

## THE TIGER OF HAITI

by Rick Lai

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Scores of theories abound about the true identity of the King of Bohemia encountered by Sherlock Holmes, but very little has been written about man whom Watson disguised as Don Murillo, the Tiger of San Pedro from “The Adventure of the Wisteria Lodge.” To my knowledge, only one solution has been offered concerning Murillo’s real identity. In Dr. Julian Wolff’s *Practical Handbook of Sherlockian Heraldry* (1955), was suggested that Murillo was Dom Pedro II, the last Emperor of Brazil. However, Dr. Wolff was the first to admit that Dom Pedro was never a despot. We must look elsewhere to ascertain the real name of the Tiger of San Pedro.

The search should begin with the country that Watson hid under the alias of San Pedro. Watson portrayed San Pedro as a Central American Republic. San Pedro Sula is a department of Honduras. Fortunately for the people Honduras but unfortunately for my analysis, none of their rulers of the late nineteenth century were as bestial as Don Murillo. Looking elsewhere in Latin America, I discovered that San Pedro is also a department of Paraguay. This country adopted a liberal constitution in 1870 that ushered in a period of political reform for the rest of the century. Don Murillo could never have flourished in such a climate. San Pedro de Macoris is a province in the Dominican Republic. This country presents some intriguing possibilities. The province of San Pedro de Macoris has a capital city of the same name located at the mouth of the Higuamo River. This port could easily have served as the point of departure for a fleeing dictator. The absconding tyrant need not be indigenous to the Dominican Republic. By crossing over the border, he could have originated in Haiti, the Dominican Republic’s neighbor on the island of Hispaniola.

Other evidence points to one of Hispaniola’s two republics. A member of the San Pedro expatriates plotting Murillo’s demise is a mulatto voodoo worshipper. Such an individual is associated with Hispaniola rather than Central America. Watson says the national colors of San Pedro are green and white. Although red and blue are also present, the flags of the Dominican Republic and Haiti both contain green and white.

A search among the various presidents who presided over the two countries proved fruitless. None of them resembled Murillo in appearance or age. It should be noted that a man need not rule in the Caribbean by holding formal office. Batista ruled Cuba for seven years through puppet presidents before assuming the Presidency himself in 1940. Watson would have us believe that Murillo was the *de jure* leader of a foreign country. “The Adventure of the Norway Builder” contains a cryptic reference to “the papers of ex-president Murillo.” Watson portrayal of Murillo as an official ruler could just be an attempt to hide the tyrant’s true identity.

Although Watson depicted Murillo as a man of Spanish descent, the Tiger of San Pedro was able to convince several people that he was an Englishman named Henderson. Holmes stated that Henderson “is either a foreigner or has lived long in the Tropics.” The second possibility suggested by Holmes should be seriously considered. The idea that an Englishman was responsible for atrocities in a foreign land would have shocked Watson’s Edwardian readers. In order to make such a wretch palpable to the public, Watson may have felt compelled to transform him into a Spaniard.

Murillo supposed perished six months after Holmes investigated him. The details of Murillo's death are highly suspicious. Holmes and Watson read a news item that men answering the descriptions of Murillo and his secretary were murdered in Madrid. Watson immediately assumed that Murillo's political foes had finally caught up with him. The Tiger of San Pedro could easily have faked his death. Murillo could have murdered a man of his own height and build and then disfigured him in order to prevent positive identification. Considering his reputation for ruthlessness, the Tiger of San Pedro would have no reservations about augmenting the illusion of his own demise by killing his own loyal secretary. The pursuers from "Wisteria Lodge" would then assume that some other group from San Pedro struck before them.

Watson claims that "Wisteria Lodge" took place in 1892, an impossible year because of the Great Hiatus (May 1891 to April 1894) in Holmes's career. In *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (1967), William S. Baring-Gould assigned "Wisteria Lodge" to March 1890. Furthermore, he contended the matter of Murillo's papers was an entirely separate adventure occurring between April 1894 and August 1895. If we accept this chronology, then Holmes's involvement in another case concerning Murillo after "Wisteria Lodge" lends credence to the belief that the Tiger of San Pedro was alive for many years after his reported assassination in Madrid.

Years after "Wisteria Lodge," an Englishman with a sinister reputation in the Caribbean surfaced in London. This man inaugurated a crime wave that was investigated by one of Holmes's so-called "rivals." If you couldn't hire Holmes as a private detective in the 1890's, then the next best available man would be Martin Hewitt. As Watson's manuscripts reached the public through the good offices of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Hewitt's exploits as recorded by the journalist Brett saw publications under the auspices of Arthur Morrison. In *The Red Triangle* (1903), Hewitt encountered his most dangerous opponent. *The Red Triangle* has recently been reprinted as part of *Arthur Morrison: Complete Fiction Volume I: Martin Hewitt and other Detective Stories* (Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2003).

Hewitt was pursuing the author of a series of robberies and murders. The mastermind strangled his victims with a tourniquet and then marked their foreheads with a red triangle. Hewitt learned his enemy's identity from Victor Peytral. Over twenty years ago, Peytral was an English merchant in Haiti. His wealth was coveted by a diabolical individual named Mayes. As a Caucasian resident of Jamaica, Mayes had joined the rebellion in October 1865. When the insurrection was crushed, Mayes escaped to Haiti. According to Peytral, Mayes "was a man of greater ability than any of the coarse scoundrels in power, and he was worse than all of them." Mayes established himself as "the jackal, the contriver, the power behind the throne, the instigator of half the devilry set going in that unhappy place." Voodoo was even used by Mayes. Peytral met Mayes during the presidency of Michel Domingue (1874-76). Due to Mayes's persecution, Peytral was forced to flee with his family to the Dominican Republic. This flight resulted not only in the loss of Peytral's fortune but the death of his two sons. When Domingue was overthrown in a violent revolution, he and Mayes fled the country. Domingue died in exile in 1878, but Mayes survived. For the next fifteen years, Peytral struggled to rebuild his fortune in the Dominican Republic. During this period, Peytral heard the rumor that Mayes was in China. In 1891, Peytral accumulated enough wealth to settle in England with his wife and daughter. Years later, Peytral read the details of the

Red Triangle murders in the newspapers. Mayes had strangled his political enemies with a tourniquet in Haiti. The foreheads of the victims in Haiti had been unmarked, but Mayes was known to use a red triangle to hypnotize people in voodoo rituals. Recognizing Mayes as the perpetrator of the recent killings, Peytral contacted Hewitt.

Over two decades had passed since Domingue's regime. Mayes's crimes could have taken place no earlier than the 1897. When Hewitt was checking on Mayes's involvement with the eccentric Jacob Mason, Brett wrote that "the season was autumn and night fell early." Mayes later stole the secret Admiralty Code. This theft generated great anxiety because Britain "was on the verge of war with a great European state." The fear was most likely generated by the Fashoda Crisis in which war nearly erupted with France due to rival claims to the Sudan. The dispute started when French troops occupied Fashoda in July 1898, and was defused by an Anglo-French agreement in March 1899. Therefore, *The Red Triangle* occurred in the fall of 1898.

Although Domingue only administered Haiti for two years, Peytral hinted that the previous Haitian presidents had been closely aligned with Mayes. It could be argued that Mayes governed Haiti through figureheads for a period beginning shortly after his arrival in late 1865. This interval of eleven years (1865-76) is pretty close to the "ten or twelve years" cited by Watson as Don Murillo's reign in San Pedro.

When Mayes fled Jamaica, he could have adopted an alias in Haiti. This false name could be Murillo. Since Watson sometimes describes the Tiger of San Pedro as Juan Murillo, it is most likely that Mayes's first name (unmentioned in *The Red Triangle*) was John or a variant. Since there is an overabundance of villains named John (e. g. Sunlight, Clay, Silver etc.), I like to imagine that his name was Jonathan.

Both Mayes and Murillo had brilliant black eyes. Mayes's face lacked vitality. Brett described it as "pale" or "palish." This description is reminiscent of Murillo's "parchment face" which was "yellow" and "sapless." Mayes would be in his late fifties or early sixties in *The Red Triangle*. Eight years earlier, Murillo would be around fifty. Mayes's hair was completely black, but Murillo's was grey. The color of Mayes's hair in 1898 was inconsistent with his age. He must have been using hair dye to look younger. Other questions such as Murillo's two daughters, the arrival of his ship in Barcelona in 1886 rather than 1876, and Peytral's total ignorance of the events of "Wisteria Lodge" are explained in the following hypothetical reconstruction of the infamous Mayes's career.

The multiple atrocities of J. Mayes (alias Juan Murillo) during 1865-76 earned him the sobriquet of the Tiger of Haiti. Besides Peytral's sons, Mayes was responsible for the death of two Haitian citizens. Both occupied high government positions. These victims were Victor Durando, the Haitian Minister in London, and a high dignitary named Garcia. When the insurrection against Domingue erupted, Mayes transported all his wealth to the Dominican port of San Pedro de Macoris. Accompanied by his wife, Mayes boarded a ship carrying all his plunder and departed Hispaniola. Arriving in Hong Kong, Mayes established himself under a false name in the British colony. Mayes's first daughter was born in 1877. Shortly after the birth of a second female child in 1879, Mayes's wife died.

During his time in Asia, Mayes probably came into contact with a man whose megalomania matched his own. According to Sax Rohmer's *The Island of Fu Manchu* (1941), the greatest master criminal of all time left Asia in 1880 to visit Haiti for the

purpose of researching the zombie legend. Fu Manchu must have learned about Haitian zombies from Mayes.

One of Mayes's former victims from Haiti arrived in Hong Kong in 1886. Recognizing his old persecutor, he contacted the British colonial authorities in the hope that Mayes could be arrested for his participation in the Jamaican rebellion. To the shock of the ex-resident of Haiti, British officialdom had no desire to prosecute Mayes. Shortly after the suppression of the 1865 insurrection, the Governor of Jamaica, Edward John Eyre, was removed for using excessive force. A conciliatory successor replaced Eyre, and a series of reforms defused the situation. Arresting Mayes now would have revived old wounds. Angered by the apathy of the authorities, Mayes's enemy informed the Hong Kong press. A public furor arose over the presence of the Tiger of Haiti in the colony. The notoriety compelled Mayes to flee Hong Kong by ship with his children, his secretary and his wealth. In order to mask Murillo's true nationality, Watson combined Mayes's flight from Pedro de Macoris and Hong Kong into one journey.

The European press picked up the story of Mayes's departure from Hong Kong. A group of Mayes's enemies from Haiti was organized by Victor Durando's widow and Garcia's son, Aloysius. They pledged themselves to the goal of assassinating Mayes. Still struggling to rebuild his finances in the Dominican Republic, Victor Peytral had no time to read European newspapers and heard only rumors of Mayes's doings. Mayes's ship landed him in Barcelona. Over the next four years, Mayes resided in Madrid, Paris and Rome under various names. The persistent pursuit of the Durando-Garcia group forced Mayes to continually change his residence.

By May 1890, Mayes was in England posing as Mr. Henderson. The events of "Wisteria Lodge" then unfolded. Tracing their enemy to England, Signora Durando and Aloysius Garcia plotted Mayes's death. Mayes turned the tables and slew Garcia. Not having a tourniquet on his person at the time, Mayes contented himself with bashing in Garcia's head. Holmes's inquiries into Garcia's death forced Mayes to leave the country. Mayes then faked his own death in September. Settling in England in 1891, Victor Peytral didn't bother to read the newspapers of the previous year. He knew nothing of the strange doings at Wisteria Lodge or their sequel in Madrid. Not merely content with deceiving his enemies, Mayes proceeded to track down Signora Durando and her accomplices. By 1894, Mayes had murdered all his former pursuers. Holmes was unable to intervene in this vendetta since he was preoccupied with fleeing the remnants of the Moriarty organization during 1891-94.

Mayes's expenditures for his constant changes of address had severely depleted the funds with which he had fled Haiti. In the chaos of the abandonment of his Henderson identity, Mayes had forgotten to take certain important financial papers hidden at his English house, High Gable. Somewhere around 1894-95, Mayes returned to England in order to retrieve the papers. Because High Gable had passed into other hands, Mayes was forced to commit a burglary. High Gable's new owners hired Holmes to investigate. He recovered the papers from Mayes, but the Tiger of Haiti avoided capture.

After a few years of living incognito on the European continent, Mayes's Haitian fortune was exhausted. In the fall of 1898, he returned to England. His purpose was to initiate crimes which would replenish his treasury. Martin Hewitt's companion, Brett, suspected that Mayes wanted money to finance another takeover of Haiti. Mayes also desired revenge on the man from Baker Street. Realizing that Holmes could have

thoroughly researched his Haitian exploits, Mayes used the tourniquet and the red triangle for the purpose of enticing the detective into a lethal trap. Holmes must have been involved in other cases. It was Martin Hewitt who assumed the role of adversary.

Hewitt's hand did not end Mayes's evil existence. While aiming his gun at Hewitt in a decaying house, Mayes was attacked by Victor Peytral. The rotting floor underneath the two combatants collapsed. Locked in each other's arms, the two antagonists fell to the ground. Lying atop Mayes, Peytral was unconscious and uninjured. Suffering from a fractured skull and spine, Mayes died the next day in the hospital.

What happened to Mayes's two daughters? One of them returned to Hispaniola and married a resident of the Dominican Republic. The husband had the surname of Mocquino. The grandson of Mayes was Dr. Rodil Mocquino, the self-styled Voodoo Master who fought The Shadow in the 1930's. Dr. Mocquino modeled his crimes partially after his grandfather's. Like Mayes, the Voodoo Master also used the color red to hypnotize people. The schemes of Dr. Mocquino ultimately concluded with this violent death. The final legacy of the Tiger of Haiti came to an end.