

The Grave-Stone of Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca (1458-1477 A. D.)

BY J. P. MOQUETTE.

(Translated by Dr. R. O. Winstedt from the *Journal of the Batavian Society*, Vol. LIX, Part 6).

In the J. R. A. S., S. B., June 1918, pp. 47-48, Dr. R. O. Winstedt gave a description with photos of two grave-stones purporting to be from the tomb of Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca.

It occurred to me at once that the two stones in no way matched, either in shape or ornament or workmanship. The head-stone undoubtedly once was placed on a tomb, while the other stone* belongs to the kind that lies on the ground. On all tombs and graves known to me head and foot stones correspond and it would be very strange if there were any departure from this custom at Malacca especially in the resting place of Sultan Mansur Shah. For the rest I could not learn much from the plates accompanying the article since the inscriptions, blackened for clearness, were thus made illegible.

Winstedt gave readings of the inscriptions on the head-stone and on the sides of the stone from a version procured by Mr. Blagden from Hervey (*op. cit.* p. 47).

I was certain that after the word Mansur should come the name of his father and that the date given was impossible, because (1) one word was not accounted for and (2) the Malay word *dua* seemed very strange in a purely Arabic inscription.

Fortunately I met Mr. I. H. Evans, Curator of the Taiping Museum, who promised to look up the stones for me at Singapore. Both the stones are in Raffles Museum and plaster-casts were made for me by Mr. Valentine Knight, then acting for Major Moulton the Director. Both, as shown in Dr. Winstedt's photos, are blackened. The head-stone has apparently been broken off the tomb, so that the inscription on the lowest line is damaged, and the other stone has a large round hole making the middle line of obverse and reverse illegible. As I am positive that the second stone neither came from the grave of Sultan Mansur nor from any other tomb, I shall leave it out of this discussion.

* NOTE. The stone, in my opinion, has no historical value. Heer G. P. Rouffaer informs me that the round hole in it shows that it was used for the taking of oaths. Should the headstone belonging to it be discovered, possibly my view might not stand. [There is a stone at Pengkalan Kempas, Negri Sembilan, with a round hole in it, which tradition avers will tighten on the arm of the person who takes a false oath R. O. W.].

The head-stone is worth deciphering, because it is so far as is known the only extant stone of the tombs of the Sultans of Malacca and secondly because Mansur Shah played a great part in Malay and Chinese records.

By the help of the casts I was able to decipher the inscriptions and by reconstructing a pair of damaged words to get an absolutely certain reading of the names and of the date. Only the first line presented difficulties but by the help of my friend R. A. Dr. Husein Jaya-diningrat a reading in my opinion satisfactory was secured, so that all the words on that line with the first word of the second line duly accounted for are meant to glorify not the Sultan as in Hervey's version but the grave. Major J. C. Moulton kindly sent me at my request photos of all four sides of the stone which is now placed on a cement pedestal for its better preservation. I give my reconstruction for each side on the accompanying plates so that any one more competent than I may express his views on it.

The reading is as follows: (Plate I. obverse):

هذه الروضة المقدسة المطهرة الزاوية الصافية المنورة السلطان العادل
الملك البازل السلطان (ن) منوصو (ر) شاه بن مظفر شاه المرحوم

Plate II (Reverse) reads:—

قد انتقل من دار المحال الي دار امال يوم الاربعا من رجب سنة
ثنتين وثمانين وثمانماية من ال (هجرة) النبوة (ية) ال (مصطفوية)

Compared with the Hervey version it thus reads: *Hadzihi al-raudzat al-mukaddasat al-mutahharat al-zawiyat al-safiyat al-munawwarat lil Sultan al-adil al-badzil al-Sultan Mansur Shah bin Muzaffar Shah al-marhum: kad intakala min dar al-mahal ila dar amal yaum al-arbaa min Rajab sanat thanatein wa thamanin wa thaman mi'ah min al-Hijrah al-Nubawyah al-mustafawyah*
Or translated

"This is the consecrated the holy grave the brilliant illuminated tomb of the just Sultan, the magnanimous ruler Sultan Mansur Shah son of the deceased Muzaffar Shah. He removed from this mortal abode to the abode of hope on Wednesday of Rajab in the year 882 after the Hijrah of the Prophet, the Chosen One."

As my reading of the gravestone differs in many places from that of Hervey, I must add an explanation of some details. The difference in my conception of the words of the first line is great and I take it that *mim* has been broken off in the middle words, and read المطهرة (ة stands in the lower corner), but the reading is of little or no consequence since, once we know who the person entombed is, it matters relatively little if one takes a word to be in praise of the grave or of the dead. However the correct reading of the bottom line on Plate I is of very great importance for the

determination of the father's name; it is now irrefragably established that we have to do with the gravestone of Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca, who according to all accounts was a son of Sultan Muzaffar Shah. It is clear that between "Mansur" and "Muzaffar" the word *بن* stands, but the "r" of "Mansur" and the "n" of "Sultan" cannot be traced. Mistakes on these gravestones are very frequent so that it is quite possible the mason omitted the letters. As regards the reverse, it is clear that in the top line not *dar al-wirad* but *dar amal* occurs. More important however is the date. The cast showed at once how the faulty reading *dua* came about. The flourish of the word *min* has been mistaken for a *dal* and combined with the *wau* of the year been read *دو*.

In 882 A.H. the month of Rajab began on a Thursday, the 9th of October, 1477 A.D.

So following my reading one must choose between Wednesday the 7th, 14th, 21st or 28th of Rajab 882 A.H. = Wednesday the 15th, 22nd, 29th October or 5th November, 1477 A.D.

Seeing that it seldom happens that the word for "year" is omitted in dates, I have assumed it occurs on this stone and read

سنة with Hervey. I must point out however that one can equally well read *سنة* = 6, so that the reading would run

بسم الاربعاء سنة من رجب ثنتين وثمانين وثمانماية

Wednesday 6 Rajab 882 A.H. = Tuesday 14 October, 1477 A.D.

My emendations for the words defaced on the bottom are borne out by the legible lines and require no defence.

Hervey's reading of the side inscriptions is untenable. It is (Plate III) the beginning of a verse repeatedly found on stones in Northern Sumatra:—

انما الدنيا فناء ليس الدنيا ثبوت
الا انما الدنيا كبيت نسجه العنكبوت

which Professor Dr. van Ronkel translated for me as follows:—

"The world is but transitory; the world has no permanence; the world is but as a house made by a spider."

The end of this text occurred probably on the lost foot-stone and the adventures of the stone we have discussed testify to the truth of the words.

I give my best thanks to all who have been kind enough to assist me.



Moquette, J P and Winstedt, Richard. 1922. "The Grave-Stone of Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca (14584477 A. D.)." *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 85, 1–3.

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