

To-day I met an old lama of venerable appearance at a Kuzda's. We spoke again about the flight of the Torguts from Russia. He was well acquainted with the fact, but could give me no details. He said that a book about these events had been lost during the revolt of the Dungans. The Torguts suffered very great material losses during the revolt. The old men questioned me closely about the Kalmuks at Astrakhan, about their financial position and so on. When I spoke of the fertility of the Volga district, their smiles showed some doubt. They seem very suspicious and are extremely reserved. To obtain any information, often of quite an insignificant kind, you are sent from pillar to post until there is no other resort but the Khan.

I had the luck to find a human skull in the plain to-day. It was very well preserved except for the teeth and lower jaw which had dropped off. It is curious that during these weeks of travelling through districts inhabited by Kalmuks this is the first skull I have come across. — The distance from Kura to Bain Bulaq is 25—26 miles (quite 7 hours on an ambler).

Owing to the illness of the Khan's mother the solemn day of prayer had to be postponed. I rather suspect that her illness was an excuse for avoiding my presence. However, she granted me a parting audience in the same rich yurt as before. In view of her illness the daylight was carefully excluded and the yurt was in semi-darkness. The number of officials standing at the door was larger than last time. Most of them had come to attend the day of prayer, and I noticed several with fine figures and features. To show my sympathy I gave the Khan's mother some photos, a pot of quinine and instructions for its use. She must have been touched by my modest gift, for she sent me a very good ambler in return.

*June 27th.*

*Camp at*

*Bain Bulaq.*

Such a day of prayer as the one that was to have been held, is a great occasion among the Kalmuks. They assemble from far and near, dressed in their best. The lamas, especially, in their red garb, look very decorative. Three horses and a couple of dozen sheep had been slaughtered for the occasion. Besides these religious festivals, races and wrestling matches are arranged sometimes like those I saw among the Kirghiz in the Allai valley. About 50 youngsters compete.

Five sumuns are encamped west of the Khan's camp towards Qaragai Tash. To the south there are four. The other 45 are spread eastward towards Qarashahr. A sumun varies in size from 25 to 200 yurts owing to the division having been made very long ago and the fluctuations in the different sumuns having been very uneven. The total number of the Torguts is probably about 3000 yurts. No less than about 1000 yurts belong to the lamas.

We left this morning for Qarashahr, the baggage being loaded on five camels in order to spare our horses as long as possible. Numgan left at the same time for his home in the Tekes valley. He promised to send the heads of the animals I had shot to Qulja in the autumn and get them forwarded by the Nadejda Company to Helsingfors with the help of the Russian consul. I was sorry to see the old fellow pack up his small tent and mount his horse. Besides being an excellent huntsman his thoughtfulness and experience make him a valuable companion on such trips in the mountains.

*June 28th.*

*Camp at*

*Artstan*

*shevyr(marsh).*