the dialects of neighbouring provinces in the same king­dom.”@@1

It is conjectured that in former times Sumatra was the seat of an extensive Malay empire, and of arts and com­merce. All traces of this empire are now obliterated, and it is only from the monuments of ancient architecture that such historical inferences are drawn. The modern divisions of the island are chiefly the empire of Menang- cabow and the Malays, the Acbenese, the Battas, the Re- jangs, and the people of Lampong. The government among them seems chiefly aristocratical. It is the rule of chief men, and in some parts the despotic assumption of power by some aspiring chief. Their government, how­ever, seems to be founded in opinion ; their submission is voluntary. Almost all the governments throughout the island partake of the patriarchal and the feudal. Where the people by conquest have been compelled to submit to a foreign yoke, feudal manners are followed ; where, on the other hand, the natives have been long undisturbed by revolutions, the patriarchal sway prevails. The Malay and the native Sumatran differ in mind fully as much as in features and person. The Malay inhabitants have an ap­pearance of degeneracy from those ancient virtues which laid the foundation of an extensive empire. Their portrait, as drawn by various travellers, has many dark traits. Mars­den describes them as proud, yet without that pride which restrains them from meanness and fraud. They can prac­tise low cunning and the most plausible duplicity, dissem­bling under an outward calmness the strongest passions and most inveterate antipathy, until the moment of gratification is found. Veracity, gratitude, and integrity, are not among their qualities. They seem to make no distinction between honour and infamy ; and their courage is the result of some momentary and vindictive impulse, which hurries them on to deeds of desperation, not that calm and steady valour which distinguishes the European in the day of battle. These harsher traits of the Malay character are greatly softened in the portrait drawn by Sir Stamford Raffles. Their piracies he traces to their warlike disposition, which, he observes, only requires to be directed into a better course ; and their vindictive spirit, to high notions of ho­nour. The attacking his enemy with the kris by the Ma­lay is the counterpart of duelling among the European nations. He proudly defends his property, his life, and character in this manner, which is not secured to him by law ; and he seldom draws his kris except in defence of his honour, or in some warlike enterprise. This prac­tice, however reprobated, has produced a habitual good breeding among the Malays.@@2 The original Sumatran has many of the Malay vices, and some virtues belonging to himself, which are however of the negative kind. He is mild, peaceable, and forbearing, but when roused to resentment he is implacable. He is temperate and sober, abstemious both in meat and drink. His diet consists of ve­getables, and water is his only beverage; yet his hospitality is extreme, and bounded only by his ability. The Suma­trans are continent in respect to women, modest and cour­teous in their behaviour, grave in deportment, seldom ex­cited to laughter, and habitually patient. On the other hand, they are litigious, indolent, and addicted to gaming. They gamble with dice or with shells, and have various games on chequered boards and other delineations. They are addicted to cock-fighting in an extraordinary degree ; and when in affluent circumstances, their propensity to it is so great that it resembles rather a serious occupation. Quar­rels, attended with dreadful consequences, have often arisen on these occasions.

The Sumatrans have no written code of laws and their various disputes are settled by custom and precedent. There is no class of persons invested with legislative powers. The chiefs of districts judge in cases both civil and criminal. In pronouncing their decision, they do not say such is the law, but such is the custom ; and their decision is gene­rally submitted to. The want of written laws was sup­posed by the East India Company’s servants likely to occa­sion endless disputes ; and in the year 1779 a code was pro­mulgated for the benefit of those under their jurisdiction. It may be greatly doubted, however, how far such a sys­tem, constructed by Europeans, would suit the wants of an uncivilized people, in preference to their own tried and well-known modes, however rude and inartificial. Legal disputes chiefly originate among them in the intri­cacy of marriage-contracts. Their laws of marriage are very coarse and rude ; a wife being obtained by purchase, and becoming to all intents and purposes the property and slave of her husband, who may dispose of her, only making the first offer to her relations. When a man dies, his effects are equally distributed among his children ; but if one pos­sesses remarkable abilities above the rest, he receives a larger portion ; a contrivance, apparently, for producing division and strife. Land is so plentiful among them, that they rarely consider it a subject of right ; another proof of the low state of civilization. They have few capital punish­ments, and, according to Marsden, corporal punishment is rare ; murder being compensated by money, and adultery being punishable by fine. But recent discoveries by Mr Marsden himself, and by Sir Stamford Raffles, as well as by others who have lately visited the island, have laid open among the Battas and other interior tribes such horrid and ferocious practices, as would not be believed unless authen­ticated by evidence above all dispute. The Battas are an extensive and populous nation, occupying the whole of that part of the island lying between Acheen and Menangcabow, reaching to both shores. The coast is but thinly in­habited ; but the people are said to be as thick as the leaves of the forest, and to amount to between one and two millions. Their laws are remarkably severe ; and for adultery, mid­night robbery, for intermarrying in the same tribe, or for a treacherous attack on a house, village, or person, the crimi­nals arc condemned to be eaten alive, which shocking sen­tence is actually carried into execution by these savages. They also eat the prisoners taken in war. The mode of proceeding is thus described. “ The victim is tied to a stake with his arms extended ; the party collect in a circle around him, and the chief gives the order to commence eating. The chief enemy, when it is a prisoner, or the chief party injured in other cases, has the first selection ; and after he has cut off his slice (the victim being alive), others cut off pieces according to their taste and fancy, until all the flesh is devoured. It is either eaten raw or grilled, and generally dipt in sambul, a preparation of Chili pepper and salt, which is always in readiness. Rajah Banda- harru, a Batta, and one of the chiefs of Tappanooly, asserted that he was present at a festival of this kind about eight years ago, at the village of Subluan, not nine miles distant, where the heads may be still seen. When the party is a prisoner taken in war, he is eaten immediately, and on the spot. Whether dead or alive, he is equally eaten ; and it is usual even to drag the bodies from the graves, and, after disinterring them, to eat the flesh.” Sir Stamford relates another example of this practice, too horrid to be detailed, at which the British resident was invited to attend ; and after a great part of his flesh was eaten while he was still alive, one man approached and stabbed him to the heart ; which, he adds, “ was rather out of compliment to the fo­reign visitors, as it is by no means the custom to give the

@@@1 Marsden’s Sumatra, p. 163.

@@@, Memoir of the Life and Services of Sir Stamford Radies, p. 236.