

In June there were great festivities at the monastery in honour of the Grand Lama. It was estimated that 30,000 Mongols visited the place. On horseback, on camels, in carts and cars, they came to worship and to receive his blessing. From Barun Sunit alone came 2,000 pilgrims, and probably at least as many from Jun Sunit, to the east of that district. Around the great temple of Bande-gegene-khit a whole town of yurts and tents arose out of the ground, and the most picturesque and bustling scenes unfolded themselves.

The Grand Lama himself dwelt in a yurt. For three days he shut himself up, secluded from the world and occupied in reading sacred writings. He sat upon his papal throne in the yurt, and below him sat other high lamas, they too absorbed in the reading of the holy books. Outside the yurt a countless congregation had settled down in breathless silence to listen to the reading, though hardly a sound penetrated the felts of the yurt, and no-one understood a word of the Tibetan prayers. When the three days were at an end, all those present got red fillets; and on the fourth day the congregation was free to come and worship the Grand Lama and receive his blessing.

A Khanpo Lama of the highest rank sat in a separate yurt, the treasury, where he received the offerings of the faithful in silver, with which sack after sack was filled. For eighteen Mexican dollars it was possible to buy a card containing blessings for ten persons. Such a card entitled the holder to a private visit to the TASHI LAMA and a private blessing. Those who had not the means to buy so costly a card had to content themselves with being blessed in the lump. There are Peter's pence here in Mongolia, just as in Rome. One buys forgiveness of sins for money which one has perhaps acquired by dubious speculations. But it is a business-like method, convenient for the sinners and profitable for the lamas.

The honour of entertaining the TASHI LAMA is of course very costly. The prince in whose headquarters he is pleased to set up his tents is said to be put to an expense of some 2,000 silver dollars a day for the maintenance of the peripatetic ecclesiastical state, its lamas of various degrees, its servants and its animals.

The TASHI LAMA derived a revenue of several hundred thousand dollars from his summer tour. He himself, however, unlike many lamas of lower degree, is simple and unpretentious. When he blesses the pilgrims with his bare hand or with the yellow, silk-wrapped staff, he certainly believes in his mission and in his supernatural powers, and he wishes all living beings peace, blessing and eternal salvation in the long rest in Nirvana.

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Resuming our journey on November 14th from Khadain-sume to the south-east on an excellent road over undulating steppe, we drove past nomad tent-settlements, past herds of horses and flocks of sheep, and here and there a well. We made a short stay at the village Bongkhong-gol, buying a harp, a fiddle, a sacral