



*A temple just outside  
the southern gate of Barkul.  
The Tian Shan mountains  
in the background.*

of the town to some extent. They would mean little, however, if the grand, white mountain ridge in the S did not render the site exceptionally beautiful. A temple stands S of the town near the wall, embedded among shady old trees with the huge mountain as a background and making a picture of indescribable beauty. Like the town, it is supposed to have been built during the fourth year of the Emperor Kinlung's reign. Two huge stones standing there are said to serve as moorings for the two towns (the Chinese and the Manchurian) lying like two ships out in the open sea (the plain). If one of them comes to harm, the town will perish and it is solely to their presence and powerful protection that the Chinese ascribe the success of the town in resisting the repeated onslaughts of the insurgents. Further up the S slope there is a temple, about 200 years old, with mural paintings. Close to the N gate, outside the wall, stands a group of old temples. In the courtyard of one of them there is a black stone, 1 1/2 m high and 1/2 m wide, with curious Chinese lettering. Tradition claims that the stone grew out of the earth and that its root goes so deep that it cannot be reached by digging. With some difficulty I took an impression of the inscription. In order to get the paper to dry we had to keep up a good fire in front of the stone for hours. As it is encased in a little pavilion of dry wood, there was a risk of the whole show going up in flames.

The Manchurian town, or rather fortress, lies just E of the Chinese. It has remained deserted since the garrison was transferred to Kucheng 33 years ago, the wall is already partly in ruins and the only buildings left inside it are 3 or 4 temples and a group of buildings surrounded by a wall, obviously the residence of the commandant. With the exception of one they have been walled up and in order to enter you have to crawl through a small hole in the wall which is almost as difficult as for a camel to creep through the eye of a needle. In a half-ruined temple there is an old watchman and a few wax candles burn in front of the gods — throned images clad in robes richly embellished with gold. In all these temples there are large, interesting and decorative mural paintings. They are apparently very old