

Rainchan Shāh (Riñchan Bhōṭī) built the Jāmi' mosque of Śrīnagar. I went there on the 18th October, two days after our arrival. The priests said, they knew for certain that the mosque was built by Sikandar But-shikan, a statement which agrees with Mr. Nicholls' reading of the inscription. When they understood that I was particularly interested in Rainchan Shāh, they told me that he was the founder of the Awwal Masjid "The first Mosque" in Mahārāj-Ganj. We therefore visited the latter which is also generally known as *Rindān Shāh Masjid*. (Plate XLV, a). It is a small, insignificant building, and cannot be compared with the beautiful, later mosques of Śrīnagar. It is empty, has not even a minaret on its roof, and the walls have lost their coating of white-wash. I could not discover in it any kind of works of art. Formerly there had been a stone slab which was inscribed with non-Arabic characters, said to have been a kind of Śāstrī, which designation may stand for Śāradā or Tibetan.¹ About twenty years ago, so I was told, a European carried off the inscribed slab and took it to England. As this gentleman did not leave his address, there is not much chance of rediscovering this important record. However, a Persian translation of the inscription has apparently been preserved in Haidar Malik's Persian History of Kashmir. It runs thus: "My friend for the sake of gaiety has become the observed of observers! His face claimed Islām and his hair adorned Paganism. He controls both Paganism and Islām, and takes interest in both." From this inscription it follows, that Riñchan Bhōṭī had become only half Muhammadan.

Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri says that there is another stone, at or near the Jāmi' Mosque, lying on its face, which also has a non-Arabic inscription. The Muhammadan priests, however, would not allow him to examine it.

The Awwal Masjid is, according to popular tradition, the oldest mosque of Śrīnagar and people assert that thousands of Hindus were here converted to Islām. Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri told us Riñchan Bhōṭī's story, exactly as it is given in Sir Walter Lawrence's "Valley of Kashmir." When I asked him how he came to know it, he said he had read it in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī. He could not, however, produce a passage in that book which contained more than Pandit Daya Ram Sahni's translation of the account of Riñchana's reign.² He provided me, with extracts from two Persian chronicles which describe the same times, *viz.*, Haidar Malik's chronicle, and the "History of Azmi." In both these chronicles it is plainly stated that Rinchan Shāh built also the shrine called *Bulbul Lankar*, besides the mosque.

This shrine is situated only a few steps from the Awwal Mosque. It is a comparatively plain sanctuary. The fresco flower ornaments on its walls seem to be of more recent date. People assert that it was built in Rainchan Shāh's time, and everybody here knows of the friendship between king Rainchan Shāh and the priest Bulbul. It is interesting that this Bulbul has also found his way into Ladakhi folklore, where he is mentioned in the "Song of the Bodro Masjid of Srinagar." The Ladakhi poet who wrote this song in times gone by, must have known of the Ladakhi origin of the Kashmir king Riñchana. *Bodro*

¹ *Sāstrī* is a term commonly used in Northern India to designate Nāgarī. [Ed.]

² *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 181 ff.