

After much discussion, a boy was sent to fetch both milk and cream, while the host placed on the dirty cloth a metal tray containing small pieces of bread and sugar. The bread was in the form of cubes half an inch in diameter, such as I had seen the plump, red-cheeked women cooking like doughnuts in hot fat at the bottom of enormous iron bowls, the sole cooking utensils. Among the strictest nomads bread is a great rarity, and I have had the pleasure of giving a piece to children who had never tasted it before. After the tray was in place, our host took some china bowls from their nest in a round wooden box, and having wiped them with another greasy cloth, filled them with tea. By the time this had cooled, the boy returned with news that his quest had been successful. At his heels followed a fat Khirghiz housewife, who dived into the small woman's sanctum behind the ornamented screen of reeds which invariably stands on the right as one enters the door, and with a wooden ladle scooped almost solid cream from a large wooden bowl into a small china one, and then poured milk from a leather flask into another smaller wooden bowl. As she handed the milk and cream to one of the men, she saw that bread was needed on the tray. Kneeling before a red and green leather-covered box, she reached behind her heels for the silver-loaded bunch of keys suspended from her long braid of straight black hair, and, finding the proper key, took from its safe repository a handful of carefully treasured bread. Now the tea-drinking began, and it continued till the supply was exhausted. Each guest had three or four bowls, but even that was not enough, so each one finished with a wooden bowl of "kumiss," the fermented milk that still remains one of the