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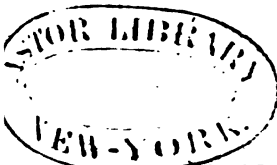
**MONTHLY REGISTER**

FOR

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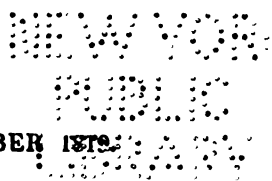
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1819.

## ORIENTAL COMMENTARY ON A EUROPEAN CRITIQUE.

A critique in the *Edinburgh Review*, No. 57, art. 2, on Major Thorn's *Memoir of the Conquest of Java, with the Subsequent Operations of the British Forces in the Oriental Archipelago*, has had the fortune to attract the attention of the editors of two Indian papers successively, one of which is published at Bombay, the other at Madras. The article in the review having introduced the book to notice, and alluded to the two grand subjects on which the narrative dilates, candidly prepares the reader for a transition :

"We will fairly confess, however, that it is not with these topics that we now propose to busy ourselves; and that we have inserted the title of Major Thorn's book, chiefly to have an apology for discoursing a little about Java, under other relations, and with a view to other objects than those with which he is occupied."

The Reviewer then enters upon a sketch of the commerce of the Indian islands; which the two Bombay and Madras editors have copied into their respective prints, less for the purpose of criticising the Reviewer's dissertation than to convey information to their readers. At the same time, conceiving some of the passages cited to involve partial mistakes, they annex corrections of these incidental lapses in the form of notes. As their commentary may be useful in this country, where the text only is easily accessible, we subjoin extracts from the corresponding parts of both publications.

TEXT.—Without pretending to a very complete or minute enumeration, we may observe, in the way of general description, that the Indian islands trade with each other, with (a) China and Japan—with what Dr. Leyden terms the Hindo-Chinese nations of the Continent—with Persia and Arabia—and with Europe and America. Each of these branches of trade will demand a few observations.

COMMENTARY.—(a) Now all persons not acquainted with these islands or the character of the natives, must conclude that they send out their fleets to all these places: this is by no means the case; their proas are seen at Malacca, and Penang, Timor, Batavia, and at Magindano, and they sometimes visit Tringano: but here is the extent of the trade of the Indian Islands, as far as regards their own trade; but that they are visited by English, Dutch, Americans, Arabs, and Chinese for that purpose is well known, and that the Chinese, who have settled extensively among them, build junks of 500

tons for the China trade, and also trade largely in vessels half Malay half Chinese, among the islands, to Malacca, Penang, and even to the Gulph of Carpenteria, in search of Trepaug, or sea slug. *Madras Editor.*

TEXT.—To a careless observer there will probably appear little difference in the state of society among the numerous nations or tribes which inhabit this vast Archipelago; and he may not perhaps think of looking for any extraordinary varieties of climate and production in countries all situated within about eight degrees of the equator. A very little attention, however, will soon discover, even in this comparatively narrow range, many degrees of social existence, and a curious diversity of climate and production.

The population of these islands may, in a commercial view, be enumerated as follow; viz. the agricultural tribes, who provide all the commodities not furnished by the spontaneous bounty of nature, and who, as there are scarcely any manufacturers, may be reckoned the most civilized of the natives; the maritime tribes, the most turbulent and enterprising; the savages, who till they can be tamed are oftener destructive than serviceable to commerce; and the foreign settlers, who may be looked on as the brokers and wholesale merchants in the great traffic which is driven from one end of the archipelago to the other.

Among the agricultural nations may be reckoned some of the greater tribes in the interior of Sumatra; the people of Bali and Lombok; and, above all, the bulk of the population in the fertile island of Java. The navigators, or maritime tribes (b), comprehend all the nations which speak the Malay language, and the greater portion of the spirited and enterprising population of Celebes.

COMMENTARY.—(b) The maritime tribes comprise indeed the whole of the *Bugis* population; not a man among them that does not understand the use of the plough and spade, of the oar and rudder, as well as of the lance and creese. *Madras Editor.*

TEXT.—The more improved tribes, or those fixed to the soil, supply the maritime or less improved tribes (c) with such productions as imply a superiority of skill and industry—such as corn, cotton-wool, cotton-cloths, salt and tobacco. All these articles, when exported, bring an advance, according to circumstances, of from one to three hundred per cent.

The productions which the less improved tribes supply in exchange, are either in their under-state, or little altered by labour; such as gold-dust, rough

diamonds, cloves and nutmegs, benjamin, and gambir or catechu, the inspissated juice of a plant which is eaten with the betel-nut, and constitutes, indeed, from its universal use, one of the most considerable articles of native commerce.

COMMENTARY.—(c) This is so very contrary to what we believe to be the fact, and so opposite to any thing we have ourselves witnessed, that we must say they have derived their information from not very authentic sources. The maritime Bugis is polite, affable, and well informed, inquisitive, curious, and high minded; and on his return to his native village is considered as much superior to the untravelled as possible. The chiefs of several of the Bugis villages, on the Celebes have been nacadahs of proas; and in general we may pronounce the maritime Bugis as superior to the other class of his countrymen. This is not said from vague information or prejudiced reasoning, but from personal acquaintance with several correct and well informed men of this tribe, amongst whom we must not forget Mahomed Radin, who has for many years resided under the Company's protection at Bencoolen.

The Bugis bring from their own country to the western ports gold-dust, sago, birds of paradise, long nutmegs, agala wood, trepang, &c. &c., and in return take opium, piece goods of all kinds, including English chintz, of which every Bugis that can afford it has some jackets.

It must however be recollected, that the title of *Bugis* is assumed by all the Eastern Islanders, and is in fact synonymous with gentleman, a pass-word that speaks pre-eminence. The precise meaning of the word *Bugis* is however lost; for it is not applied to a particular nation or tribe, but, as we said before, is usurped by all the Eastern islands, if we except Java, Borneo, and Sumatra. "I am a Bugis of such a place," is the usual answer to an interrogatory, whether he is really a Bugis or not.

The Bugises of the Celebes, however, sometimes send out colonies. Mr. Dalrymple speaks of one in Borneo; and there is a large colony of them at Madura, from whom Radin Mahomed, before mentioned, is descended. *Bombay Editor.*

TEXT.—The trade between the Indian islands and China is certainly the most

important of the foreign commercial relations of both countries, for its extent and utility. This indeed is the only foreign commerce which is admitted to be necessary to the proud empire of China, which pretends in other cases to despise it. The peculiar productions of the Indian Archipelago have become, by the habit of ages, scarcely less indispensable to its great population, than the teas of China are to the modern inhabitants of Europe. At least twenty thousand tons of Chinese shipping conduct this trade annually. These vessels, which, from a corruption of the Malay word *jung* (a ship) we call *junks*, (d) are, according to the depth of the ports they enter, from the inconsiderable size of 100 tons burthen, to the enormous and unwieldy one of 1500 (e). These vessels perform no more than one voyage yearly, though the time, from port to port, seldom exceeds twenty days. They come and go with a flowing sheet, under the benignant influence of the monsoons, without which, it may be said of this, as well as every other proper Asiatic trade, that it could have had no existence.

COMMENTARY.—(d) *Jung* or *Joong* is the Malayan, or rather the Javanese word, for the identical Chinese ships—not for an European ship, which is called *Koppell* all over the Malay world. But it is by no means proved that *Junk* is the corruption of *Joong*. In the English sea dialect "Junk" is applied to any thing rude or misshapen as well as to old cable; the inference in favour of the Malay word is however strong, from the circumstance of the adoption of two or three other Malay words into our vocabulary, viz. Paddy, (*Padee*) Godown, (*Gadong*) Compound, (*Campong*.)

(e) We have the dimensions of several junks lying before us, but the largest one that we can find, on the most exaggerated calculation, measures only 960; even this is enormous. These vessels may be fairly stated to be the rudest monuments of naval architecture that exist; and this is the more remarkable, as their smaller vessels and boats of all descriptions are not excelled, if equalled, by even any European nation—the management of them is admired by all; but with regard to that of the large junks, the falling off is so evident as to strike the most superficial observer. In adverse winds and narrow channels they lie at anchor for days, when a European ship finds no difficulty. On entering the Bocca Tigris, if the wind is not favourable the sails are

abent, and they are towed up to Canton by two or three hundred small boats.

The navigators of these China junks are often Portuguese from Macao or Siam, and in one instance an American of the name of Smith made several voyages from Macao to Batavia.

Most of the large junks are built of teak at Siam; and a good many of 300 to 500 tons on Borneo. It would appear that China produces no wood for ship-building but fir, of which all their small vessels are built; it is said to last very well for 10 or 12 years, with very little more precaution than frequently oiling the bottom and white-washing the upper works, and occasionally hanging a bag of lime over the bows, near the surface of the water. *Bombay Editor.*

TEXT.—Iron, cotton-cloths, and broad-cloths are the staples of the trade. In iron, the whole consumption (*f*) of the great population to which we have alluded (that of the Indian islands) is exclusively supplied from Europe.

COMMENTARY.—(*f*) The China junks bring vast quantities of cast iron-ware in pans and pots, (*tatch*) small anchors, &c. besides cutlery, in all shapes from a sword to a needle, and from a reaping hook to a fishing hook. *Madras Editor.*

TEXT.—The trade which Europe has carried on with Japan was conducted, on the part of the former, chiefly with the commodities of the Indian islands; a fact which may teach us a new lesson respecting the commercial value of the latter. The currency of those commodities, indeed, approximates them rather to the nature of the precious metals, than to the more vulgar objects of commercial exchange. The cloves, mace, and nutmegs, the pepper, camphor, and sugar of the archipelago, are still eagerly demanded by the Japanese. With these, we know from the most authentic and recent sources, that there is also an anxious demand for the manufactures of Europe; and a preference, as elsewhere, for those of England (*g*). But what avails all this?—for it is impracticable to introduce them; and it will always be so, until some European nation becomes possessed, as the Dutch once were, of the island of Formosa; for we consider it to be quite certain that it was to the greatness of the power they possessed in that island, at the doors of the Japanese monarchy, they owed their admission to the trade of the empire, and not to the meanness of their submissions, however abject. From the moment the Japanese ceased to be over-awed by the neighbourhood of the Dutch, they ceased to respect them. The trade

decayed from year to year; and at last dwindled into a pittance hardly worth the adventure of a private merchant.

COMMENTARY.—(*g*) The Japanese have so little opportunity of judging of our English manufactures, that we question this assertion much. In 1803 and 1806 attempts were made, both from Madras and Bengal, to establish an intercourse; but both ships were sent away without landing an article; and in 1813-1814, when the English ship *Charlotte*, of this port, went as the annual ship from Batavia, the English were not recognized, the trade was still carried on under the Dutch flag, and the restrictions on the importing vessel were enforced with more than ordinary rigour; to such an extent was this carried that a top-gallant yard could not be crossed, or sent down, nor a boat hoisted up or down, without the consent of the Japanese officer in charge. *Bombay Editor.*

TEXT.—Piracy, to be sure, is just as common and as openly pursued in the Malay seas as robbery in the deserts of Arabia. Nor can we wonder very much at its prevalence among a hundred nations of independent barbarians, along whose shores half the wealth of Asia is yearly passing. The real danger, however, arises, not from the desperate character of the Malay pirate, (*h*) but from the weakness and pusillanimity of their victims, the Lascars of Bengal, the dastardly Chinese, and the cowardly inhabitants of Malabar and Coromandel. A few British seamen might, on their own element, defy the whole hostile array of a Malay state; for incontrovertible proof of which opinion, it is only necessary to state a known truth, that in 20 years, during which the Americans have visited the same seas, not a single ship of that nation has been cut off by the Malays, though navigated, at an average of the whole, with not so many as a dozen of men each.

COMMENTARY.—(*h*) We should be most happy to coincide with this assertion, but we could bring hundreds of instances to prove their ferocity and thirst of blood. By the Lascars and Chinese they are never opposed; but we know that 30 or 40 Malays, worked up to a proper state of desperation, had very nearly carried the *Victory* sloop of war, with 120 Europeans on board. That some of the Malay tribes have a very high sense of honour we know; and it is equally certain, that when that honour is assailed in any way, the blood of the offender is shed without compunction.—*Bombay Editor.*