



*Shell used as a wind instrument at Buddhist religious ceremonies and by itinerant beggars.*

altar at a slight distance there is a monumental armchair for the superior, covered with carpets. Between the pillars there are low wooden benches and along the wall on either side of the entrance a row of stools with carpet cushions on which lie the lamas' headgear, cloaks, staffs and other regalia of their office. The side-walls are each covered with a row of large coloured pictures. The whole thing is cold and stiff without a trace of wealth or luxury.

In the afternoon I wanted to pay my respects to the superior, but the old man had gone, in spite of the bad weather, to a warm spring in the neighbourhood to take a bath. I called on a couple of lamas and later on the superior. They live very simply in small wooden houses with very little light. Each has a little Buddha altar, but otherwise not much more than a carpet, a couple of low tables and a bench or two. The superior had a stove of sheet-iron. I presented him with a clock, the ticking of which seemed to amuse him. He blessed me for my long journey with a Buddha image that had, no doubt, been worn by generations of other men, as it was so badly worn. The old man allowed me to choose between one in better preservation that would give me long life and another »Berke» that would give it not only to me, but to my father, brothers and sisters, children etc. From a feeling of reverence I chose the »Berke».

Every third son in a Kalmuk family is brought up to be a lama. This is not obligatory, however. The village is full, too, of healthy boys, whose merry faces enliven the yellow lama dress and red shawl. The old man is very kind to the little fellows. When he blesses them, he playfully raps them on the head. A lama may not marry. Women are banned from Kura, where life seems to be very simple.