

*The sarai at Gilan.*

Having ridden across the fields for 4 or 5 miles, we arrived at the camp, embedded between a couple of hillocks on the southern slope of a chain of hills. Hundreds of grazing horses and cows and a few dozen camels in the vicinity of the camp testified to the wealth of my host. His very large yurt was surrounded by about a dozen smaller ones, inhabited by his people, shepherds and others. Some distance from the camp I was met by the younger brother and a little nearer by the host in person, who had dismounted and stood surrounded by some of his men. A yurt had been set aside for my kitchen and men, while I was to share the large one with my hosts. On entering I found the hostess and her two daughters standing on the right at the back of the yurt. The women wore the same laced black garment that I had seen other Kalmuk women wearing, but better than those I had seen hitherto. The girls had blouse-like garments, one green, the other black, and both wore a silver-mounted stone ornament hanging from their hair or caps on their brows. Their headgear was a slightly pointed hood covered entirely with small coral beads and decorated with the traditional plaited Chinese knob on the crown, also of corals. The woman had two thick, black, straight hanks of hair that hung down in front of her shoulders almost to the ground and ended in a couple of long, bell-shaped metal ornaments. Her skirt was edged with lace and divided both back and front, the one part slightly overlapping the other. A fat bunch of big keys, fastened so that they also almost reached the ground, jingled underneath it. The girls' straggling black hair was brushed back from their temples. The footgear of all three consisted of the same curious Kalmuk boots that seem to be very pliable in spite of their clumsy, massive appearance. Silver bracelets and many rings of the same metal on almost every finger completed this not exactly tasteful, but rich dress. On the left the decorative praying site of the household had been established, a row of images of Buddha with polished brass cups, filled with grain and water, on several ledges in front of them. On either side two ostentatious, bright Buddhist paintings with religious and very complicated and not easily intelligible subjects were put up like banners.