

Under the rule of this religious king, all the ten virtues were prominent, here in the capital of Hrib-skyes (Shipke).

This inscription contains, as we see, the name of the village of Shipke in its original Tibetan spelling. It reads *Hrib-skyes*, and means, 'arisen in a moment,' probably without the agency of man; it was built by fairies, like so many places in Tibet. The Nāga Ma-gros is one of the most famous Nāga kings, and figures in all the lists of Nāgas. His dwelling place is the Holy Lake of Tibet. The Kailāsa mentioned in this song, is the beautiful mountain group in the vicinity of the Holy Lake. As Hira of Namgya told me, the rKyang-drag monastery is situated in front of these mountains, and a glass window is provided just in front of the eyes of the image, so that it may always be enabled to enjoy the view.¹ As regards the Holy Lake, four different sects have their monasteries there, in five principal establishments. The oldest is the Byiu-dgon-pa (Sven Hedin's *Tschiu*) which belongs now-a-days to the Gelugpa sect; the same sect also owns the Dri-ri-dgon-pa (perhaps Sven Hedin's Diripu). The Glang-po-sna-dgon-pa, (Sven Hedin's Langbonan?) belongs to the 'aBrugpa, and the bKa-rdzong-dgon-pa to the rNyingmapa sect. Besides these professedly Buddhist monasteries there is also a Bon monastery on the shores of the Lake. As stated by Graham Sandberg, the Manasarovar Lake was already known to Pliny and Ctesias who say that the natives collected pitch in a certain corner of it. As Dr. Longstaff informs me, there are certainly hot springs on the isthmus between the two lakes.

When I heard all this about the attractions of the forbidden land of Guge, and when the natives themselves invited me most cordially to proceed, it was certainly hard to turn back. But the promise given to the Indian Government, I had to keep. The Tibetans of Shipke did not understand my position, for they said: "If men like Sven Hedin, Sherring, Calvert, etc., are allowed to travel about in Tibet, why should not you?" All these travellers had won the hearts of the Tibetans by their liberal payment for services rendered to them. The Tibetans were more than ready to serve me in the same way under similar conditions.

Opposite Shipke may be seen the Puri monastery. This, as well as the Ra-nyid monastery, a little north-east of Shipke, is asserted to have been founded by Ratnabhadra in the 11th century.

As I was not allowed to proceed to mTholding and Tsaparang myself, I asked Lobzang, a former pupil of the Poo mission school, to go there and copy any inscriptions he could find. Accordingly he went on alone from Shipke, and after twelve days he returned safely to Poo. He had, however, found no inscriptions of any antiquity at either of the two places. It is quite possible that none remain. Just as there are many inscriptions of the Dalai Lama's time at Shipke, but only one previous to 1650, the old inscriptions of mTholding and surroundings may have disappeared as well. Lobzang, however, did not return quite empty-handed. He brought me short descriptions in Tibetan of both places he had visited, and a copy of a written document which he had found in the

¹ As I see in Sven Hedin's *Transhimalaya*, Vol. II, p. 146, there is a similar window in the Gossul ('Gossul-gompa') monastery. An account of the monasteries on the holy lake and mountain is also found in Sandberg's *Tibet and the Tibetans*.