THE YUPA INSCRIPTIONS OF KING MULA-VARMAN, FROM KOETEI (EAST BORNEO). 1

BY

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In a meeting of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences held on 3rd June, 1879, Mr. K. F. Holle drew attention to an inscribed stone reported to exist, together with a large-sized pirogue, somewhere in the Native State of Koetei, East Borneo. Inquiries subsequently made from the Assistant Resident of Koetei proved the report to be true. That official in a letter dated 9th September of the same year informed the Batavian Society that some inscribed stones and other relics of the Hindu period did exist at Moeara Kaman, three stages above Pelarang and that on the same spot the remains of a Chinese junk were found. On the 26th August, 1880, the Assistant Resident sent a further communication to the effect that His Highness, the Sultan of Koetei, had generously decided to present the four inscribed stones to the Society and that they were ready to be despatched to Batavia at the first opportunity. They arrived before the close of the year and were deposited in the archaeological section of the Batavia Museum. 2

In the meanwhile a facsimile of one of the inscriptions had reached Professor Kern who made the first announcement of the important discovery in a meeting of the Royal Academy of Sciences held at Amsterdam on 13th September 1880. He at once gave a transcript and translation of the inscription which was composed in pure Sanskrit and which, in Kern’s opinion,

1 I here wish to give expression to my indebtedness to Mrs. Kuenen-Wicksteed for her kindly revising my manuscript, and to Mr. G. P. Rouffaer for some useful suggestions made in connection with this paper.

was to be assigned to the fourth century of our era. After this preliminary announcement Professor Kern received from Mr. Holle copies of the three inscriptions (including the one mentioned above), that on the fourth stone being almost completely obliterated. The materials supplied enabled him at a subsequent meeting of the Royal Academy to present a paper in which the Koetei inscriptions were discussed in detail. It appeared in the Proceedings of the Academy together with facsimiles of the inscriptions. In his article Kern gave complete transcripts and translations of the three inscriptions, discussed the various questions they raise, and gave special attention to the chronological problem in connection with the palaeographical evidence afforded by the inscriptions. He added an interesting disquisition on the history of the various alphabets in use in the Eastern Archipelago.

The Koetei inscriptions having been deciphered and discussed by so great an authority on Indian and Javanese epigraphy as the late Professor Kern, a fresh treatment of these documents will perhaps seem an undertaking as bold as superfluous. There were, however, two considerations which induced me to re-edit them, the reasonableness whereof, I am glad to add, was fully admitted by that great scholar himself in a letter written only a few months before his lamented death.

In the first place, it was no slight advantage to be able to utilize a set of excellent inked estampages for which I am greatly indebted to Dr. F. D. Kan Bosch, Director of Archaeology in Netherlands-India, whereas Professor Kern's edition of these epigraphs was based on eye-copies which, though executed with evident care, could never have the authority of mechanically prepared impressions and which, indeed, were misleading in several respects. The use of more reliable materials has enabled me to correct and supplement in some points the readings proposed by my predecessor.

The other ground on which a fresh treatment of these important documents seemed desirable is the circumstance that during the period which has elapsed since Professor Kern's...