

❁ BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

One of the traditional ceremonies among the Mongolian customs is the birthday celebration. This celebration can be divided into two types. One is a child's birthday celebration, another is aged people's birthday celebration. The one-year birthday celebration is arranged as a feast among the child's parents, their relatives, and close friends. In recent times, children's birthdays are celebrated each year among the child's relatives or friends. This is a new social ritual.

A child's birthday celebration intends to bring together the child's age-mates and to treat them with dairy products. At this moment of celebration, the child can be seated on the white felt at the northern part of *ger*. The feast starts with a benediction, saying:

*Your growing age,
Expanding deeds,
Studying,
Learning,
Knowledge,
Proud name,
Be always
Like the rays of the sun
And the light of the moon;
Rise and rise,
Glory and glory,
Behave like a hero to the state,
Be favourable to your relatives,
Be helpful to your parents,
Be friendly to brothers and sisters,
Be a good citizen,
So we wish all the best!*

This is a benediction. When a child turns five-years old, we prepare a saddle and point out a horse, which the child likes. When we celebrate the child's birthday we saddle a horse and put the child on the horse and anoint the horse's mane and crupper with fermented mare's milk and the child can drink the remnants of the milk. When a new saddle is

put on the horse, the father of the child first mounts the saddled horse. After dismounting, the child is placed on the saddled horse. The child's father then steers the child on horse around the corral of sheep three times in a clockwise direction and says:

*May the valleys be full of horses,
May the corrals be full of animals,
May your child be set upon the saddle
In front of you
Riding your own colt!*

According to established tradition, Mongolians officially celebrate the birthday of those living to seventy, eighty-five and ninety years. But the participants in these birthday celebration are their own children, grand-children, relatives, and local people of that location. During this event there is horse-racing and wrestling. This is a kind of festival. The birthdays of the ninety and ninety-five year-old people are commemorated more respectfully. There is a benediction to the benevolent elders:

*Dear esteemed elder,
Your labour is valued by the state,
Your name is written in the chronicle,
You are respected by all;
You are supported by your relatives,
You are the pride of your grandchildren,
You have become a senior of the universe;
May all your wishes come true;
We arrange this feast on the occasion of your ninetieth birthday*

On this occasion the merits of grey-haired man or woman can be enumerated in poetic and rhythmical manner. The feast is conducted according to the general established rules. In this benediction we say:

*You are appreciated by the state,
You are respected by the populace,
You are noted in the chronicle,
You are supported by your relatives,
You are a patron of your great-great-grandchildren;
Dear grey haired person,
You have become senior of all;
You are well content with your life,
We commemorate your ninetieth birthday
And wish you all the best*

In such a manner we recite the exploits of our grey-haired people in a poetic and rhythmical tune. This is just at the beginning of the celebration feast of the grey haired people. There follows certain announcements that address the guests, often in the witty words of a poem. The feast is conducted by the established rules.