

XXXII. *A Cufic Inscription found in Ceylon, communicated by Sir A. JOHNSTON, V.P.R.A.S.; with a Translation by the Rev. SAMUEL LEE, A.M., Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge.\**

Read February 3d, 1827.

DEAR SIR :

Cambridge, Nov. 27, 1826.

Herewith you will receive the Ceylon Papers which you were so good as to lend me. I should have returned them much earlier had not my Lectures absorbed nearly the whole of my time. You will perceive I have made an attempt to decipher the whole of the inscription, which, together with a translation of it, I now send you. I have availed myself of the previous endeavours of Major Stewart, as far as I could coincide with him in opinion; the rest I have made out as well I could. It is as follows :

INSCRIPTION.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ  
 الرَّحِيمِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ  
 رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ  
 اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ وارْحَمْ وَتَجَاوِزْ عَنْ عَبْدِ  
 ابْنِ عَبْدِكَ خَلْدِ بْنِ ابْنِ بَعَانَةَ قَدْ تَرَكْتُ  
 الدُّنْيَا وَافْتَقَرْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنْتَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْهُ وَقَدْ يَزِلُ  
 ...كَ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْزُولٍ مِنْهُ اللَّهُمَّ فَاغْفِرْ ذَنْبَهُ مِنْهُ  
 لِيَبْقَ تَبْرَةً وَعَطَهُ آخِرَةً وَيَتَبَرَّ وَذَمَّهُمْ وَاسْتَزِيدَ التَّوْبَةَ  
 ...حَيْثُ نَدَى وَأَمِينَ وَعُلُوًّا جَعَلَ نَبِيَّنَا الْخَيْرَ يَتَنَلُّ  
 ....دَلَّنَا الرَّشِدَ دَلِيلَةً وَنَبَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ  
 اقْتَنَتْ حُجَّتَهُ وَرَدَّهُ حَوْضَ تَنْبِهِ أَمِينَ رَبِّ  
 الْعَالَمِينَ وَكُتِبَ يَوْمَ الْاِثْنِينَ لِخَمْسِ خَلِينَ مِنْ  
 رَجَبِ سَنَةِ سَبْعِ وَثَلَاثِينَ وَثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ وَبِالْقَارِيَةِ يَتَمُّ  
 أَمِينَ دِينَ وَرَبِيحَةَ سَنَةِ سَبْعَةِ عَشَرَ  
 وَثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ نَبِيِّهِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَسَلَّمَ

\* For a reduced fac-simile of the inscription see the accompanying plate.

## TRANSLATION.

In the name of the compassionate and merciful God. There is no God but God. Mohammed is the prophet of God. May the blessing and peace of God be upon him. O God pardon, have mercy upon, and pass away from (the sins of) a servant, the son of thy servant, Khálid Ibn Abu Bakáya (Takáya or Nakáya), (who) has left the world, and (who) was dependent on thee; but thou wast sufficient without him: (who) has departed to thee, and thou art his best place of departure. O God pardon his sin, that his piety may remain, and grant him his last (reward), and that he may be justified. And protect thou, and multiply favour and security to him. And may he (God) appoint our excellent prophet supreme, that he may afford to us and shew us the truth clearly; for he has admonished with the established word, and his decision has obtained, and his resistance is (as) the (depth) lake of reproach. Amen. Lord of Worlds. It was written on the second day (of the week) five nights taken out of (the month) Rejeb (*i. e.* on the 5th of Rejeb) in the year 337.\* And in the vicinity he completed a security for religion with (other) conveniences, in the year 317. May God give blessing and peace upon his prophet Mohammed.

This, as I have already remarked, is the best interpretation which I have been able to give of this interesting inscription. Allow me now to say a few words on those passages of it which have appeared to me doubtful. We have in the fifth line *ابو ساه* which has been translated by Abu Bakáya (Takáya or Nakáya): where the first word *ابو Abu*, is incorrect, the rules of the grammar requiring *ابي Abi*, not *Abu*, and the second is doubtful, in consequence of the omission of the points necessary to distinguish the letters. But I have further doubts as to the letters themselves, from comparing the two copies together, which, in this, as in other instances, differ very widely. Upon turning over the travels of Ibn Batouta (which I hope to have it in my power shortly to give to the public), I find that he visited a grave in the island of Ceylon, which contained the remains of *ابو عبد الله ابن خفيف* Abu Abd Allah Ibn Khafeef. Whether this can be the same with the name in this inscription, I will not take upon me to say. It is possible and not improbable that it is. But nothing can be said on this point, until we get better copies of the inscription, or a sight of the original itself.

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\* Of the Hejira.

In the beginning of the seventh line we have only the letter ك with a space; which I have translated by supposing the word اليك to have been originally there, although there is still a slight anomaly, as يزل not يزل should have preceded: yet, as the word منزل *Munzarwal* follows, I do not see what other word could have occupied this space. Again عنه would be more consistent with the idiom of the language than منه at the end of the seventh line; but as منه is more agreeable to the Cufic copy of the inscription than عنه, I have been content to allow this deviation, until we have better means of ascertaining what the inscription really is. In the next line, يتبرر and تبرر would be more grammatical than تبرر and يتبرر; but, as before, I can see my way no clearer, until I see a better copy of the inscription itself. At the end of the eighth line we seem to have a defect, which I would thus supply, التتعم *favour, grace, &c.* the last two letters of which may have been written at the commencement of the following line, for which there is manifestly a space left. At the end of the next line there is also a defect, which seems only to want one letter, *viz. alef.* At the beginning of the next, *i. e.* the tenth line, there is again a space and the letter ي is wanting, which I have supplied in the translation. Of the remainder of this line, I think, there can be no doubt; and the same, perhaps, may be said of the greater part of the next. Of the last word but one of the twelfth line I think there can hardly be two opinions, the first letter being evidently one of the ح class, though the rest are a little obscure: and, if this be the case, a considerable difficulty as to the first date will vanish. There now can remain only one difficulty of any importance, and that is, as to the second date. Of the form and signification of the last two words in the thirteenth line, I think there cannot be much doubt; and if so we may be sure that reference is made to some event independent of that mentioned in the first date. The three first words of the next line I have decyphered and translated as being آمين دين وريحة "A security of (or for) religion, with conveniences." If this be the real purport of the passage, the erection of a religious house, with offices, gardens, &c., is meant, and the circumstance perhaps been recorded here, as being the work of *piety*\* alluded to above, and which it is the wish of the writer should remain. This passage however

\* The word بر, from which the word in the inscription is derived, is often used by Mohammedan writers in the sense of legacies for religious purposes.

is capable of another interpretation. Renaudot tells us, pp. 102, 103, "Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine," that the Arab merchants were about this time in great insecurity in this island in consequence of a barbarous custom which prevailed among the Indians, whereby both their lives and property were often sacrificed, and that the king made a regulation prohibiting its recurrence in future. If then the passage relates to this circumstance, perhaps the true reading will be آمينَ دِينِ وَرَجَزٍ. "A security of (or from) debt and deceit : " and to shew perhaps that this was brought about by the endeavours of this good man just twenty years before his death. For this interpretation the inscription on the smaller paper seems to make, as we have either a ر or a ز evidently concluding the last word. The other, or larger copy, is however on the other side, the last word being there رَوَاجٌ, another form only of the word رِجَّةٌ, but which can be made by no means to correspond with رَجَزٌ, which seems to be the reading of the smaller copy. The first of these words moreover, in the smaller copy, is apparently مَآئِنِ, which, at first, may have been مَآمِنِ a place of security, which would suit the passage rather better than آمينَ in whichever of the significations proposed the following words are to be taken. Still the word آمينَ is not objectionable, as we find the Temple at Mecca occasionally called البيتَ الأَمِينِ, and the province in which it is situated البلدَ الأَمِينِ, which word may have been taken and applied as an epithet to any similar religious building or station.

I am sorry that I have not been able to command more leisure than I have for the consideration of this inscription, and hoping that the time I have taken has not been productive of any material inconvenience,

I remain &c.,

(Signed) SAMUEL LEE.

To Mr. W. HUTTMANN.