



The Paradox of the Friendly Vengeful Malay

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ABSTRACT

The Malays are commonly known as a very sensitive race compared to other Asian races, if not all races of the world. The sensitivity comes usually in a good way but sometimes in a bad way. The Malays used to be identified by their reputation for vengeance. But authors and researchers on Malays varied in their description that despite admitting to such indignant nature, the Malays are pretty well recognized for their compassion and gentleness. Such contradictory descriptions could be found abundantly in many chronicles of travelers and writers during the 18th and 19th centuries. To better understand the irony, this article attempts to scrutinize the peculiarity of Malay sensitivity, which is signified by the paradox of their kindness and vengeance, by analysing the records of observation and encounter of firsthand experiences and direct insights. This study sheds light on how the intricate Malay sensitivity is displayed through their contentment and resentment.

Keywords: Amok, Behaviour, Ethnic, Malay, Sensitivity, Vengeance.

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned by British colonial administrator in Malay states, Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham, the Malays have a reputation for their bloodthirstiness [1]. Malay vengeance is quite the very portrayal of Malay traits during the 18th and 19th centuries. Being vengeful is almost a definite identity of a Malay, as mentioned by British Army Captain Edward Thomas Coke [2]. In the *Lady's Amaranth* [3], the Malays are universally characterized as possessing a portion of that fiery impetuosity.

Despite the notorious reputation, the Malays, on the other hand, are also known as kind, generous, and friendly. For English geographer, linguist, writer, and civil servant Sir John Barrow, the Malays are active and docile, faithful and honest, but dangerous on account of their impetuosity and vengeful temper [4]. In a Christian missionary catalogue of nations, Malay and his neighbours are described as having one common character, which is the passion of play and vengeance [5]. Sir Spenser Buckingham St. John describes the Malays as brave when well led; they inspire confidence in their commanders; they are highly sensitive to dishonour, and tenacious as to their conduct towards each other; and being remarkably polite in their manners, they render all intercourse with them agreeable [6].

The Malays, as explained by English explorer and writer Isabella Lucy Bird, are chaste, gentle, honest, and hospitable, but their "honour" is so sensitive that blood alone can wipe out some insults to it. They are at some points excessively sensitive regarding their honor, and to wipe out a stain upon it by assassinating the offender is considered as correct and in accordance with

etiquette. In some cases, the one in despair will run amok, rush forth in a frenzy, and slay all he can lay hands upon [7].

This unique behaviour is the most important identity of the Malays to some degree. They are sensitive in nature. Most of the time, they are very kind and warm. But any wrongful acts and unjust treatment that harm and burn up their sensitivity could turn Malay's benevolence into malevolence. From the kindest people, a Malay person may turn into a shocking, horrible savage. This article attempts to analyse the peculiar characteristic of sensitivity among the Malays, which is represented by the paradox of their kindness and vengeance as reported in the 18th and 19th centuries' accounts when the distinctive trait most prevails.

THE AFFABLE YET VINDICTIVE MALAY

One of the earliest descriptions of the Malays is by British Member of Parliament and writer, Sir Richard Joseph Sullivan, who defines Malays as those who live in the Malay islands of Southeast Asia, who are mostly Muslims, adhere to the feudal tenure, but admit not of personal slavery, scrupulously honest, confident in others, remarkably harmonious in language, animated and full of fire in music and poetry, courteous and affable to strangers, frantically extravagant of which they are guilty of and, most of all, very vengeful. The Malays, even though somewhat ferocious in their look, are very friendly and assuredly are considerably more advanced in the principles of civilization than the Europeans a few centuries ago. Sullivan blames the sweeping description of the Dutch by associating the Malays with the character of amok, although it exists in the norm of the Malays. The madness of amok, which is not necessarily of Malays, is generally the result of injury and harsh usage, which drive them to madness and destruction, and it could happen to anybody and any race [8].

Amok, from the word "*amuk*" in the Malay language, which was later incorporated into English, is a cultural concept of distress derived from the Malay World. This aggressive behavioural pattern was regarded as a culture-bound syndrome as it was profoundly associated with the Malays. Amok is a dissociative episode characterized by a period of brooding followed by an outburst of violent, aggressive, or homicidal behavior directed at people and objects. The episode tends to be precipitated by a perceived slight or insult and seems to be prevalent only among males. The episode is often accompanied by persecutory ideas, automatism, amnesia, exhaustion, and a return to premorbid state following the episode. Some instances of amok may occur during a brief psychotic episode or constitute the onset or an exacerbation of a chronic psychotic process [9, 10]. Influential psychologist Professor William McDougall describes the amok of the Malays as not necessarily caused by anger and wounded self-feeling. It is undirected revenge rooted in the feeling of power and authority to enhance the self-feeling, which had been lowered or degraded by the injury suffered. The Malay who has suffered injury or insult does not deliberately plan out and execute his vengeance on those who have injured him. He broods for a time, no doubt filled with the painful desire arising from his instinct of self-assertion, and then suddenly takes his kris and runs through his village, cutting down every living being he encounters, until he himself is slain. This brooding and fierce dejection produced by insult is sometimes very intense among other races [11].

The character of being vengeful is not just an outsider's view, it is indeed very well known to the Malays themselves. Vengeance is the epitome of a lesson for the Malays to control their emotions and guard themselves from going too far in seeking revenge and justice, which is

known by the Malay words of “*tuntut bela*” (avenge) and “*balas dendam*” (revenge). The 15th-century fabled revenge of Hang Jebat (or alternatively Hang Kasturi) for the supposed death of his beloved fellow Hang Tuah as mentioned in the classical text of *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), or also known as *Sulalat al-Salatin* as well as *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was a standard depiction of Malay vengeance that went too far beyond fair justice.

In *Sejarah Melayu*, Hang Tuah was wrongly accused of having seduced one of the female attendants of the palace. Sultan Mansur Shah, the Sultan of Malacca of that time, ordered his minister, Sri Nara Diraja to put him to death. Sri Nara Diraja, conceiving that his fault was not established, for Hang Tuah was not at that time a common man, and it was difficult to get a servant to the Sultan like him, ordered him to be concealed in a certain village and fettered, and he informed the Sultan that he was dead. Sultan Mansur, when he heard this, was silent. After a while, Hang Kasturi went to the palace to avenge the death of his company. All the ministers and all the champions assembled surrounding the Sultan, full of shields, bucklers, tridents, spears, and lances, but no one could mount up to Hang Kasturi. He locked all the gates of the palace but the main access. Every warrior was afraid of Hang Kasturi as they were not on the level to compete with him. They all began to think about Hang Tuah. Sultan Mansur said, “I regret that Tuah is not here, or he would have quickly removed my disgrace”. After hearing the Sultan mention Tuah’s name several times, Sri Nara Diraja asked, “It appears to me that, My Royal Highness, you greatly regret Hang Tuah; if he were here, would he be pardoned? The Sultan replied, “Were Hang Tuah here present, though his fault were greater than Mount Qaf, I would assuredly pardon him”. Sri Nara Diraja said, “When you ordered me to put Hang Tuah to death, I could not do it, and did not deem it proper on account of his fault, for he did not appear to me as a common subject, and I thought, perhaps you might need his services on some future day. I therefore confined him in fetters within my garden”. The Sultan was glad and ordered him to be brought up directly. When he arrived, the Sultan then presented his kris to Hang Tuah and asked him to kill Hang Kasturi, and he immediately advanced against Hang Kasturi. Hang Kasturi, when he saw Hang Tuah, shockingly said, “I supposed you had been dead, and thus I ventured to act as I have done”. The two then began a single fight. After a long fight, Hang Kasturi died after being stabbed in the heart by Hang Tuah [12].

A little bit different story is reported in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Hang Tuah was accused of treason for being an accomplice of the Kingdom of Majapahit during their robbery in the houses of the Bendahara, the Temenggung, as well as the royal palace of Malacca. The Sultan orders the Bendahara to slay him and confers his kris of office of the Laksmana (Admiral) on Hang Jebat. But the Bendahara hides Hang Tuah in an orchard seven days’ journey up-country. The Sultan spoils Hang Jebat, who takes liberties in the palace. He becomes rude to courtiers and runs loose among the Sultan’s women. Detecting his madness, the Sultan at last removes to Bendahara’s house. All the ministers and warriors come to assault Hang Jebat, but all fail. The Sultan then said: “If Hang Tuah were alive, I should feel as though my revered ancestor in Mount Siguntang were restored to life”. The Bendahara then hints he is alive. They go and fetch Hang Tuah and bring him to the Sultan. The Sultan welcomed Hang Tuah and asked him to kill Hang Jebat. When Hang Tuah enters the palace, he finds that Hang Jebat has killed 700 women in the palace. They fight like hawks. Hang Jebat said that his behaviour was due to the injustice done to Hang Tuah. Hang Tuah replied: “Better death with honour than life with shame. So that one may enter Heaven”. After a few days of fighting, Hang Jebat then died on the lap of Hang Tuah [13].

The peculiar sensitivity of the Malays even goes far back to the 12th century when Sang Sapurba made an agreement with Demang Lebar Daun in order to become the King of the Malays as well as handing her daughter to be the Queen. The pact involves that Sang Sapurba should treat Demang's family as well as the Malays liberally and should never expose them to shame for any fault committed by them unless the faults are too great, but still it must accord to the law. In return, the Malays should never move any treasonable practices against his descendants even though they should become tyrannical, unless they themselves break the agreement [12]. This legendary agreement shows a great deal of the loyalty as well as sensitivity of the Malays to any injustice.

The stories of resentful Malay characters keep carrying on to be spoken in the next centuries. Many incidents of Malay vengeance are recorded throughout history. During the Dutch control of Malacca, English traveler Jemima Kindersley records that some of the Dutch's servants in the Cape of Good Hope during her travel there in the year 1765 were Malays from Malacca who spoke corrupted Portuguese. They are remarkable for the violent of their passions, and are to the utmost degree revengeful with melancholic violence of running amuck (*amok*), which is peculiar and not unusual to the Malays. An instance happened during her visit that a Malay being offended with his matter, gave himself up to the fury of his passion. He intoxicated himself with opium, then let his long hair loose about him. He sallied out with a knife in his hand, running straightforward, to stab every man, woman, child, or animal that he met with. Fortunately, only one person was killed before he was taken and later executed [14].

Even during the temporary British administration of Malacca from the year 1795 until 1818, a Protestant mission to Malacca recorded that revengeful malignity is a leading trait in the Malay character [15]. In an ode entitled *Revenge*, a poet named J. L. wrote a very condensed paradoxical representation of the Malays [16]:

Amid the Southern Ocean's isles,
Where roams uncurbed the rude Malay,
The youthful nature fairest smiles,
Triumphs Revenge with horrid sway.

In a poem by J. D., the trait is quite the same as depicted [17]:

In all the kingdoms of the sun,
The race of death shall have been run,
The vengeful Turk, the fierce Malay,
Shall throw the bloodstained knife away.

Another stanza is by an American minister and author, Jared Bell Waterbury [18]:

Then shall the wrathful Turk, the sensual slave,
The wandering Tartar, and the Arab brave,
The Abyssinian, Caffre, and Hindoo,
Indian, Malay, a dark and vengeful crew.

Captain Robert Johnson, in his record, depicts what the concept of amok is. That singular and barbarous custom of running amok is practiced by the Malays in the following manner. A Malay who abandons himself to despair from any cause, though it most commonly proceeds from the ruin attending his extreme propensity to gambling, takes opium till he becomes frantic. Then

with his disheveled hair, he draws his creese (kris), runs along, and stabs and destroys all he meets, until he destroys himself. The Malays, for Johnson, are savagely jealous and take revenge themselves by assassinating the party they suspect, even without any proof. While the crime of adultery is detected, the injured Malay kills both the man and also the woman for sacrifice, if he can. The man is brought to a large open spot, where every Malay in the neighbourhood who wears a kris attends. A ring is then formed, and the delinquent is placed in the centre. If the man could not escape, the Malays will stab him with their krises. Notwithstanding the severity of punishment for adultery, is still a prevailing crime in the Malay country. Indeed, the Malays are brought up in such a savage manner that they seem to disregard not only the loss of the limb but even life itself [19].

Captain John Percival, on account of Captain Johnson, describes the Malays as extremely vindictive, treacherous, and ferocious; implacable in their revenge, and on the slightest provocation, or imaginary insult, will commit murder. They are indeed a scourge to the people they come amongst. When bent on revenge, or irritated at some supposed insult, they scarcely ever full of wreaking their vengeance. Many shocking murders have been committed by the Malay slaves on their masters and mistresses, not for the purpose of robbing, but merely to gratify their thirst for revenge, which nothing but the blood of their object will satisfy, though at the certain loss of their own lives. When the Malay has determined on revenge, he takes a quantity of opium to work himself up to a state of madness, when he rushes with a kris, and after putting to death, the original object of his infernal passion, he next rushes at everyone he meets, till he is overpowered and taken, which perhaps is not the case till several victims fall before him. Nothing but a lucky shot or blow that stuns him to the death will ensure the safety of his opponents as he proceeds with such a savage fierceness and impetuosity that it is reckoned a most arduous and dangerous service to encounter him in this state. This is what is called a running amok, on the slightest alarm of which everyone flies before him and escapes the best way he can. Whoever kills a Malay in the act of running amok, is entitled to a very high reward from the government, and he certainly deserves it, for the most cool and intrepid are scarcely a match for the Malay when worked to this pitch of desperate madness [19].

Percival told some stories about encountering Malay vengeance. One is whilst he was in Cape Town, a Malay, for some insult from his master, drew a knife and stabbed him to the heart and immediately ran into the streets with the weapon reeking with the blood of his unfortunate victim until finally shot down with a gun by a passing farmer. Another instance, also in Cape Town, a Malay, who being refused leave by his master to go out to a festival, or merry-making with his fellows, took a knife and stab him to the heart, then went to his mistress in an adjoining room, and committed on her the same barbarous and inhuman act. A Malabar slave who was cutting wood nearby observed him and managed to strike him on the head with the axe, killing him on the spot. Another event in the East Indies, Percival narrowly escaped, having been slightly wounded in the arm by a Malay who had attacked some Sepoys. The Malay struck him with a poisoned kris [19].

The manners and characters of the Malays and generally the Southeast Asians are described by Scottish physician, colonial administrator, and author, John Crawfurd. They are throughout gifted with a large portion of fortitude, especially in suffering with patience. They are almost always superior to the fear of death, and when their vengeance is roused, they are capable of acts of desperate valour, bordering almost on insanity. They are capable of attachment,

gratitude, and fidelity, and it would be difficult to quote among them any instances of the flagrant and revolting violation of those virtues. They are good humoured and cheerful to a remarkable degree. However, revenge is the most prominent in the character of them. They can hardly forgive an injury, and are capable of harbouring the longest and the deepest-rooted resentment. In a state of society where the security of every man's honour, life, and property depends in no small degree upon his own arm, one may almost hesitate whether to pronounce the passion of revenge a virtue or a vice. All the tribes of the Archipelago, without exception, are tinctured more or less with this vice. The spirit of revenge, with an impatience of restraint and a repugnance to submit to insult, more or less felt by all the Southeast Asians, gives rise to those acts of desperate excess that are well known in Europe under the name of amucks. This peculiar form of exacting revenge, unknown to all other people, yet universal in the Malay World, and recognized throughout by one and the same name. Amuck means generally an act of desperation, in which the individual or individuals devote their lives, with few or no chances of success, for the gratification of their revenge. Sometimes it is confined to the individual who has offered the injury; at other times it is indiscriminate, and the enthusiast, with a total aberration of reason, assails alike the guilty and the innocent. On other occasions, again, the oppressor escapes, and the muck consists of the oppressed party's taking the lives of those dearest to him, and then his own, that they and he may be freed from some insupportable oppression and cruelty [20].

The same depiction is also mentioned by Christian minister Colin Smith, that the Malays of all races, bear the most marked character. They are cunning, active, and intelligent but at the same time, implacably revengeful. If a Malay commits a fault and is punished for it, there the matter terminates; but if he is only threatened and fancies the punishment still hanging over him, he will commit the most atrocious actions to put an end to the misery of suspense. Desperate under the influence of this impression, he works himself into a state of delirium by swallowing opium; then draws his kris or dagger, and stabs the whole family, slaves and all. Having glutted his vengeance indoors, he sallies forth into the street, and, plunging his weapon into every living creature he meets, whether it be man or beast, he never ceases until he is shot, or is otherwise disabled from doing further mischief [21].

For Christian theologian Dr. Heinrich Ludwig Emil Luering, the Malays are accomplished in manners, giving him the appearance of perfect ease in whatever society he may be. He possesses a natural gift of being social and entertaining in his conversation, and is a born storyteller and orator. He is intriguing, utterly void of sympathy with others than his kith and kin, exceedingly sensitive to insult and slight, relentless and bitter in his hatred, and unscrupulous in the manner of wreaking vengeance upon his enemies [22].

A terrifying experience of horror of the Malay written by Henry Robert Addison (1842: 533-536) with a scene more revolting than imagination ever pictured. On his way to Madras, Addison stopped at the house of Mr. T, a magistrate he knows. When he arrived, he found his friend absent, but his wife however did the honours for him. However, on the same day, an incident happened where Mr. T's wife lost a superb emerald necklace that had suddenly disappeared from her trinket box, in which she declared she had carefully deposited it a few days before. A strict search took place. Every servant was examined till it was suddenly recollected that a young Malay boy, about ten years of age, who had hitherto acted as a sort of page, had been sent to the case to bring down a ring to his mistress on the previous morning.

The boy had also been seen with some money, which he however averred he had received from his father, a khitmatgar in the household [23].

The result was, that suspicion pointed so strongly at the boy that his mistress desired him instantly to be tied up and flogged until he confessed what he had done with the stolen necklace. The unhappy father, threw himself on the knees, and kissing the feet of Mrs. T, besought her to relent. But, considering the case clearly brought home to the young Malay, and annoyed at his refusal to admit his guilt, she refused to listen to his parent's appeal. The boy was tied up and punished till the blood actually flowed down his back. The father was present at the scene, but he did not attempt to interfere. His son endured the torture without a groan, and after three dozen lashes, he was taken down fainting, without having made any confession. He was again flogged in the next morning, but still remained obdurate. The following day, Addison advised her to abstain from further attempts until the return of her husband. The boy then recovered and soon returned to his work. The father, though seemingly much hurt at heart, uttered no complaint and performed his duty as usual [23].

At the end of the week, Mr. T arrived, bringing with him some companions. The next morning, after breakfast, the fond husband brought down a collection of little gifts for his wife and children, who eagerly expressed their joy. Mr. T then gave the necklace he had get it repaired. The wife regretted that she had falsely accused the Malay boy and punished him for stealing it. His husband pondered for a few moments; they desired the boy and the father to be summoned. Mr. T explained that his innocence was now manifest and as a recompense for the unfortunate mistake and unmerited suffering, he gave him a present of a European dress he had brought for his eldest boy. Although the Malay boy delighted and clothed himself in his new garments, his father instantly seized him and tore his clothes from his back, declaring that nothing could ever cover the disgrace that had been inflicted on him. Mr. T became angry, but his wife dissuaded him from punishing the father [23].

Ten days after the incident, T's younger sister is expected to arrive at Madras. He and Addison planned to meet her together, but the Malay father begged that his son be allowed to accompany them. After at first objecting, Mr. T finally consented. When they all returned home and entered the house, there was the body of the Malay father, surrounded by a pool of blood, his throat cut from ear to ear. Later they discovered the bodies of Mr. T's wife and his children, evidently murdered while they as they slept by the revengeful Malay father, who after washing out his dishonour, had put an end to his own life. The Malay boy was horrified that he fled and never returned. While Mr. T, after a few weeks, returned to Europe [23].

For British Royal Navy admiral Sherard Osborn, running amok is a desperate resource for every Malay when he fancies himself irredeemably injured in character or when rendered reckless by misery. Armed with his creese, one man will, in such a mood, throw himself upon any number of foes or friends, and stab right and left until himself shot down or creessed as a mad dog would be. But for Sherard Osborn, although the amok phenomenon is usual to the Malays, the oppression of the Dutch and the Portuguese, which injured the Malays in many ways, made the amok incidents more common during that time. Resistance to the iniquity has made the Malays what they are. Osborn seems to be sympathetic with what had happened to the Malays. Notwithstanding the many stories he heard about Malay vengeance, he tried to understand Malay in a better and more comprehensive picture. For him, the Malays are courageous and

generous. They are the best sailors among Asians, displaying courage, discipline, handiness, and ingenuity. These characters are the most important national characters of the Malays, despite the popular notion of Malay vengeance, raw-head, and bloody-bones ferocity [24].

American poet, author, and physician, John Williamson Palmer also extensively describes the Malay vengeance. Before his arrival in Singapore from Hong Kong, an event of horror had occurred on another ship that sailed from Hong Kong for Calcutta with a crew of Malays, serving to show Malay temper. For Palmer, only experienced Europeans could venture to manage the sensitive, resentful Malays. In most of the cases, only the chiefs of the Malays are capable of controlling them which is the organization of the Malays that the Europeans must respect. Therefore, a Tindal officer is elected among them for his activity, intelligence, and seamanship. It should be noted that the Malays are good, trustworthy, very well-disciplined, and rarely need punishment. But when they do, it is laid on with the heaviest hand, and with but little heed to the regulations. In most cases, it should be left to themselves, settled by their own chiefs and masters, as the Malays respect their leaders. For Palmer, it is beautiful to see how patiently, and with what trained respect according to the bond, the most tiger-like of the fierce fatalists submit to their masters. But the skipper of the ship, his wife, and one European crew member always been reckless and braved the revengeful devil of Malay blood. After many incidents on the ship, the Malays stayed still and calm for days until a day before arrival in Singapore, when they armed with knives and axes, led by their tindal, quietly approached the captain, unsuspected by others, and stood close behind him. With a downright, steady brunt, the Tindal buried the butt of his axe in the old man's brains, and while his astonished eyes still stared, they tossed him over, shivering, to the sharks. Then the tiger in the temper of each man of them sprang forward with a roar. The Malays, except two of them, later had been sent on to Penang for trial and execution [25].

Another occurrence happened in Penang while Palmer was there. A Malay ran amok after he had been bamboozed for a theft. In the next morning, he snatched his wicked kris, and with his black locks streaming in the astonishing air, and back and loins bare and slippery with palm oil, with starring eyes, and visage all-bedeviled, crazed with shame and spite, and drunk with opium, he reeled like a mad dog, down the thronged lanes between the bamboo hedges. He rushed through men, stabbing, chopping, and slashing, spattering the bamboos with blood, till at last down and wriggling in a fit, he was dispatched, and his steeplechase of death was run. For the horror he experienced, Palmer relates it commonness with the spiced sauces, which are everything for the Malays, and he advises either to love it all or not at all; the same goes for the Malays. Palmer's travel companion, Mrs. Judson summarized that the revengeful malignity is the leading trait of the Malay character. Palmer added some other common characteristics of the Malays as also being clannish, jealous, and exacting consideration [25].

American publisher and statistician, James Dunwoody Brownson De Bow states that when a Malay becomes "a victim to misplaced confidence", he resents the insult by homicide. The respectable Malay is highly sensitive to trivial and even unpremeditated insult; such for instance as brushing by one, and turning round, is considered by Malays as a gross injury. He fancies that no law can compensate for the injury his honor has sustained. His feelings are, therefore, apt to lead him, not merely to criminal, but absurdly ridiculous excesses [26].

English naturalist, explorer, and anthropologist Alfred Russel Wallace particularizes the characters of Malays as exhibit easy-goingness, impassivity, reserve, diffidence, shyness, and bashfulness, but attractive. Wallace sees the ferocious, savage, and bloodthirsty character imputed to the Malay as grossly exaggerated. For Wallace, Malay is not demonstrative, and their feelings are never openly expressed and manifested, and are probably not strongly felt. He is slow and deliberate in speech, and circuitous in introducing the subject he has come expressly to discuss. These are the main features of his moral nature, and exhibit themselves in every action of his life. When alone, the Malay is gloomy and taciturn; he neither talks nor sings to himself. When several are paddling together in a canoe, they occasionally chant a monotonous and plaintive song. They are seldom and very cautious of giving offense to each other. He does not quarrel easily about money matters; dislikes asking too frequently even for payment of his just debts, and will often give them up altogether rather than quarrel with his debtor. Practical joking is utterly repugnant to his disposition; for he is particularly sensitive to breaches of etiquette, or any interference with the personal liberty of himself or another. As an example, it is very difficult to get one Malay servant to waken another. He will call as loud as he can, but will hardly touch, much less shake his comrade. The higher classes of Malays are exceedingly polite and courteous, and have all the quiet ease and dignity of the well-educated Europeans. Yet this is compatible with a reckless cruelty and contempt for human life, which is the dark side of their character. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that different persons give totally opposite accounts of them, one praising them for their soberness, civility, and good nature; another abusing them for their deceit, treachery, and cruelty. Wallace's explanation is utterly opposed to popular judgments in the various accounts given by observers; nonetheless shows the irony of the Malay sensitivity [27, 28].

The same contradiction is also defined by the British judge and legal writer, Peter Benson Maxwell who describes the Malays as affectionate and gentle. They have that quiet, grave dignity of manner that seems to be the common property of Mahometans everywhere. They do possess qualities of industry and energy that make them valuable and have always been an example to the other races in peaceful conduct and loyal attachment. They are passionate and punctilious; and if they sometimes commit acts of violence that bring down on them denunciations for bloodthirstiness and vindictiveness, it is because they are proud, sensitive to insult, and incapable of receiving a blow without resenting it. As an old writer says of them, "They are such horrible savages that, if you strike them, they will retaliate". They are easily led by kindness, which is by no means inconsistent with firmness, but they are too high-spirited to bow meekly to violence and contumely [29].

Scottish surgeon and orientalist, Edward Green Balfour designates that Malays are frank, courteous and honest, brave, generous and sensitive to a fault, in youth grave at times and anon overflowing with mirth; in advanced life sedate. They are proud, and if ill-treated, revengeful; but under generous treatment are gentle, kind, humane, grateful, docile and faithful. They are capable of the warmest attachments, and yet impelled to madness and the commission of the most revolting deeds by real or imaginary unkindness. They are dutiful children and kind parents. They treat their aged kinsmen with the greatest kindness and even feel it a duty to relieve the wants of an indigent relation. Old men and women are always regarded with respect [30].

The fear of Malay revenge has always been noted by American journalist and travel writer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore when speaking of her experience of Malays in Southeast Asia, which normally involves the chilling tales of death as well as terrible series of conspiracies and revolts of earlier times [31]. United States' Congressman, author, and journalist Henry Watterson states that one of the characteristic qualities of the Malays is their contempt of death. They have transmitted it, with their blood, to the Polynesians, who see in it only one of the multiple phenomena and not the supreme act of existence, and witness it or submit to it with profound indifference [32].

Australian mining engineer Ambrose Rathborne also defines the characteristics of the Malays as being very slow to acquire confidence in strangers, polite with an innate courtesy, and should they suddenly be confronted by a novel or difficult situation, their self-control and grace of movement are so inborn that they go through the most trying ordeal without the slightest awkwardness. They can be led by words into doing almost anything; but once you let them imagine that they are being driven or forced against their will, they turn mulish and stubborn, and it is difficult to overcome their obstinacy. They are reserved, quick to judge character or to take offense, disliking coarseness, flattered by small attentions and agreeable glibness of speech. Notwithstanding an apparent frank openness of manner, and seeming candid lightheartedness attractive in the extreme, they possess a self-restraint and control that enables them to narrate only just as much as they think it expedient for the listener to know. They parry an awkward question with commendable dexterity [33].

CONCLUSION

The Malays were well known in history for their vengeful character. They may now still be to some degree, but throughout time and modernity, it becomes much less than they were. As stated by Isabella Bird, although it was formerly very common, running amok during the late 19th century is comparatively uncommon in the Malay states [7]. Heinrich Luering states that cases of amok and other incidents of interest, which were so frequent in earlier days began to be rare and far between, especially during the late 19th century. The change is ascribed for the better to the healthful influence of British law and watchfulness [22]. It has almost ceased to exist since the 20th century, and later in the 21st century, the amok connotation to the Malays is no longer perceived as a racial trait [10].

Although it will not be easy to find an amok phenomenon in current times, still the paradox sustains with perhaps a bit of less of both kindness and vengeance. One must bear in mind that the vindictive character is just a little feature of Malay traits and it should not be understood as a collective representation of the Malays. As it was visibly apparent to the foreign explorers and the most bizarre thing they experienced, it became something remarkable and notable in their description of the Malays. It is also needed to be considered that during the colonial times, negative perspective by the Europeans towards Asians, Africans, and people in other parts of the world is quite common. They tend to perceive them as primitive, savage, and uncivilized.

With all that being said, there is still something unique and distinctive about the characteristics of the Malays. Despite being regarded as friendly and affable, the Malays are very prevalent with being vengeful and implacable. Although time and progress have changed the magnitude of the traits, nevertheless the Malays are still a very sensitive race. The good, the bad, and the ugly of Malay sensitivity should be understood meticulously. Many foreign authors and

explorers were astounded by the sensitive taste of the Malays in jewelry, weaponry, cookery, music, fashion, as well as their nuanced knowledge of birds, fishes, herbs, and plants. Keeping them in goodwill has always been a good move. As Palmer advises, just like treating the spicy *sambal*, as well as the smelly durian, one should either love the Malays with kindness and loveliness or not ever bother about anything of them.

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