

NEW  
MODERN  
ENGLISH  
TRANSLATION



# SANDOKAN®

**THE TIGERS OF MOMPRACEM**

**SANDOKAN SERIES**

**VOLUME 1**

**BASED ON THE NOVELS BY  
EMILIO SALGARI**

**ADAPTED AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY  
DARIO TROIANI**



# SANDOKAN

VOLUME 1

## THE TIGERS OF MOMPRACEM

NEW MODERN ENGLISH ADAPTATION

BASED ON:

“LA TIGRE DELLA MALESIA” (1883) and “LE TIGRI DI MOMPRACEM” (1900)

WRITTEN BY

**EMILIO SALGARI**

TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION BY

**DARIO TROIANI**

TRANSLATION AND EDITING BY

**DARIO TROIANI, VANESSA GALLI and MAVI DENIZ**

ADVISOR FOR NAUTICAL TERMS

**RON ACIERNO**

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## Foreword

Sandokan... Who is that?... What is that?...

For many years this was the response I got when I talked about Sandokan, the main hero in Emilio Salgari's Novel Cycle of the Pirates of Malaysia.

How is it possible that most of the world, and predominantly the English speaking world has no knowledge of Emilio Salgari's extended body of work? All the adventures of heroes and heroines in exotics settings, which accompanied me through all my youth and made me dream of becoming and adventurer myself, are mostly unknown to the majority of people.

This is something that shocked me at the time and that's why, almost twenty years ago, I came across the idea, which later became a life mission, of bringing the work of Italian author Emilio Salgari and his most brave character named Sandokan to every household around the world.

I hope that my translation and adaptation into modern English of the first two books combined "La Tigre della Malesia" and "Le Tigri di Mompracem" which launched in 1883 the amazing adventures of Sandokan, will help new readers to discover them, and enjoy them as much as I did over the years.

I would like to dedicate this adaptation to the master/adventure writer:

**Emilio Salgari (1862-1911)**

With all my love and respect.

Dario Troiani

CHAPTER I

## THE TIGERS OF MOMPRACEM

On the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1849 a very violent cyclone was raging above the wild and infamous island of Mompracem, the hideout of extraordinary pirates, in the Malaysian Sea, a few hundred miles from the eastern coasts of Borneo.

Every now and then black threatening clouds, pushed by the stormy wind, let furious downpours fall on the dreary island jungles. Huge sea waves crashed furiously against the coasts, roaring loud amid thunder and lightning.

No lights could be seen on the island, neither from the huts lined up on the bay, nor from their defensive walls, nor from the many ships anchored beyond the cliffs, nor from the woods, nor from the rough sea. But if those travelling from the east had looked up towards the island, they would have noticed, at the top of a very high cliff overlooking the sea, two brightly lit windows.

Who was awake at this time and with this storm on the island of the bloodthirsty pirates?

In a maze of collapsed trenches, fallen embankments, uprooted fences and big broken down cages full of shattered firearms and human bones, stood a huge and solid hut with a big red flag portraying the head of a tiger.

Only one, odd looking room was lit.

Its walls were lined with lavish velvets and brocades, some of which were torn and stained, and a soiled Persian carpet, embroidered with gold, covered the floor. In the middle of the room there was an ebony table, inlaid with mother of pearl and adorned with silver decorations, laden with rare crystal bottles and glasses. Big, old battered shelves stood in the corners of that room, weighed down by jewels, medaillons, pearls, gems and precious holy relics, which sparkled under the light of a hanging chandelier. A scratched ebony harmonium stood out amid the mess of rolled up carpets, sumptuous clothes, paintings by well-known artists, Spanish trombones, and finely decorated weapons.

A particularly handsome, tall, muscular man, with manly and fierce features, sat on a rickety armchair in that oddly furnished room.

His long black hair fell over his shoulders and a thick beard framed his slightly tanned face. His forehead was high, with beautiful, boldly arched eyebrows, his small mouth displayed strong, white teeth and his intense black eyes would make anyone lower his gaze.

He'd been sitting for a few minutes, staring at the chandelier, his hands nervously holding his scimitar, which hanged from a wide red silk sash, tied around a blue velvet jacket embroidered in gold. As a sudden violent downpour shook the hut to its foundations, he awakened abruptly from his daze. He threw back his long loose hair, fixed his turban on his head, and got up, embracing the room with his gloomy gaze.

- It's midnight. - he murmured. - And he's not back yet!

He sipped a glass of an amber coloured liquid, then he opened the door and walked briskly between the trenches protecting the hut, until he reached the edge of the cliff. Below, the sea was roaring furiously. He lingered there for a few minutes, with his arms across his chest, as still as the cliff on which he was standing, inhaling with delight the stormy night's air and searching the wild sea with his gaze, then he slowly walked back into his hut and stopped in front of the harmonium.

- The cyclone outside and me, inside. - he exclaimed. - Which one is more dangerous?

He let his fingers slide along the keyboard, playing a fast-paced tune, which sounded odd and wild. Then he slowed down, until the music faded into the thunderstorm.

Suddenly he turned towards the door, which he had left ajar. He leaned forward for a moment, pricking up his ears, then he walked out rapidly, and reached the edge of the cliff. When lightning struck he saw a small ship, with half lowered sails, entering the bay and blending in with the anchored vessels. He blew three sharp blasts on his golden whistle, and someone whistled right back.

- It's him! - he murmured excitedly. - At last!

Five minutes later a man, wrapped in a large, wet cloak, appeared in front of the hut.

- Yanez! - exclaimed the longhaired man.

- Sandokan! - answered the new arrival, in a strong foreign accent. - What a hellish night, my brother.

- Come!

They rapidly crossed the trenches, then entered the lit room and closed the door.

The foreigner got rid of his cloak and carbine, while Sandokan filled two glasses and, handing one to him, said in a friendly tone: - Drink, my good Yanez.

- To your health, Sandokan.

- And to yours.

They drained their glasses and sat at the table. The new arrival was a Southern European looking man in his early thirties, a little older than his companion. He was of medium height, very robust, very pale skinned, with classic features, grey cunning eyes and thin, sneering lips.

- Well, Yanez? - asked Sandokan, with a hint of excitement in his voice. - Have you seen the girl with the golden hair?

- No, but I have found out what you wanted to know.

- Didn't you go to Labuan?

- Yes, but you can imagine how difficult it is for us to dock on those coasts, heavily guarded by English cruisers.

- Tell me about the girl. Who is she?

- I will tell you that she is a magnificently beautiful creature, so beautiful that she can bewitch the most formidable pirate.

- I see! - exclaimed Sandokan. - Tell me more.

- They say that her hair is as blonde as gold, her eyes as blue as the sea and her skin as white as alabaster. I know that one of our men, Alamba, saw her one evening as she was strolling on the island and was so struck by her beauty, that he stopped his ship to admire her, risking to be massacred by the English.

- But whom does she belong to?

- Some say she is the daughter of a colonist, others say she is the daughter of a lord and others say that she is related to none other than the governor of Labuan.

- Mysterious creature... - murmured Sandokan, pressing his hands against his forehead.

- Well? - asked Yanez.

The pirate didn't answer. He suddenly got up, overwhelmed by an emotional impulse, and went to the harmonium, letting his fingers run along the keys.

Yanez smiled, then he took an old mandola off the wall and started to pluck its chords, saying: - Very well! Let's play some music.

He'd just started to play a little Portuguese aria, when Sandokan suddenly approached the table and banged on it so hard that he made it bow.

He was no longer the man he had been before, a deep frown creased his forehead, his eyes darted anger, his tense lips showed his clenched teeth and his limbs were shaking. In that moment he was the extraordinary leader of the ferocious pirates known as the tigers of Mompracem, he was the man who had been flooding the coasts of Malaysia with blood, the man who had fought terrible battles everywhere, the man whose extraordinary audacity and fearless courage had earned him the name of Tiger of Malaysia.

- Yanez! - he exclaimed in a broken voice. - What are the English doing in Labuan?

- They are gathering strength. - answered the European calmly.

- Perhaps they are plotting something against me?

- I believe so.

- You believe so? I dare them to lift a finger against the tigers of Mompracem! Tell them to try and challenge us in our hideout! The Tiger will destroy every last one of them and will drink all of their blood. Tell me, what do they say about me?

- That it's time to get rid of such a daring pirate.

- And do they hate me much?

- So much that they would gladly lose all their ships in battle to catch you and hang you.

- They wouldn't dare.

- Why? Do you doubt it? My brother, you've been stirring up trouble for many years now, leaving traces of your raids on every coast. Every Dutch, Spanish and English fort has been hit by your cannonballs and the bottom of the sea is covered with ships that you have sunk.

- That is true, but whose fault is it? Have the white men not been relentless with me? Have they not dethroned me with the excuse that I was becoming too powerful? Have they not killed my mother, my brothers and my sisters, in order to destroy my lineage? What had I done to them? The white men never had a reason to complain about me, yet they wanted to crush me. Now I hate them, be they Spanish, or Dutch, or English or your Portuguese countrymen. I loathe them and I will have my revenge, I have sworn it on my family's dead bodies and I will keep my promise! But if I have been merciless with my enemies, I hope a voice will rise to say that sometimes I have also been kind.

- Not just one, but one hundred, one thousand voices can say that you have been even too kind to the weak. - said Yanez. - It can be confirmed by all those women fallen into your hands whom you brought to the ports in order to return them to the white men, risking to be killed. It can be said by the weak tribes which you defended against the racisms of the bullies, by the poor sailors hit by storms, whom you rescued from their sunken ships and overwhelmed with presents, and by so many more people, who will always remember your good deeds, Sandokan. But tell me, my friend, what are you getting at?

The Tiger of Malaysia did not answer. He'd started to pace the room with his arms crossed and his head bowed. Yanez could not figure out what was on his friend's mind, although he had known him for a long time.

- Sandokan. - he asked after a few minutes. - What are you thinking about?

The Tiger stopped and stared at him, but still didn't answer.

- Is something tormenting you? - Yanez went on. - It seems as though you're troubled because the English hate you so much.

Sandokan kept silent.

Yanez got up, lit a cigarette and headed towards a door hidden under the wall tapestry, wishing his friend good night.

Sandokan pulled himself together, stopped his friend and told him: - One word, Yanez.

- Speak, then.

- Do you know that I want to go to Labuan?

- You! To Labuan!

- Why are you so surprised?

- Because you are too bold and you will end up doing something crazy in your worst enemies' hideout.

Sandokan glared at him fiercely.

- My brother... - Yanez went on. - Don't tempt your luck too much. Be careful! Greedy England has set eyes on our Mompracem and perhaps they are just waiting for your death to pounce on your men and do away with them. Be careful, because I have seen a cruiser, full of cannons and packed with soldiers, sailing our waters, and I'm afraid it's a lion waiting for its prey.

- But it will meet the Tiger! - exclaimed Sandokan, clenching his fists.



- Yes, the lion will meet the Tiger and perhaps it will lose the battle, but its dying screams will reach the coasts of Labuan and others will attack you. Many English will die, because you are strong and terrible, but the Tiger will die too.

- Me?

Sandokan leapt forward, contracting his arms in anger, his eyes a flame of fire, his hands closed as if he were holding a firearm. But it was just a fleeting moment, he sat down at the table, drank a full glass in one gulp and said, in a perfectly calm voice: - You are right Yanez... still, I will go to Labuan tomorrow. An irresistible force is pulling me towards those shores and a voice is whispering that I must see the girl with the golden hair, that I must...

- Sandokan!

- Hush, my brother, let's go to sleep.