

# URGA, a WORLD CAPITAL



Religious Devil Dance in Mongolia.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

Any list of world capitals should include Urga. As if claiming the political capitalship of Mongolia were not enough, Urga, on its high flat plateau beside sacred Bogdo-ol mountain, also requires recognition as a religious capital of Lamaism, and as a fur capital without peer not only in Mongolia but probably in all Asia.

Like Gaul, Urga is divided into three parts, but its parts are Russian, Chinese and Mongolian. The Russian quarter stands out sharply with its church towers, shaped like Christmas tree ornaments and quaint green and white cottages. Chinese merchants and growers live in their native shacks while the Mongolians cling to their felt "yurt," a round tent adapted to cold plains winds. The fur market draws all classes into a colorful market turmoil where furs of the steppe land and furs of the forest change hands and are hurried off to other markets in other lands.

Were Skipper Jason of ancient Greece to take up his famous fur search in 1924 he would have to pilot a ship of the desert instead of a galley because Mongolia, by the whim of the American lady of fashion, is now the land of the golden fleece and Urga its chief port of a sea of plains.

For the last two years skins of newly born Mongolian lambs have brought a shower of wealth to the astonished shepherds of the southern Siberian steppes and the Chinese merchants of the Asian fur mart because of a decree of style. As the lady of fashion trips her way down Fifth avenue or Michigan boulevard in her trim short jacket of sandy-bued, close-curl'd fur, she little realizes the life history of that lambkin coat which graces her shoulders, or the vast power she wields in many obscure places by following the latest fads.

The style for curled lambkin fur is one of the many witnesses that the lady of fashion is a person of importance, worthy, perhaps, of a seat on the right of prime ministers or, failing that, between the dignified ministers of commerce and foreign affairs. In remote regions her influence sometimes ranks with that of missionary cohorts. She scatters her gifts more extravagantly than any spendthrift monarch the world has known. As inconstant as the wind, she pours wealth into some land beyond the seas one day and leaves it starving in dire poverty the next.

Two years ago she enriched primitive black tribes of central Africa, paying exorbitant prices for monkey fur. Some years back she sent bulion to the tropics for dainty head tufts of a species of heron. The egret is now outlawed. Natives of another part of Africa found gold in ostrich feathers but that mine soon was worked out. Unscrupulous hunters once made fortunes killing seals on North Pacific islands for this same lady, but this year 10,000 seal skins owned by the United States government were a "drug on the market." Distance, evidently, makes her heart grow fonder.

In a Remote Region.

Urga is so far from Peking, even, that it is considered good time if a letter dispatched at Peking is received at Urga two months later. Although this city is 800 miles from the narrow-gauge Trans-Siberian railroad, it is more than 1,000 miles by road from the terminus of the nearest Chinese railroad. The overland trail is not an easy one. For centuries the camel held the transportation monopoly of the winding track across the Gobi desert, but today the camel must compete with the automobile.

In Urga the native Mongols sell their curly-haired lambkins and from Urga the hides start on their long journey to the United States, England, and France. A number of great fur houses now maintain resident buyers at Urga and other firms send their agents to the mart in fur sale seasons. Today this inland, isolated mid-Asia state is supplying American stores and show windows not only with Mongolian lamb, but also with sable, martens, marmots, thousands upon thousands of squirrel pelts and wolf, fox, and goat skins. In fact, Mongolia stole some of Africa's thunder by sending out goat skins to be dyed and sold for monkey

Even the ignorant Mongolian native may be forced to think seriously on the subject of conservation before many years because some of the animals whose pelts bring to him British cotton and Chinese brick tea are becoming scarce. Mongolia's taxing system is partly responsible. The provider of a Mongolian family is required to pay to his government three sable skins and one hundred and twenty squirrel skins per thousand head of cattle. This premium on sable has made it scarce. Furs are currency in Mongolia much as they were among the early French and English traders in America. Thus a snow leopard may bring twenty squirrels, a wolf and a marten; a sable may equal forty squirrels, or six wolves or six martens.

Mongolia, however, has its own Yellowstone Park, a sanctuary for animals of all kinds, guarded night and day by two thousand Lamas (Buddhist priests) stationed around its confines. This National Park is the sacred mountain of Bogdo-ol, whose snow-capped peak stands guard over Urga.

To most people Mongolia means the Gobi desert and vast plains. But a mere recital of the pelts bought at the Urga mart hints the existence of a forest. Northern Mongolia is largely a timber-land, not a desert. Roughly speaking, Mongolia is half as large as the United States without Alaska. It is divided into four parts; the southern grass plains which are rapidly falling into the hands of Chinese immigrants, the Gobi desert comprising one-fourth the territory, another great plains district similar to Kansas and Nebraska, and finally Northern Mongolia which has more climatic and topographic ties with Siberia than with China.

Residence of the Hutukhtu.

Urga's position as a pelt mart is far overshadowed in the eyes of a native Mongolian by its place in his religion. In the sacred city the Hutukhtu, third power of Lamaism and spiritual ruler of Mongolia, is living out the tag end of his life in near blindness. His keen interest in the mechanical contrivances of civilization is the source of many local stories of the glaring incongruity when west comes east. High Priest Hutukhtu heard about automobiles and insisted that he have one.

The story goes that certain merchants having fitted the palace with electric lights at the Hutukhtu's command called at the holy residence for their money. A crowd had gathered around the portal and overhead a bare electric bulb spread a white-hard light. An official of the household in brilliant robes snally brought out a sizable hoard of silver to pay the merchants. While they stood at the entrance a long rope was lowered out of an empty upper window and waggled gently against the palace wall. About the rope the faithful gathered, knelt and touched it reverently since supposedly it was dangled out of the window by the holy Hutukhtu—all this under the glare of a Twentieth century electric light.

Electricity and automobiles are only typical of the dignitary's passion for devices of the Occident. His palace is said to be stored with phonographs, typewriters, microscopes, sewing machines and other mechanical aids to man. But to Hutukhtu they are more like toys than instruments of convenience or culture and after a few days or weeks they go into the discard.

Like certain other religions, Lamaism is divided under a fixed administrative and spiritual hierarchy. The Dalai Lama at the Forbidden City of Lhasa, located in the inner recesses of Tibet, is the head of the entire church. Lhasa is the Mecca of Lamaists in Mongolia. Next in rank to the Dalai Lama is the Tashi Lama, residing at Tashlumpo, also in Tibet. Then follows Hutukhtu in far off Urga. Tradition in Mongolia rules that the Hutukhtu never dies. The people believe his spirit reawakens in the person of a newly born child. All ecclesiastical intrigues for position are swept aside by the effective method of Mongolian selection which is nothing more or less than a lottery. Names of infants who have been considered as candidates are written on paper slips and placed in a golden urn. A slip is drawn and the infant whose name appears on the paper is proclaimed the new Hutukhtu.

# Brazil's "Cow-Country"



Porto Alegre, Capital of Rio Grande do Sul.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

The name "Brazil," to the average North American, conjures up a picture of coffee, tropical forests and rubber. But it is a tremendous country, this United States of the South American continent, and the usual conception takes no account of Brazil's south, and especially of Rio Grande do Sul. That state, mentioned in dispatches because of the revolution which it has had on its hands, gives a different picture, and presents a Brazil into which hundreds of thousands of citizens of the United States could fit in peace times with little violence to their daily routine.

Reverse directions in comparison with the United States, and you have an explanation of the importance of Rio Grande do Sul. Brazil's North has a tropical climate; and there is the Brazilian "black belt," where live millions of negroes. The South has a temperate zone climate at its best; and Rio Grande do Sul, most distant of the states in climatic agreeableness from the point of view of northern Europeans and North Americans. This has been a "white man's country" from the first, and it has been the leader in many ways in Brazilian development.

But there is a marked difference between Brazil's South and our own North. This southernmost of Brazil's states has its closest affiliations with our West, for it is a "cow country" without peer. On the 31,000 square miles of Rio Grande do Sul are more than a quarter as many cattle as in the entire United States. Water and grass are abundant, droughts are practically unknown, and the rolling country with its numerous tree-covered hills furnishes a charming and stimulating countryside in contrast to the dreary and often dry level of many of the world's great cattle-raising regions. Travelers who have visited all the leading live stock countries assert that Rio Grande do Sul's pasture lands are superior to those of Argentina, South Africa, the United States and Australia; and that here, under the Southern Cross, is the coming "cow country" of the world.

But although fortunately situated in so many respects for the raising of cattle, Rio Grande do Sul has no monopoly on the cattle industry, according to one Brazilian authority. Next to that state in the number of head of cattle is the interior state of Minas Geraes. This is the center of the dairy industry, as Rio Grande do Sul is the center of the packing, salting and leather industry.

Other Good Cattle Regions.

Most recent estimates place the number of cattle in Rio Grande do Sul at 8,400,000 head, while Minas Geraes presses the leading state with herds that number only one million head less. It is said that there is not a single state or territory of the country in which there is not some land favorable to the growing of live stock. Curiously enough the well-watered tropical states of Maranhao, Para, and Piahy share honors among the lesser producers with Geraes, a relatively arid state. But the real future of the cattle business in Brazil is believed to be in the interior states of Minas Geraes and Goyas. There are millions of acres of fertile ideal land waiting to support great herds in these districts.

Particularly in the latter state the parallel between the American cowboy west and the Brazilian cow country is very close. There are no fences on the vast plains carpeted with succulent grass. Herds are rounded up once a year and delivered on the hoof after a journey of sixty to ninety days to the neighboring state of Sao Paulo. There they are sold to packing-house agents who fatten them for nine months before shipping them by rail to the slaughterhouses.

Until fairly recently Rio Grande do Sul's cattle were neglected by companies in search of beef to transport; and the state had to content itself with shipping millions of dollars worth of "jerky beef" and hides. Recently tremendous freezing plants have been erected and now Brazilian beef is

finding its way to the world markets in competition with that from Argentina and Australia. Since this region is somewhat closer to Europe and the United States than its competitors, the industry seems assured of a steady development.

Rio Grande do Sul is not alone a "cow country." Its soil grows to perfection the grains and vegetables and fruits of the temperate zone. There has been considerable development along these lines; and the country seems destined to prove that there can actually be a compromise in the old war between agriculture and stock raising which has raged since before the days of Abraham. In manufacturing only one state, Sao Paulo, surpasses Rio Grande do Sul. The state is the only vineyard of Brazil, producing annually 10,000,000 liters of wine.

Many Germans and Italians.

Rio Grande do Sul has been more strongly affected by immigration than any other Brazilian state. For a time it was a German colony. Even now whole communities and towns and cities are predominantly German, and in them the German tongue has little competition. About 200,000 Germans live in the state, but since the total population of the commonwealth is more than 2,000,000 the German element is not dominant. Italians also have been attracted by this temperate portion of Brazil and scores of thousands of them have settled in the state.

Cattle and rubber were among the later discoveries of Brazil's agricultural treasures. With the growth of England's rubber plantations in the Malay peninsula the market for Amazon rubber from the virgin forests has faded to a mere skeleton, but the world cannot get along without Brazil's cattle plains. Sugar, cotton and subsequently coffee were the Eldoradoes of Brazil's early proprietors because of their export value. As early as 1500, however, live stock of many kinds was introduced into Bahia, where the first serious efforts at colonization were made. In 1500 Queen Catherine of Portugal personally sent cows and mares to the inhabitants. The caracou or native Brazilian stock, found principally in the interior, is the direct descendant of these early cattle sent from the continent. This type of cattle adapted itself to the plains of Brazil just as the Spanish horses adapted themselves to the plains of the American West.

Importation of other breeds of cattle has led to great mixture of breeds and dilution of pure strains, whether native or imported. In the more developed Rio Grande do Sul there are some 4,500,000 head of cattle of pure or practically pure stock. Durhams, Herefords, Angus, and Devons. Crossing of these breeds with the native Brazilian cattle is notable in Sao Paulo, the coffee state.

The true Englishman considers himself an exacting connoisseur of roast beef, but an incident which is going the rounds in Brazil is a blow to this particular English pride. A certain English firm steadfastly refused to accept any shipments of beef from Brazil because nothing but the finest of blooded beef would satisfy their epicurean, English customers. Assured by the Brazilian exporting firms that they could send a shipment of absolutely pure Durham beef bred in Rio Grande do Sul from imported English stock, the British firm tempted by the lower price abandoned its conservatism to the extent of ordering several thousand carcasses. By an error in the shipping department, however, the beef consigned to the British firm was directed to a German importing house and the beef intended for the latter, the product of a mixed breed of Durhams and native Brazilian cattle, was delivered to the English firm. The Brazilian firm had just had time to discover the error and was on the point of restitution when they received the following cable: "Your shipment of pure bred Durham beef has surpassed all expectations. Are forwarding instructions for delivery of another shipment of same."

## Do You Sweep



Do you sweep floors with elbow powder? Take down and shake your curtains? Do you open the windows and swirl the dust? Disarrange the furniture? Rip up the rugs and send them to the cleaners—and pay them a big bill? Climb up and dust your mouldings? Beat your mattresses?

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**Franklin and Masonry**

The first American newspaper item concerning a lodge of Freemasons in the western hemisphere, according to a recently published book, "The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America," appeared in the Philadelphia Gazette for December 8, 1790. This paper was published by Benjamin Franklin. Oddly enough, says the Detroit News, the item consisted of an alleged

exposure of Freemasonry which had been circulated for some time in England. Franklin afterward became a Mason and held the position of grand master of the province of Pennsylvania.

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