

Our host took a pleasure in relating to us all the adventures he had had in conflicts with roving bands of robbers, who had attacked his camp and attempted to plunder it, and how he had generally outwitted them with cunning. The guest-yurt just near his own was cleaned out for us, and we spread out our sleeping-bags round the fire in the middle of the floor.

KHABCHILIN-SUME

DEVA GUNG himself accompanied us during the fourteen minute drive to the family temple of his fathers, Khabchilin-sume, which has stood here through seven generations, and was erected in its original state by his ancestors two hundred years ago. This elegant little temple has its name from the well Khabchilin-usu in the vicinity. The sacred precincts comprise several pavilions and halls of the gods with courtyards in between, and boast two hundred lamas under a *chörch* or prior. A hall that serves for prayers and ceremonies bears the name Choksum-dugun (du-khang); and here is enthroned an image of Sakyamuni Buddha. The chamber of the 'Servants of the Spirits' is called Sakhusne-dugun; and the Chöra-dugun is embellished with a Maydar image. The lamas had just been reciting one of their holy scriptures, so their mantles were still lying on the divans. Here there was a copy of the Tanjur, the commentary to the Kanjur. The Abita-dugun is a small chapel erected by DEVA GUNG himself. This contains an image of Amitaba, 'the god of boundless light', called by the Tibetans 'Od-dpag-med and by the Mongols Abita. This image, which is two and a half meters high, was made of gilded brass in Dolon-nor, and together with the gilt wooden aureole it is worth 1,800 taels. The whole chapel had cost him about 5,000 taels.

In his tent-camp DEVA GUNG had in addition two temple-yurts. One of these was very impressive with its solid and tasteful furnishing — a real little jewel, that had been handed down from father to son for many generations. The felt, and perhaps also the wooden framework of the yurt, had been renewed time after time; but the cult-objects of metal were still left, and each successive owner had added to their number as a sacrificial offering. This temple-yurt had thus its own personal history, and to our question as to whether he was willing to sell it to us DEVA GUNG replied that inherited shrines were not for sale. (Plate 19).

In his other temple-yurt lived two lamas, and here, to the sound of the conch horn, drums and bells, they held their daily services. When DEVA GUNG went away on a journey he used to take both of these yurts along with him.

In the afternoon we drove on northwards and north-east over the flat, undulating steppe past a little lake. Snow-flakes began to float down, and big herds of about a thousand head of antelopes appeared on either side of the road. They were white and light-brown, and delightful to look at with their noble forms and their