

THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
OF
BENGAL.

—◆—
EDITED BY

JAMES PRINSEP, F. R. S.

SECRETARY OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL ; HON. MEM. OF THE AS. SOC.
OF PARIS ; COR. MEM. OF THE ZOOLOGICAL SOC. OF LONDON, AND OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETIES OF MARSEILLES AND CAEN ; OF THE ACADEMY
OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF PHILADELPHIA ; OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF GENEVA ; OF
THE ALBANY INSTITUTE, &c.

—
VOL. VII.—PART II.

—
JULY TO DECEMBER,
1838.
—

" It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers, and men of science, in different parts of *Asia* will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatic Society at Calcutta ; it will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted ; and will die away, if they shall entirely cease."

SIR WM. JONES.

—
Calcutta :

PRINTED AT THE BAPTIST MISSION PRESS, CIRCULAR ROAD.

SOLD BY THE EDITOR, AT THE SOCIETY'S OFFICE.

1838.



treasury, MADANA HILA, son of SKANNA BHATTA, in the year Sum-but 365 (A. D. 309) on the first day of the light half of the month of Bysakh.

On the seal, SRI' BHATARKA under a bull, as in Mr. WATHEN'S grant, for which see vol. IV. page 475.

VI.—*Information regarding Illanoon Pirates. By Captain BLAKE, H. M. S. Larne.*

In the course of the past year, Capt. STANLEY, H. M. S. *Wolf*, with the *Diana* steamer in company, fell in with a fleet of pirates in the act of attacking some Chinese trading vessels, and having rescued these, the steamer followed, and by its rapid pursuit and well-directed fire captured and destroyed several of the pirates. The prisoners taken on this occasion were carried to *Singapore* for trial, and the Malays were convicted and executed, the facts being such as to prove that the fleet attacked had committed more than one act of piracy, before the British vessels fell in with it. But amongst the prisoners were some *Illanoons*, and it appearing that many of these pirate vessels were of that nation, the Recorder who tried the case would not pass sentence of death upon them, owing to some doubts which arose, as to whether they might not be acting under commission from the Sooltan of *Sooloo*, or from some other recognised prince of that part of the Archipelago. Very little information was procurable as to the political character and circumstances of these *Illanoons*. But they were not wholly unknown, for in the year 1822 it was this same class of pirates who attacked the *Seaflower*, and Mr. FULLERTON, then governor of P. W. Island, was disposed to have sent an expedition for their chastisement, but was restrained by the government of Bengal. There is also an imperfect mention of this race in Mr. MOOR'S recent compilation of notices regarding the Indian Archipelago, which contains the intelligence collected by Mr. HUNT regarding the *Sooloo* Islands in 1814: but the information procurable was altogether so defective, that it was determined to take the occasion of any one of H. M. vessels of war proceeding to the vicinity, to ascertain further particulars regarding them. Captain BLAKE, of H. M. S. *Larne*, found the opportunity of making the desired inquiries, and the following report from that officer is the result. It has been communicated by His Excellency the Naval Commander-in-Chief to the Governor General, and by His Lordship's orders is made available for publication in this journal.

TO SIR FREDERICK L. MAITLAND, K. C. B.

Rear Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.

SIR,

In compliance with your memorandum of this day's date, to "report to you any information I may have been able to obtain during my stay at *Manilla*, respecting the state of piracy in the *Sooloo Sea*," I beg to inform you, that on the arrival at *Manilla*, about two days before my departure, of some *Singapore* papers, containing the particulars that transpired at the trial of the "Illanoo" pirates at *Singapore*, lately captured by Her Majesty's sloop *Wolf* and the Honorable Company's steamer *Diana* off *Tringana*, I sought an interview with Don JOSE ARCONI a post captain in the Spanish royal navy, and Don VILLASICENZIS his assistant, two officers who have been employed for some years in watching and suppressing piracy amongst the southern group of the *Philippine Islands* and *Sooloo Sea*, and I may observe that the former officer, while I was at *Manilla*, received his promotion from Spain for his exertions on this service.

It appeared from their statements, that the "Illanos," as they call them, are a distinct race of people, inhabiting the line of coast comprised within the bight of the bay of that name in the island of *Mindanao*, the shore of which is there one continued line of mangroves and swamp, and which soon communicates with an immensely extensive inland lake. This lake they consider as their stronghold and their home, and these people are termed by the Spaniards "Los Illanos de la Laguna." Here they build and repair their prahus, which they convey to and from the sea by means of ways or platforms constructed of bamboo and ratan and placed on the unsolid surface of the mangrove roots and branches, over which their prahus are hauled to and fro. On this lake too they have their wives or females in the prahus, in which they live, and in short, here they carry on all intercourse with each other as an insulated and distinct community. Born and bred in a life of piracy, they look on it merely as a means of living, and not as a criminal occupation. For this reason they meet with nothing that escapes their attack in the shape of native vessels of those seas; but I was especially assured, and all accounts seem to confirm it, that they are quick and intelligent in the extreme, in discriminating and instantly avoiding a canvas sail, or any vessel of European appearance; and so dexterous are they, that they in a moment lower mast and sail, and are hauled in among the mangrove shores with which the innumerable islands thereabouts abound; and though the *Manilla* government maintains a constant establishment at different points of *Mindanao*, especially at *Samboongan*, it is but rarely that their

falucas, or (gun-boat launches) succeed in capturing any of the "Illanos." Two of them however were surprised and secured in the early part of this year, and their crews amounting together to about sixty were in prison at *Manilla*. As they were not captured in any act of piracy they are merely kept as prisoners, but what their ultimate destination may be I know not.

The distance to which the "Illanos" extend their cruizes is shewn from the late capture off *Tringana*: but I was much surprised, when pointing this out on the chart to the Spanish officers abovementioned, at their assuring me, that they had no doubt the pirates made their round south of *Borneo* to the coast of *Siam*; that there is a pirate tribe on the north end of *Borneo*, daring and atrocious as themselves, between whom and the "Illanos" exists, and always has existed, a most deadly and unextinguishable enmity, and that the latter will never pass by the northern route. If these two tribes of depredators do meet, a most sanguinary conflict ensues, and I was assured, that either of them will even quit their plunder to attack the other, and thus prefer the gratification of feelings of hatred and hostility. The object from which the "Illanos" derive their principal booty in their cruizes, is the captives they make and sell on all parts of the eastern and southern coasts of *Borneo*, and in the *Macassar* straits. To this they principally direct their attention, after they have supplied themselves with a sufficient number to pull at the oar and do the other work of their prahus.

They seldom cumber themselves with any thing from the cargo of a capture, save gold dust or other valuable goods.

Though other descriptions of pirates infest those seas, the "Illanos" are always known from the peculiar construction and dexterous management of their prahus. A drawing of one of them was shewn to me, which minutely corresponded with the description given of the one captured off *Tringana*.

It has been supposed that these "Illanos" are subject to and act under the directions of the rāja of *Sooloo*, but I was most positively assured by the Spanish officers mentioned above, as also by His Excellency Don ANDRES GARCIA CAMBER, governor of *Manilla*, that such is not the case. Captain Don JOSE ARCONI has had some communication with the rāja of *Sooloo*, and is acquainted with his situation, his means and his habits. He assured me that the rāja had neither means, power, nor influence over these "Illanos;" that they are a race purely piratical, of a distinct community of wild ranging predatory habits, dependent on no one, and acknowledging no external authority. It is true they frequent the island of *Sooloo* as they please, quite unmolested,

and without hindrance, as well as the other innumerable islands and mangrove banks (called by us the *Sooloo* islands), supposed to be subject to the rāja's sovereignty. One of these, called "*Bang een ghee*," eastward of *Sooloo*, is a principal resort for them, as it affords convenience and facility for their piratical pursuits. It is principally mangrove growing upon coral banks, and is well calculated for protection and secure concealment.

I was informed by Don JOSE ARCONI, that he had witnessed at one time nearly two hundred "Illano" prahus, great and small, off this island, and on attempting to chase them with his "Falucas," they outstripped all pursuit, and disappeared in the most extraordinary manner, dousing masts and sails, and taking refuge among the mangroves. He compared these haunts to extensive nests, or banks of rats, where they can fly from one refuge to another, and which no means, we Europeans here possess, could ever succeed in annihilating.

The island of *Baselan*, I was also informed, is a common resort of the "Illanos," and some of its inhabitants are pirates from their birth, and it is not unusual for them to identify themselves with the "Illanos." Although the whole *Sooloo* group is subject to visits from them from time to time during their cruizes, they are in the habit of resorting to no other fixed points except "*Baselan*" and "*Bang een ghee*," the first of which is an island of very considerable size. They generally obtain their supplies of ammunition, &c. by trafficking with places of their acquaintance, which are in communication with the various small Dutch settlements on the coast of *Borneo* and the islands.

The boldness and audacity of the "Illanos" cannot well be exaggerated. They have been known to enter the bay of *Manilla*, passing the signal station on the island of *Corregidor*, where two gun-boats are generally stationed, and to capture boats or small vessels within the bay. This I believe was proved on the late trial by two boys, who were captured by them in a boat off *Cavite*, about eight miles from the city of *Manilla*. From the "*Laguna*" which they inhabit in *Mindanao*, they have been known not unfrequently to push a passage in their prahus out to the northward by a small river which runs from the lake into the sea at "*Cay-gain*," where there is a Spanish settlement, a fort, and always a company of soldiers, whose random fire from musketry, after they have got clear, they have ridiculed by loud shouts and wild yells of defiance. If they have reason to suspect that a particular look-out is kept for them when on their passage to seaward by the Spanish falucas stationed at *Samboangan* and its neighbourhood, their quickness and penetration are incredible. They will move their

prahus with caution along the edge of the mangrove banks by night, even for ever so short a distance, and haul them into an impenetrable concealment ere the dawn of day, and at last gain their object by persevering in their progress night after night, while look-outs are kept constantly on the edge of the mangrove banks unseen during the day.

The Spanish officers confessed to me, that their attempts to capture them were almost uniformly foiled by their quickness, cunning and sagacity; and strange as it may seem, these extraordinary marauders, acknowledged foes to all they meet, through the advantage of locality, their own adroitness, the peculiar construction of their prahus, and other natural circumstances so favorable to their lawless pursuits, maintain in spite of every thing a constant intercourse with their home the *Laguna*, almost without interruption.

It may not be irrelevant here to mention, that a treaty (so called) was concluded between the rāja of *Sooloo* and the late acting governor of *Manilla*, SALAZAR, about two or three years since; this treaty is however proverbially ridiculed at *Manilla*, as having been made with an individual ignorant of the faith or meaning of a treaty, a mere cypher, nominally a rāja, but possessing no control over his subjects who regard not his authority and yield him no allegiance. This may tend to confirm the assurances made me, that the rāja of *Sooloo* possesses not a shadow of power or influence over the community of the "Illano" pirates.

The foregoing details are recited from memory, but are the true substance of information I gathered, during a long verbal communication, over charts, with the two very intelligent Spanish naval officers before mentioned: and though they may not throw much additional light on the information already abroad on the subject of piracy in the *Sooloo* sea, they certainly tend to confirm, or explain some remarkable points of the evidence, that transpired during the late trial of the "Illano" pirates at *Singapore*.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. J. BLAKE,
Commander.

Her Majesty's Sloop Larne, }
Toong-koo Bay, 13th Aug. 1838. }