

history of Sooloo that has made any of the reigns of the sultans memorable, although fifteen have since ascended the throne.

Sooloo has from all the accounts very much changed in its character as well as population since the arrival of the Spaniards, and the establishment of their authority in the Philippines. Before that event, some accounts state that the trade with the Chinese was of great extent, and that from four to five hundred junks arrived annually from Cambojia, with which Sooloo principally traded. At that time the population is said to have equalled in density that of the thickly-settled parts of China.

The government has also undergone a change; for the sultan, who among other Malay races is usually despotic, is here a mere cipher, and the government has become an oligarchy. This change has probably been brought about by the increase of the privileged class of *datus*, all of whom were entitled to a seat in the *Ruma Bechara* until about the year 1810, when the great inconvenience of so large a council was felt, and it became impossible to control it without great difficulty and trouble on the part of the sultan. The *Ruma Bechara* was then reduced until it contained but six of the principal *datus*, who assumed the power of controlling the state. The *Ruma Bechara*, however, in consequence of the complaints of many powerful *datus*, was enlarged; but the more powerful, and those who have the largest numerical force of slaves, still rule over its deliberations. The whole power, within the last thirty years, has been usurped by one or two *datus*, who now have monopolized the little foreign trade that comes to these islands. The sultan has the right to appoint his successor, and generally names him while living. In default of this, the choice devolves upon the *Ruma Bechara*, who elect by a majority.

From a more frequent intercourse with Europeans and the discovery of new routes through these seas, the opportunities of committing depredations have become less frequent, and the fear of detection greater. By this latter motive they are more swayed than by any thing else, and if the Sooloos have ever been bold and daring robbers on the high seas, they have very much changed.

Many statements have been made and published relative to the piracies committed in these seas, which in some cases exceed, and in others fall short, of the reality. Most of the piratical establishments are under the rule, or sail under the auspices of the Sultan and *Ruma Bechara* of Sooloo, who are more or less intimately connected with them. The share of the booty that belongs to the Sultan and *Ruma Bechara* is twenty-five per cent. on all captures, whilst the *datus* receive a high price for the advance they make of guns and powder, and for the services of their slaves.