

The Advent of Muhammadanism in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago.

BY R. O. WINSTEDT.

Muhammad died in 632 A.D. By the year 915 A.D. Arab traders had voyaged to Kedah, and it is related¹ that they found there a large and important port for trade. It is highly improbable that they made many converts; but undoubtedly some of them married native wives and Muhammadanism must have made headway in the port itself.

In 1292 A.D. Marco Polo visited Sumatra. He relates how he found Muhammadans in the port of Perlak, but that the people of Samudra² and Pasai were still heathen. In Marco Polo's day Kedah had fallen from its previous estate as a trading port and Pasai had taken its place. The *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (*J. R. A. S., S. B., No. 66, pp. 9-15*) gives a story of Merah Silu ruler of Pasai marrying a daughter of the ruler of Muhammadan Perlak and taking the title of Sultan Maliku's-Salleh on his conversion to Muhammadanism; and this story is corroborated in the seventh chapter of the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu*. Sultan Maliku's-Salleh died in 1297 A.D. At that time Pasai was the chief trading port in these seas.

To this day are preserved Muhammadan tomb-stones at Pasai, dated 1407 A.D. They have been identified by a Dutch archaeologist³ as coming from Cambay in India: and they bear the closest resemblance to tomb-stones at Grisek in Java and at Bruas, the site of an old Malay kingdom between Perak and the Dindings. Of course, the early missionaries were not only Arabs but Indians from Gujerat and Malabar or Kalinga as it was then called. And the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* furnishes confirmatory evidence of the custom of bringing tomb-stones from India to Malayan countries (Chapter VII).

The *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* records (Chapters XX and XXXII) how there was constant intercourse between Pasai and Malacca. In his "Commentaries," Affonso d' Albuquerque gives a native

¹ "Cathay and the way thither," Col. H. Yule, C.B. (London, Hakluyt Society, 1866).

² In 1346 Ibn Batuta found the king of Samudra an ardent Moslem.

³ "De grafsteen en te Pasé en Grissee vergeleken met dergelijke monumenten uit Hindoestan" by J. P. Magnette, *Tijd. Bat. Gen.* LIX (1912), p. 536 and p. 208.

tradition that Iskandar Shah of Malacca married a princess from Muhammadan Pasai. The Chinese records chronicle that the Malays of Malacca had become Muhammadans by the year 1409 A.D. Anyhow all tradition describes Sultan Muhammad Shah as the first Muhammadan prince of Malacca. That prince ascended the throne in 1403 A.D. and died in 1414 A.D. In that century Malacca succeeded Pasai, as Pasai formerly had succeeded Kedah, as the chief centre of sea-trade. The port of Malacca was filled with foreigners, Arabs, Indians, Javanese, missionaries, traders, mahouts and so on. And the path of the Muhammadan missionary was still hard. Witness some of the stories told against him in the *Sējara Mēlayu*:

“A boat came from Jeddah to Malacca. In it was a man of great religious learning, by name Maulana Sadar Jahan. Sultan Mahmud Shah became his pupil and ordered his son Raja Ahmad also to take lessons. One night the Bendahara Sri Maharaja sat discussing religion with the missionary, when Sri Rama a confirmed drinker entered the worse for liquor. The Sultan bade his servants bring food for Sri Rama; and they brought it in a silver bowl, covered with an embroidered cloth. Sri Rama saw the Bendahara Sri Maharaja talking with the Arab teacher, and remarked, ‘Come on, I’ll have a lesson too.’ The Bendahara invited him to be seated. Sadar Jahan saw that Sri Rama was drunk and noticed that his breath smelt of spirits: so he observed in Arabic, ‘Drink is the mother of all beastliness.’ Sri Rama retorted, ‘Covetousness is the mother of all beastliness, and you came here in search of profit.’ The missionary was exceedingly wroth and went home, refusing all efforts of the Bendahara to detain him.”

And again:—

“Tun Mai, whose nickname was The Hairy Caterpillar, took lessons from the Arab teacher. He was not apt at learning, because it is hard for a Malay to pronounce harsh Arabic sounds. So the teacher was upset and remarked, ‘Your pronunciation is very bad; I make one sound and you another.’ Quoth Tun Mai, ‘Yes, I find it very hard to pronounce Arabic, as it is not my own language. If you talked Malay, you would be in a similar case.’ The teacher replied, ‘What difficulty is there in the pronunciation of Malay that I cannot master.’ Quoth Tun Mai, ‘Say *kuching*.’ The Arab said ‘*Kusing*.’ Quoth Tun Mai, ‘Wrong! Say *kunyit*.’ The Arab said ‘*Kuzit*.’ ‘Say *nyiru*.’ The Arab said *niru*. Said Tun Mai the Hairy Caterpillar, ‘A pretty notion you have of pronouncing Malay! Just like my notion of pronouncing Arabic.’ Then Sadar Jahan was exceedingly angry and declared, ‘Never again will I give lessons to Tun Mai the Hairy Caterpillar.’”

All sorts of merchandise came to Malay ports like Malacca from Arabia, India, Persia; and references to such novelties are frequent in Malay folk-tales, the *Ht. Awang Sulong*, the *Ht. Sērī Rama* and so on:—

Baju-nya bĕlēdu ainu'l-banat.....
Kain-nya kain Bugis Kĕmbayat.....
Kĕris-nya sĕmpana ganja iras,
Kĕratan tongkat nabi Adam,
Sĕrpai bĕsi Khĕrsani.....
Di-pakai jubah khasah halus,
Jubah mĕleret sampai ka-kaki;
Sĕrban Kashmiri warna hijau,
Buatan Arab di-nĕgĕri Mĕkkah.....
Kĕris sĕmpana ganja iras
Pamur janji di-tĕngah
Pamur jilallah di-tuntong,
Pamur alif tĕrdiri sĕndiri-nya;
Bukan-nya bĕsi sa-barang bĕsi.
Bĕsi lĕbeh pĕnganching kaabah Allah.

Cambay, Khorassan, Kashmir, Mecca were all familiar names to these Malay buyers of foreign merchandise.

Sultan Mansur Shah, who died in 1475 A.D., conquered Pahang Kampar and Indragiri and introduced Muhammadanism into those countries. His tomb-stone beautifully carved, with an inscription in Arabic, lies now in two fragments outside the front door of the Residency at Malacca. Certainly it was no Malay craftsman who did the lettering.

This tomb-stone of Sultan Mansur Shah, if the date has been correctly deciphered as 880 A.H., is a few years later than that of the Muhammadan saint at Pangkalan Kĕmpas. The Indian lettering on the Pangkalan Kĕmpas stone has never been deciphered; but the Malay inscription in Arabic lettering, evidently done locally and by an amateur carver, records that it marks the grave of one Shaikh Ahmad Makhtar Ramali ibni Marfu Talani and was erected in A.H. 872 (corresponding to 1467 A.D.) "in the reign of Sultan Shah Mansur." It is possible that parts of the Shaikh's tomb were constructed locally and that other parts, like the ornate so-called "Sword," were brought from India, as we have seen was a common custom. The word "Allah" stands carved in high relief on the "Sword," so that one may surmise it is a genuine Muhammadan relic, and not a Hindu stone adapted for a Muhammadan shrine, as might be contended if "Allah" were cut into the surface of the stone; a word in high relief must almost certainly form part of the original ornamentation. It shows the interest that has been taken in our few archaeological remains, when as late as 1910 a keen enquirer like the late Mr. Barnes could write of the tomb-stone of Raja Fatimah of Pahang, which is dated A.H. 901 = A.D. 1496, as "the oldest dated grave-stone in the Peninsula"! (*J. R. A. S., S. B. No. 60, pp. 37-39*). Like Sultan Mansur's tomb-stone Raja Fatimah's stone has an inscription in the Arabic language and the lettering too is not amateurish but less fine perhaps than that on the Sultan's.

Unless the author of the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* has been guilty of anachronism Malay translations of the Muhammadan stories of Hanafiah and Amir Hamza were classics by the year 1511 A.D. and Malacca's warriors read them on the eve of the Portuguese attack which was to break Malay power in Malacca. Anyhow they were classics by 1616 A.D., the date of the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu*.

The last Malay ruler of Malacca became the first ruler of Johor. By him and his descendants Muhammadanism was introduced into Johor, Riau and Lingga.

But after the fall of Malacca, Acheen became the centre of native trade and of the Muhammadan religion. In 1524 A.D. Sultan Ibrahim of Acheen conquered Pidië and Pasir. From 1606 till 1636 A.D. Acheen was ruled by Sultan Iskandar Muda, called Mahkota Alam. By him were conquered Indrapura, Deli, Siak, Johor, Kedah and Perak. In his reign all sorts of books were written in Malay or translated from the Arabic into Malay at Acheen; for instance, the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* and the *Bustanu's-salatin*. The *Bustanu's-salatin* was written by Shaikh Nuru' d-din of Gujerat. This Shaikh Nuru'd-din Muhammad Jilani ibni Ali ibni Hasanji ibni Muhammad Hamid a'r-Raniri also did into Malay the religious work, the *Siratu'l-mustakim* in the year 1634 A.D. Our *Kedah Annals*, the *Hikayat Marong Mahawangsa*, relate (*J. R. A. S., S. B., No. 72, p. 115*), how the king of Acheen and Shaikh Nuru'd-din sent letters and copies of the *Babu'l-nikah* and *Siratu'l-mustakim* to the raja of Kedah on the occasion of his country's conversion to Islam:—a story which, as Mr. Blagden has pointed out, helps to fix the date of the *Kedah Annals*. The Achinese account gives 1474 A.D. as the date of Kedah's acceptance of Muhammadanism; and the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* relates that a raja of Kedah went to Malacca to receive recognition as ruler from the king of Malacca, a Muhammadan prince: so that it is probable that Muhammadanism had been accepted at the Kedah court in the XVth century, though the conquest of Kedah by Acheen may have given it a fillip in the XVIIth century. Possibly conquest by Acheen stimulated Muhammadan influence in Perak too. Anyhow in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries Sayids of the great Hadthramast house of Ahmad bin Isa al-Mohajir¹ (*Paper on Malay Subjects, Law Part II, pp. 1-7, R. J. Wilkinson*) gained enormous power at the Perak court.

As for the spread of Islam in Sumatra. From Acheen it spread to Ulakan; from Ulakan into Minangkabau:—*Ulakan sĕrambi Acheh, Acheh sĕrambi Mĕkkah*. In the XVIIth century the people along the coast of the Lampong district began to be converted, and in the XVIIIth the people up-country too.

In Java, early centres of Muhammadan influence were Grisek Surabaya and Madura.

¹ This family will form the subject of a later paper.

The first Arab missionary to Java was Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who came to Grisek and lived there till he died in 1419 A.D. Sĕdayu, Tuban, Japara, and Demak soon became Muhammadan. In 1478 A.D. the Muhammadan princes of Java overthrew the old great Hindu kingdom of Majapahit. The ruler of Demak seized the regalia and proclaimed himself Sultan, and he and his descendants drove Hinduism to take refuge in Blambangan and Bali. The fall of Majapahit released its dependencies Palembang, Jambi and Inderagiri, and in those countries too Muhammadanism gained ground.

At the time of the fall of Majapahit there was an Arab missionary Shaikh Nuru'd-din Ibrahim bin Maulana Israil, or Sunan Jati as he styled himself, who lived at Jati near Cheribon. He and his family gained great power. Cheribon came to be governed by this Shaikh Nuru'd-din; Jakarta, or the district of Batavia, by one of his sons and Bantam by Hasanu'd-din another of his sons.

In the middle of the XVIth century a missionary went from Palembang to Borneo and made converts first at Sukadana and at Madan.

In 1606 A.D. a Minangkabau trader converted the raja of Pallo in the Celebes; and soon the people of Boni and Lui also became Muhammadans.

At the end of the XVth century the princes of Ternate and Tidore in the Moluccas and the people of Amboyna became Muhammadan.

Study of the genealogies of the ruling families of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and even Mindanao (*Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion*, N. M. Saleeby) will throw still more light on the spread of this one of the world's great religions among the heathen peoples of the Malay archipelago.

An account of the conversion of the Malayan races of the archipelago is given in vol. II of the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* under the caption "Mohammedanisme," but chronological points have been further corrected by B. J. O. Schriëke in *Het Boek van Bonang*, Utrecht, 1916. An account of the early Muhammadan missionaries to Acheen is to be found in the *Bustanu's-salatin*, in the fragment published by Niemann in his *Bloemlezing uit Maleische geschriften*: Snouck Hurgronje's *The Achinese*, Vol. II, pp. 10-20 contains an authoritative summary of their doctrines. Van der Tuuk's "Account of the Malay MSS. belonging to the Royal Asiatic Society" gives a catalogue of the works composed by the author of the *Bustanu's-salatin*, and by the pantheists Hamzah of Barus and Shamsu'd-din of Pasai (*Essays relating to Indo-China*, vol. II, pp. 49-52). D. A. Rinkes has written a brochure entitled *Abdoerraof van Singkel*, (Friesland) being a study of Muhammadan mysticism in Java and Sumatra and containing a useful bibliography.



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