



*Interior of the main temple
of Kura.*

direction and forming the southernmost spurs of the mountains we noticed yesterday in the N. No steep ascents or descents. Here and there the soil in low-lying places has a tendency to be marshy. Luxuriant grass everywhere, which is much appreciated by large herds of Kalmuk cattle. About 6 or 7 miles from Khargontu our road joined the road we left yesterday from Shatâ to Kura.

A mile or two beyond we came to Kura, a village of yurts and wooden houses, in the midst of which stands a tall Buddhist temple. The village is inhabited exclusively by the monks and novices of the lamasery, men and boys of all ages, from 8 upwards. Shortly before reaching the village I was met by two yigits and three Chinese soldiers sent by the Taotai in Qulja. For fear of the cold further on, closer to Muzart, they had stopped in Kura and had been a burden on the monks for 16 days. One of the yigits handed me the Taotai's card and conveyed his greetings. He asked if I preferred to put up in a wooden house rather than a yurt, and when I expressed myself definitely in favour of the former, all five galloped off to the village to select a suitable house instead of a couple of yurts that the monks had already prepared for me. On my arrival a few minutes later I found the superior of the lamasery waiting for me, a little old man of sixty with a well-shaped Roman nose and a pair of very small eyes, one of which was always weeping. A lively fire was burning in the stove of a log cottage with a clay floor. With a feeling of contentment I divested myself of my sodden clothes in the warm, though rather dark room.

The temple in Kura was built ten years ago with funds collected by the Kalmuks. It replaces their former lamasery Sumbe which was destroyed, as the superior told me, 30 years ago by General Kolpakovsky. The lamasery is considered to be fairly wealthy. Besides voluntary subscriptions it is entitled to the total possessions of childless Kalmuks, if