Artistic reconstruction of the traditional Nogai wedding yurt “Ak Otav”

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Abstract. The study conducted an artistic reconstruction of the wedding yurt “ak otav”, which refers to one of the types of traditional Nogai architecture used by them during the nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life. Based on written, figurative, and oral sources, an analysis of the structural and technological features of the wooden frame manufacture of a yurt and felt coatings corresponding to each structural layer is carried out. The marking details that indicate that the Ak Otav yurt belongs to the wedding ceremony have been revealed. The marker localization locations and features of their formation in relation to the corresponding structural elements are indicated. The values of the color formulas used in the decorative design of the wedding urt “ak otav” are determined.

Introduction
The centuries-old practice of improving the portable dwellings, which the Nogais used during their nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles, led to the creation of two types of yurts - collapsible “terma” and non-collapsible “otav”.

Each type of dwelling, despite the general, round-shaped form, the principles of the decoration of the external and internal decoration, had its local differences. The dimensions of the Terme yurt could be increased by adding the trellised sections, a door entered its design, and when migrating, the frame of the dwelling was completely dismantled and transported on the pack animals. The “otav” yurt frame remained motionless, during assembly it was firmly fixed and, when migrated, was completely mounted on a cart. The non-demountable yurt was used as a utility room, a camp and guest house, a home for unmarried girls and newlyweds.

Source analysis
An analysis of the written sources showed that the tradition of using non-separable yurts among Nogais as a separate home for the unmarried girls and a young couple is rooted in antiquity. As far back as the 13th century, the Flemish traveler G. de Rubruk, describing the dwellings of the Nogai ancestors, noted that small yurts served as “the rooms in which the girls live” [1]. Three centuries later, the monk of the Dominican Order, J. de Luc, noted that the Nogais had two cabs, one of which was “… the smallest, for a husband and wife” [2]. In the records of the French traveler of the XVII century J.B. Tavernier we see: “Each young woman has her own cart, well closed” [3].

Evidence from a number of ethnographic authors of the 19th - early 20th centuries give reason to argue that during this period, a steady tradition among Nogais was the use of a non-separable yurt for
newlyweds in wedding ceremonies. So, A.P. Arkhipov wrote: “There is a wedding wagon ... Every girl who gets married must bring a wagon with her. In it, she hides from the light for a certain time when she marries ... According to the ancient Nogai concepts, this cherished wagon should certainly be embroidered, adorned and hand-made by a young and her sincere friends” [4]. F. Fielstrup, studying the wedding dwellings of Turkic-speaking peoples, including Nogais, noted: “Ak Otav” is a yurt that young people receive from their wife’s father in dowry with other property and in which they live during the first period of their life after the wedding” [5].

In the historical and ethnographic essay “Nogais” there is the following information: “In the second half of the XIX century a yurt of the Otav type was used only as a wedding home for newlyweds. It was decorated with specially made felt. Such a yurt was placed next to the Terne yurt ... Each family tried, as good as possible, to elegantly decorate the wedding yurt. Wooden products were decorated with decorative carvings, felt ones - with ornaments ... Carpets, feltings and other interior items were handmade by the bride” [6]. Similar information is contained in the monographic editions of S.Sh. Gadzhieva [7], R.Kh. Kereitov [8], F.Yu. Kanokova [9], I. B. Musukaev [10].

Due to the fact that today, a wedding yurt, along with other types of portable dwellings, is not used by Nogais, written sources allow us to identify the design and technological features of the manufacture of its frame, traditional ways of decorating the exterior. “The wagon consists of the middle and lower hoops “erge”, the upper one is “yashgarak”, the smaller ones are “shektal” located between the upper and middle, the longitudinal rods are “tobetal”, the lower longitudinal columns are “jyalkan”, the cross beams are “ashyamay”, two door halves, a threshold and a crossbeam - “bosaga” and a pole -“croc”, on which the upper quilted cover is “uzik”. A curtain is attached to the door - “esik” - we see in the works of O.V. Marggraf [11].

The description of marking details of the wedding yurt’s external decoration is given by S.V. Farforovsky: “With the bride’s entrance to the “otav” a triangular half embroidered above it, embroidered with various variegated pieces of matter, was strengthened above it. Such a half was familiar that the newlyweds live in this “otav” [12]. S.Sh. Gadzhieva, relying on the preserved photographs and information received from the local people, writes: “Otavs for the newlyweds were distinguished by their decoration ... They were covered with white felt, which was belted with woolen patterned ribbons with fringe ... had a luxuriously decorated applique with an “esik kiyiz” felt door curtain (142x88 cm) ... Over the door and on both sides ... four strips of rectangular felt “inig” hung (95x33 cm), (95x28 cm); four “beylas”, each of which consisted of three embroidered square pieces of dense fabric (30x30 cm) sewn in relation to each other at an angle. Above the door, with the coverage of part of the roof, a “mangalashay” was attached – a felt cut in the shape of a triangle, perhaps even resembling a human figure ... “Tunlik” - a wedding flag made of felt (62x97 cm) ... placed on a wedding wagon” [7].

In addition to the written sources, the images of “otav” yurts were recorded on the engravings by A. Olearias “Lower Volga and Astrakhan 1630-1640s”, “Nogais in Astrakhan. 1630-1640s”, H.G. Geisler “Nogai Tatars. 1803”, “Aul of the Kundra Nogai, wandering along the shores of Akhtuba. 1803”, a drawing by G. Boplan “Nogai arba and yurt. 1853”, photographs of the beginning of the XX century, field sketches of M. M. Mankaev, Yu. B. Karasov and S.S. Batyrov have great information content.

The details’ fragments of the wedding yurt’s external decoration are gathered in the museum collections. One of the most valuable collections is the collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum. The collection contains details of the frame of the wedding wagon, a felt flag, items of external decoration of the wedding yurt and a wedding curtain. Those items are of great interest for us.

**Artistic reconstruction**

The results of the sources’ analysis make it possible to collect the big picture and stage-by-stage to carry out the artistic reconstruction of the traditional Nogai wedding yurt “ak otav”.

The first stage is the reconstruction of the yurt’s frame. The diameter of the frame base is 3 m and its height is 2 m. The frame consists of two structural layers - the turlak skeleton and the tundyk arch. Each layer consists of specific components. The skeleton of a yurt is assembled from the door frame of the
Enege and the threshold of the Bosag, the lower hoop of the erge, the upper hoop of the yashgarak, and the 2-3 longitudinal hoops of the tobetal. To the hoops, rawhide tows, the cross columns “jalkan” are attached at equal distance, and then to the hoops, cross columns and the door frame, the cross bars “ashamay” are attached. The arch of the yurt is assembled from a light-smoke hole “shagarak” and the “oversized” dome poles, the lower ends of the poles are inserted into the upper hoop of the core, and the upper ones are inserted into the lower hoop of the light smoke hole.

The assembled frame is shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Frame of the traditional Nogai wedding yurt “ak otav”.

1.1. The rest of the “turlak” yurt: 1.1.1. Lower hoop “erge”; 1.1.2. Upper hoop “Yashgarak”; 1.1.3. Longitudinal hoops “Tobetal”; 1.1.4. Cross columns “jalkan”; 1.1.5. Cross beams “Ashamay”; 1.1.6. Door frame “enege”; 1.1.7. The “bosaga” threshold. 1.2. Arch of the “tundyk” yurt: 1.2.1. Dome poles; 1.2.2. Light smoke hole “shagarak”.

The second stage consists in the reconstruction of the main felt coatings (first layer) and the clear localization of the additional markers on them (second layer).

Each structural layer and the details of the yurt’s frame have corresponding coatings. The skeleton of the yurt is covered with “shipt” mats, a wide felt “tuvirlyk” is attached to the upper hoop, and a narrow “etek” felt strip is attached to the lower hoop.

The door curtain “esik kiyiz” is nailed to the upper crossbar of the door frame. The dome poles are covered with two trapezoidal felts of “uzik” shape, and a light-smoke hole with square felts of “orke” shape.

The felt cover of the skeleton and the arch of the yurt, except for felt, is nailed to the frame. The coating details of the first layer are shown in Figure 2.
1.1. Coatings of the yurt’s skeleton: 1.1.1. Felt covering of the upper part of the “tuvirlyk” yurt skeleton; 1.1.2. Felt coating of the lower part of the “etek” yurt’s wreck; 1.1.3. Door curtain “esik kiyiz". 1.2. Coverings of the arch of the yurt: 1.2.1. Felt coverings of trapezoidal “uzik” shape for the dome poles; 1.2.2. Squared felt coating for light smoke hole.

The decoration of the central part of the skeleton consists of a door curtain on the lining “kelinshek esik kiyiz”, which is attached from the outside to the upper crossbar of the box. The curtain dimensions are 142x88 cm or 150x90 cm. Decor technique - applique. The ornamental patterns are assembled from a limited number of figures: triangles “duva”, S-shaped curls “ylan”, shape-meanders “shynzhyr”, dots and rhombuses “kun”, anthropomorphic images “adem suvret” and the horn-shaped curls “koshkar muyyiz”.

The composition is arranged vertically according to the partial symmetry principle. The central field consists of a rectangular strip, divided in the center into two rhombuses, in the inner space of which there are two cross-shaped figures-outlets. In contact with the central field edges, rhombuses create three pairs of triangles filled with anthropomorphic images, two central images face the center of the field, and four angular ones from it. The side and bottom of the curtain surrounds the curb; there is no border at the top of the curtain. The ornamental composition of the curb is constructed according to the following principle - the upper corners of the side curbs are filled with S-shaped curls, under which there are the stripes of rhythmically repeating meanders. The inner edges of the side borders are bordered by the interconnected triangles. The border located at the bottom of the curtain consists of two tiers. Four figures are inscribed in the upper tier — triangles with the horn-shaped curls with a ram “outer” head; three figures — the horn-shaped curls are inscribed in the lower tier. The strip dividing the lower border into the tiers consists of interconnected rhombs. The curtain on all sides is edged with a twisted cord, ornamented snake abdomen “ylan bavur”.

On both sides of the door curtain, four felt stripes of the rectangular shape “inig” and four stripes composed of three interconnected rhombuses are attached to the upper hoop. The sizes of the “inig” stripes are 95x33 cm and 95x28 cm. The decor technique is applique. Ornamental patterns are built from a limited number of figures: triangles “duva”, S-shaped curls “ylan”, dots and rhombuses “kun”, the horn-shaped curls “koshkar muyyiz”, “buga muyyiz”. The composition of the first and third bands located vertically on each side is divided into three parts, the first and second narrow, the third in width is their sum. The first part contains the ornaments consisting of horn-like curls. The second part contains a rhythmically repeating S-shaped curl. The third part is divided into four squares, separated by two
lines, between which a strip of dots is horizontally inscribed. The inscribed rosettes are built in the squares along their perpendicular axes, consisting of a rhombus (in the center) with horn-shaped curls extending from it. The composition of the second band “inig” is divided vertically into two parts, the first wide, the second half already. The first part is divided into three rectangles, separated by two lines with dots. The rectangles contain the ornaments consisting of rhombuses with horn-like curls extending up and down from them. The second part is divided into six rectangles, separated by two lines of three triangles. An S-shaped curl is inscribed in the rectangles. The felt strips on all sides are edged with a cord, an ornament of a calf’s tooth “buzav yew”.

The dimensions of the rhombus parts that make up the stripes are 30x30 cm. The decor technique is applique. The composition of each strip consists of three diamonds bonded together, into which the rosettes are inscribed - horn-like curls built on the horizontal and vertical axes of the rhombus. The “biyal” details on all sides are edged with a cord, ornamented snake abdomen the “yylan bavur”.

The skeleton of the yurt in the upper and lower parts is surrounded by long, woven from woolen threads, belts with the fringe “ozek basar” and “taban bav”. The size of the Ozek Basar upper belt is 35x220 cm (strip 15x220 cm and triangles sewn onto the top of the strip 20x30 cm). Decor technique - applique. The ornamental patterns are built from a limited number of figures: triangles “duva”, anthropomorphic images “adem suvret”, horn-shaped curls “koshkar muyyiz”, steps “bashkysh”. The composition of the belt strip consists of ornamental motifs - horn-like curls inscribed in triangles. The composition of the triangles sewn onto the upper part of the belt strip consists of alternating anthropomorphic images of “adem suvret”, horn-shaped curls “koshkar muyyiz” and steps “bashkysh”. The size of the lower “ozek basar” belt is 15x220 cm. Decor technique - applique. The composition of the belt consists of the rhythmically alternating ornamental figures-meanders “shynzhyr”. The belts on all sides are edged with a cord, ornament snake abdomen “yylan bavur”.

The marking details of the vault are felt flag “tunlik” and half “mangalash”. The “tunlik” flag has the shape of a vertically elongated inverted trapezoid. The sizes of the flag are 62x97 and 142x88 cm. The decor technique is applique. The ornamental patterns are assembled from a limited number of figures: triangles “duva”, S-shaped curls “yylan”, figures-meanders “shynzhyr”, dots and rhombuses “kun”, the horn-shaped curls “koshkar muyyiz”, lines, hearts “yurek”. The composition is arranged vertically according to the principle of symmetry. The central field is conventionally divided into two parts - in the upper one there is a rhombus made up of four stripes, two meanders are located on the outer part of the upper stripes, and the horny curls are located on the lower ones; the interconnected triangles are located on the inside of the strips. A sock consisting of horn-like curls is inscribed in the rhombus. In the lower part of the central field, under the upper rhombus, there is a smaller rhombus, the right and left corners of which are closed with the heart shapes. Five stripes are located under the rhombus; the small circles are sewn on them. The entire composition of the central field is framed by a strip consisting of rhythmically repeating S-shaped curls. The edge of the flag is surrounded by a strip of fabric, the side stripes are decorated with lines, and the upper and lower ones are connected by triangles. The ribbons with which the flag is attached to the yurt are divided into rectangles in which S-shaped curls, meander figures, horn-like curls, anthropomorphic images are inscribed. The flag is framed on all sides by a cord, an ornament of the calf’s tooth “buzav tis”.

A felt part in the shape of a triangle was attached above the entrance to the yurt, with “mangalay” branches extending from it; visually, the part resembled a seated female figure with hands resting on its sides. Decor technique - applique. The ornamental patterns are assembled from a limited number of figures: triangles “duva”, S-shaped curls “yylan”, dots and rhombs “kun”, anthropomorphic image “adem souvret”, lines, hearts “yurek”. The composition is arranged vertically according to the principle of symmetry. In the center of the part is an image of a triangle, the contours of which are assembled from the strips consisting of the connected triangles. Inside the figure there is an anthropomorphic image duplicating the shape of the “mangalash” felt part. In the lower part, under the triangle, there is a strip consisting of rhythmically repeating S-shaped curls. In the upper part, in the figure’s upper part, there is a rhombus, under it an S-shaped curl. Branches are filled with dots. The part is edged with a cord, ornament snake abdomen “yylan bavur”.

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The composition of the yurt’s exterior decoration is built in accordance with the laws of symmetry; it receives the development both horizontally and vertically. Obeying the dialectical principle, it has an equal ratio of background and decor, so that the grouped ornamental motifs are combined into the closed and ribbon compositions according to the ornamental counterpoint laws. Three-component is created with the use of three motifs phases - geometric, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic ornaments.

The coating details of the second layer are shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. The second layer of felt covering of the traditional Nogai “ak otav” wedding yurt – the marking details. 1.1. Decorative coverings of a yurt’s skeleton: 1.1.1. Wedding door curtain “Kelin shek Esik Kiyiz”; 1.1.2. Inyg bands; 1.1.3. “Biyal” Stripes; 1.1.4. Belt of the upper part of the “ozek basar” skeleton; 1.1.5. Belt of the “Tabancha Bav” skeleton’s lower part. 1.2. Decorative coverings of the yurt arch: 1.2.1. Wedding flag “tunlik”; 1.2.2. Felt detail “mangalashai”.

Color is of great importance in the marker parts’ decoration. Each color is inherent in traditional symbolism, in which a certain message is laid. For example, “sewing motifs of blue color (the symbol of the sky), the craftswomen wished a clear sky above the newlyweds’ house, yellow (the symbol of reason) - the compliant nature of the wife, white (the symbol of truth, joy, happiness, purity) - chastity and a happy family life, green (the symbol of spring, fertility) - healthy children, brown (a symbol of land, wealth) - prosperity, red (the symbol of youth, fire, beauty) - home comfort and beauty” [9].

Summary
The wedding “ak-otav” yurt, being the most important and brightest object of the Nogai wedding ritual, embodied the best traditions of folk architecture, arts and crafts, spiritual and material culture of Nogais, which made it a distinctive legacy of folk architecture of the ethnic group.

The study, based on written, visual and material sources, revealed that:
1. The design features of the yurt’s frame manufacture;
2. The felt coatings’ features, the sequence of their fixation on the details of the yurt;
3. The artistic features and the fixation sequence on the details of the yurt’s marking products.

The result of the revealed data was a sequentially performed artistic reconstruction of the “Ak Otav” Nogai wedding yurt.
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