining the cultivation of these valuable plants to their own grounds"! The gentleman has probably heard some story about the Spice islands, but what it is, it were impossible to guess.

Colonization, he says, has been "expressly recommended by Raffles on a large scale" as well on account of the commercial advantages of which it opens the prospect, as being the most effectual means of suppressing piracy and civilizing the inhabitants. The same eminent individual, it appears, also noticed the North East Coast of Borneo, "as a favourable spot for the erection of a line of forts, to control the pirates in their favourite haunts, and to afford the most central position for commerce." These views and opinions of Sir STAMFORD RAFFLES are, it seems, developed in his "*History of Java*" which is quoted and referred to in the course of these articles. That work was published in 1817; and when the author was engaged in its composition it is probable his recollection of the exploits of the piratical state of *Sambas*, which had just then been reduced by our arms, was the cause of his suggesting the selection of a situation on the Coast of Borneo, and the preparation of such formidable means, to check the depredations of these marauders. We have not however at present the means of referring to the work in question, and ascertaining the writer's correctness in attributing such views to Sir STAMFORD RAFFLES. It seems probable, however, that these opinions bore reference to the existing state of circumstance at the time when he wrote—as at a later period (1824) we find him expressing different opinions. "Our object," he writes, "is not territory but trade—a great commercial emporium and a *Jalorath*, whence we may extend our influence politically, as circumstances may hereafter require." This was written in reference to the occupation of Singapore—a place of which it does not appear the writer in the *United Service Journal* has ever heard—it is not mentioned by name, and there is no allusion whatever to it in the course of the two articles in question. In fact, as he is all along speculating on the probability of his scheme of colonization effecting these commercial objects which the establishment of Singapore already has actually accomplished, it is scarcely possible to believe that he knows anything about it—but the extent of his ignorance on this point is next to a demonstration when he instances "the flourishing state of *Penang* as an existing proof of what might be expected from a settlement formed upon a more liberal basis"—than *Balambangan* abandoned in 1775! When he proposes too that our naval squadron should "range along the whole length of coast and seize upon and occupy certain favorable station"—to maintain ourselves in which African or Chingalise regiments are to be raised—he has altogether overlooked a certain well-known (we don't mean to this writer) Treaty concluded in 1824, between their Britannic and Netherlands Majesties, by which the whole length of coast "from the Straits of Sunda to the Philippines" is not quite left at our option to choose certain favourable stations on—inasmuch as by the 9th Article of the said Treaty, we are completely that out from *Sumatra*,—and by the 12th Article, from the *Carimons, Bultam, Bintang, Lingin* and "all the other islands south of the Straits of Singapore," with the chiefs of whom the same Article stipulates that we shall not even conclude a treaty! But for colonization on an extensive scale we have still plenty of room left, were it advisable to commence with such a system—a view in which we certainly cannot concur. There are moral as well physical difficulties in the way—some of which could not perhaps be overcome at all, and the least of which would require an expense more than commensurate with the objects that now remain to be attained. But these observations have already run to too great a length to permit us to enter into any details—altho' at a future period we shall probably resume the subject. With regard to the two articles from the *United Service Journal* which we have had under consideration, we should certainly not have thought the observations and opinions contained in them worthy of notice or refutation, did they not appear in a popular periodical publication, which only serves to disseminate more widely the erroneous notions they embody. When such accounts of these countries can go down at home, it is surely time for Mr. CRAWFORD to be again at work—and give another edition of his "*Indian Archipelago*" to the world.