

A PART OF YÜRÜK LIFE STYLE: TENTS

*Mustafa GENÇ**
*Ayşegül KOYUNCU***

Abstract:

One of the basic needs of human beings is sheltering. At first, safe places were chosen to settle down. Buildings which were constructed by getting into pits from above were the first residential architecture. Then vertical housing style became dominant. The material and shape used varied based on geographical, topographic characteristics, and weather and life styles. As Yürük life style forces them to move very often and they need light goods to carry with them, they chose tents. They are generally woven in the way they learned from their parents with the basic materials they need to survive their lives. Anatolian Yürüks use hair tents and these tents have been multi-functional to them as a kitchen, a bedroom, and a dining-room. In this study, we explained tents, their setting, and parts.

Key words: Yürük, Tent, Hair, Anatolia, Life Style.

Introduction

People, who have nomadic life-style, and whose economy is based on husbandry, are called “Yürük”, and their life-style is “Yürüklük”. What is meant here is not a nomadic life. In Western sources, the word “Yürük” is generally used to define people who have not got tradition, culture and art, but, actually among Turkish people it is regarded as a life-style. It also mustn't be forgotten that these two words may have different meanings in different regions. Yürüks and their life-styles have been examined by experts in different branches and they have been subject to a lot of publications. It is a necessity for Yürüks to move in order that they can keep their animals and crops away from possible dangers. So they have goods which occupy little place, are easy to have, light and multi-functional.

In this study, we have dealt with “tents” which are losing their importance and value; but, is a part of Yürük life-style. Tents make Yürüks' lives easy and they are home to them. Tents' parts and their pitching techniques are explained in a detailed way. This study has focused on the importance and place of tents in tradition, their factual, visual and vital

* Lecturer, Sakarya University Faculty of Fine Arts Department of Traditional Turkish Crafts Main Head of Carpet, Rug and Old Fabric Designs – Sakarya genc@sakarya.edu.tr.

** Lecturer Dr., Pamukkale University Denizli Vocational College Department of Technical Programs Program of Traditional Crafts – Denizli aysegulkoyuncu@pau.edu.tr.

properties. Interview and observation techniques have been used in this study.

A Part of Yürük Life-Style: Tents

The word “Çadır (tent)”, the old form “Çatır” was derived from “çadır” in Persian, or the base form of set up “çat” in Turkish. Turks name this kind of dwelling as “ev, iv, ova, otak, oba, kerekü, çerge, çatır, çetir”¹. With its status and importance in nomadic life-style, tents are indispensable dwellings and also a significant characteristic of them. Without mentioning tents, we can not understand Yürüks and their lives. To nomads, a tent means the same as what a house means to settled people².

Some archeologists who have examined Middle East Turkish Architecture state that Asian architecture’s basic principles are inspired from tents. It is a common belief that Turkish architecture was derived from tents whereas Greek architecture was derived from wooden architecture. The upper parts of felt-tents used by Turks in Middle Asia are believed to be the ancestors of domes in architecture (See Photos:1-2).



Photos 1-2: Felt Tents and Their Interior Decoration

(Photos 1-2: Mustafa GENÇ Archives-Kirghizistan The God Mountains/2009)

Tents and their ornaments have inspired the development of Turkish art and construction of architecture. They have also had an impact on the settlement of people. Although it is not recognised clearly, Yürük tents have had a direct effect on interior decorations of Turkish homes. The relationship between sofa and rooms of a Turkish home is like the setting of tents in

¹ Abdülkadir İnan, “Orta Asya Türklerinde Çadır ve Kıymız”, *Türk Folklor Araştırmaları*, S. 288, Temmuz 1973.
² M. Muhtar Kutlu, “Doğu Anadolu Göçer Topluluklarında Kara Çadır: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma”, *III. Milletlerarası Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri*, C. 5, Başbakanlık Basımevi, Ankara 1987, s. 239.

Yürük plateaus. One can sit, sleep, cook, eat and even have bath in a tent. A room's being multi-functional can be provided by its goods' being portable. Turkish people's main tent is made of white felt and it is known as "değirmi" tents (See Photo:3). Hairtents are generally used by the ones who grow goats and whose grass land is little³. This kind of tent is everything to Yürüks and because of its material of black goat hair, it is known with different names like "kara çadır (black tent)", "kıl çadır (hair tent)", "çul çadır (gunny tent)", or "Yörük çadırı (Yürük tent)" (See Photos: 3-4). The big and figurative tent is known as "otağ (marquee)". Unfortunately, tents whose last traces are being seen in nomadic culture, are disappearing day by day. We might definitely make ethnographic research and document this traditional culture and provide to have documented information⁴.



Photos 3-4: White Felt Tent and Black Tent

(Photo 3: Mustafa GENÇ Archives, Kirghizistan The God Mountains/2009)

(Photo 4: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archives, İzmir/2008)

In Anatolian nomad societies, "kara çadır (black tent)"⁵ is the most common type of tent. On the other side, we can see the samples of different kind with various names such as "alaçık (alayçık)"⁶, "topak ev (lump home)"⁷, "ak ev (white home)", "ak üy", "boz üy", "çadır", "derim ev"⁸,

³ Faruk Sümer, *Oğuzlar (Türkmenler) Tarihleri-Boy Teşkilatı-Destanları*, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı yay., İstanbul 1999, s. 25.

⁴ Kutlu, age., s. 246-247.

⁵ Persians, Tibetans, Syrians, Large Sahar Arabs are also using tents similar to black tents. Although their basic material is also goat hair, its setting, shape, size and use differ from Yürüks'.

⁶ Sides of the tent are placed with stones, upper part is knitted with tree and wicker parts and shaped like a dome or tunnel and felt is placed on it. Alaçık is mainly preferred by Yürüks who move less and it is difficult to carry its parts.

⁷ Tent which has been used for more than 1000 years by Turks, Mongols, Kirghizs, Kazakhs and Uzbeks is sometimes named as "lump home" or "home". Felt is laid onto the tent. It is more difficult to carry the parts of a tent set and detach it than to carry it.

⁸ Atilla Erden, "Günümüz Toros Yörüklerinden İzlenimler", *I. Akdeniz Yöresi Türk Toplulukları Sosyo-Kültürel Yapısı, Yörükler Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Kültür Bakanlığı yay., Ankara, 1994, s. 144.

“bekdik çadırı” and “turluk”. According to historical documents and archaeological finds, Middle East nomads have been using felt-made of sheep wool since ancient times⁹.

Turks brought “topak ev (lump homes)” with them while coming to Anatolia from Middle Asia. But as climate differed, and as a result of their interaction with Arabs, they met “kıl çadır (hair tents)”. People must have mild weather to live in their tents. As Anatolian lands are efficient and fertile, and plateaus are suitable for husbandry, and life in tents, it has affected Yürüks’ life-styles. Yürüks easily adapted themselves to growing sheep and goat and providing wool and hair from them. They can succeed in using the raw-material in the best way they can and they have already made it a profession to themselves. Since they have to live in plateaus, they have to produce everything they need to have a more comfortable life. It has resulted in some materials special to Yürüks. Their weaving’s being diverse and rich is not only related to their having herds, but their living in tents as well. Because, they have weavings ranging from crib blankets to handkerchief bread and bag of salt. Yürüks prefer things with them which are portable and easy to carry due to the fact that they have to move from a place to another one¹⁰. A weaving must serve to more than one aim. It must be suitable to alpine pasture and winter quarters. It must be set easily and functional. As a tent has got a few wooden parts, it is easy to carry it. During migration, objects used at plateaus are folded to weavings which constitute the roof and walls of a tent. A tent’s parts can function as a bag and a crate to the things protected in this way; and they are placed onto a camel. All parts of a tent can be carried by a camel. That is why there is a saying in Turkish; “A camel can carry a Yürük’s home; but 40 camels can not disturb his pleasure”¹¹.

When Yürüks come to a plateau, their first duty is to prepare parts of tent and set it. They set it onto a flat surface. If they are staying at their usual place, they make some settings. If there are any dents in their walls, they immediately repair it building stones around it. They generally choose same place to set their tents.

Every Yürük group has a specific place to set their tents, which they have been using for a long time. Where they should set their tents is clearly

⁹ **For detailed information search:** Mehmet Eröz, *Yörükler*, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı yay., İstanbul 1991, s. 97; Ali Rıza Yalın, *Cenupta Türkmen Oymakları*, Cilt: 1, Ankara 1977, s. 245-246; Naci Eren, “Yörüklerde Karaçadır”, *Folklor ve Etnografya Araştırmaları*, Esenler Matbaası, İstanbul 1984, s. 6; Muzaffer Ürekli, “Honamlı Türkmen (Yörük)’lerinde Çadır ve Çadır Hayatı”, *Tarih Boyunca Ev ve Aile Semineri*, 25-26 Mayıs 1998, Globus Dünya Basımevi, İstanbul 2000, s. 201.

¹⁰ Şerife Atlıhan, “Güney Batı Anadolu’da Karaçadır”, *Kültür ve Sanat*, Eylül 1992, Yıl: 4, S. 15, s. 52.

¹¹ İsmail Şimşek, 1956 born, animal husbandry, graduate of primary school, Çivril/Denizli, interview held on 13.05.2009.

clarified. Another Yürük group can not use that place. Should a Yürük group want to set their tents in a place which already belongs to another one, they should get their permission. Although that group has not been using that land for a long time, the process should be activated in any case. Otherwise, there might be a conflict between those two groups.

The distance between each tent must be at least 1 km. It is for animals to move and pasture easily. Women and men in the group share duties to set tents. Tents must be opposite the wind-sides, and their doors must be facing south and corner. Door of a tent is generally on the right side. Because Yürüks believe; right side is both auspicious and fertile¹².

Basic material of a Yürük's tent is goat hair¹³. In plain weaving technique, a big blanket woven by looms called "Istar" and "çul (gunny)" are the main parts. Moreover, "saçak (fringe), 3-5-7 pillars which support and tighten the blanket, "çanaklar (pots), cırmakans, eyef or eşgelek", "sitol kazıkları (gunny piles)", "dolak hasırı (puttee mats)", "çadır bağı (tent bond)" and "çivi (nail)" are also used.

Tent blankets are composed of flanks which are 50-60 cm in width and 150-160 cm in length. With the smallest tent, which has got 3 pillars, there are 4 "kanat (flank). Depending on the size this number might increase.

Çul (gunny) which forms skeleton (wall) of a tent is woven thinner than the tent blanket, and it is adjusted depending the length of tents. It prevents dust, clay and rain from leaking inside. They also enlighten inside tents by pores formed. Gunnies used on the shorter sides of a tent are named as "böğür sitili (flank gunny)" whereas we name the ones used on the longer sides as "ön sitil (front gunny)" and "arka sitil (back gunny)". For shorter sides, 4 gunnies are woven with a width of 100-120 cm. and length of 150-200 cm. For longer sides, gunnies which are 150-160 cm. in width and 500-600 cm. in length are woven. These are attached to each other by sewing. These sizes can be with the correct proportion with the length of a tent.

There are "saçak (fringe)" at where tent blanket and gunnies meet with a width of 15-20 cm. They surround the whole tent and they look like a strip woven from hair. They are generally used to drain water outside tents which formed because of rain and snow. They are also decoration and used in modern architecture as well. Some tents are set to be used just on day time

¹² Nuray Yılmaz - Ayşegül Koyuncu, "Yörük Yaşam Biçiminin Geleneksel Dokumalara Yansıması", *10. Ulusal El Sanatları Sempozyumu*, 19-20 Kasım 2009, İzmir 2009, s. 383.

¹³ Hair is sheared from goat's shoulder once a year. Gathered hair is chosen depending on size and trimmed to give it a soft form. The trimmed wool is wrung by a Rolling pin or a long thin rod. This process is "wringing" or "winding". Goat hair spun with "kirman" is used in its original colour without being dyed. **For detailed information search:** Ayşegül Koyuncu, *Belenbaşı Köyü (Buca-İzmir) Düz Dokumalarının Teknik ve Desen Özellikleri*, (Yayınlanmamış Sanatta Yeterlik Tezi). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü, İzmir 2011, s. 63-65.

and gunnies which are on the front side of this kind of tents are not attached to tent blankets; so the front side is always open. This part is ornamented with wool or hair fringes and blue beads (See Photo:5). Fringes woven with different wools can be used.



Photo 5: Saçak (Fringe)
(Photo 5: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archive, Muğla/2010)

Pillars used in tent making are chosen among the long, thick and smooth branches of pine, willow, and poplar trees. Snags on these branches are like hangers inside a tent. Pillars are not tacked to the land; they are placed on the ground floor. Depending on the size of the tent, number of pillars increase. Number of pillars can vary to 3-5-7. It shows that the more pillars a tent has got, the richer the owner of it is. Tribal chiefs' homes are named as "Ulu Evi"¹⁴ and they have got the most amount of pillars. Pillar in the centre is 8-10 cm. longer than other pillars. It is done like this in order that water can be drained outside easily through roofs. Length of center pillar may be between 230-250 cm. When you look at a tent through front-line, the uppermost pillar is named as "ön direk (the front pillar)", the one in the centre "orta direk (the middle pillar)", the hindmost one "arka direk (the back pillar)".

A part which resembles a bowl is located onto the pillars facing the roof; and because of its shape it is called "çanak (bowl)". They are selected from hard and durable parts of trees. There is a hollow with a diameter of 3-5 cm. in the center part, and it has got a dimension nearly 10 x 15 cm. or 15 x 20 cm. mastheads are attached into this hollow. It is used to ward the reaming of tent blanket when bowl tent is stretched (See Photo:6).

¹⁴ Müyesser Tosunbaş, "Akdeniz Bölgesi Türkmenlerinde Çadır Tipleri", *İçel Kültürü*, S. 1, Ocak 1987, s. 25.



Photo 6: The Pillar Located Into the Bowl
(Photo 6: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archives, Muğla/2010)

Cırmakan in Turkish with other names like eyef or eşgelek consists of a smooth tree part with 25-30 cm. in length, 4-5 cm. in width and 3-5 cm. thickness. It is essential for kolan (a kind of thin and long weaving) to stretch the tent. It has a big importance in balancing the tent. With cırmakans, the place where lanyards are to be fetched is attached. Lanyards must not shift to the right or left sides. There are 8 cırmakans in a 3 pillar tent. When the number of pillars increase, 2 extra cırmakans for each pillars must be applied. Number of cırmakans and pillars are equal. Cırmakans are like hands holding a tent bonds¹⁵.

After the tent is set, 25-30 wooden piles, with 90-100 cm. in length and 3-5 cm. in thickness are tacked around the tent. They are called as “stil kazığı (gunny piles)”. These sharpened pile tips are tacked on the floor with a distance of 50-60 cm. to each other. These piles make it possible for puttee mats to stand still and gunnies to be stretched. This skeleton acts like a wall to the tent. Tacking process starts with leaving a space for door and coiling around the tent. It finishes where the space is left.

The weaving which is especially woven at 50-60 cm. width is named as “dolak hasır, çığ (puttee mat)”. It encloses the tent. This material is a life-guard against hot-cold weather, dust, and harmful insects. As it functions like a door to the tent, it is very practical with its upright posture. But nowadays they are being replaced with corrugated tin or nylon sacks (See Photos:7-8).

¹⁵ Atlıhan, age., s. 52.



Photos 7-8: Usage of Nylon Sacks and Corrugated Tins Instead of Putte Mats
(Photos 7-8: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archives, İzmir/2008)

A 30-40 cm. long yarn woven with goat hair like plait is called “çadır bağı (bond)”. Bonds are named depending on where they are sewed. For instance, the one in the center is called “böğür bağı (flank)”, the one in the back-center is named “arka bağı (back bond)”, the one in front is known as “ön bağı (front bond)”, and the rest are preferred to be called like “pinti bağı (mean bond)”. A rod which is approximately with 10 cm. is attached to these bonds on the tent blanket. And this rod is known as “siti çöpü (gunny garbage)” (See Photos: 9-10). While stretching this bond whose one side is connected to the gunny garbage and the other side to the pile, we can make the tent blanket rise in the air and fix it to land.

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Photos 9-10: Binding the Bond and Gunny Garbage
(Photos 9-10: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archives, Muğla/2010)

The tent blanket forming the roof of the tent and gunnies forming the skeleton of the tent are attached to each other skillfully with sharpened rods

known as “çivi (nail)” (See Photo: 11). This binding process is named as “Siğinti” by İçel Sarıkeçili Yürüks¹⁶. If the binding is not done skillfully enough, the tent may bent and its appearance formless. Moreover, it can not protect the people living inside it well enough against rain, snow and wind. Once attaching process is finished, clay and stone is piled to keep rain water and wind away. Runnels named “sellik” are opened so that they can avoid rain water from getting inside.



Photo 11: Attaching the Gunny With Nail
(Photo 11: Ayşegül KOYUNCU Archives, Denizli/2010)

When Yürüks visit another family to marry the family's daughter to their son, The family asks a question: “Have you got a house?” This question is responded with an answer like: “We have got a 40 windowed apartment”. What is meant with 40 windowed apartment is Yürüks' tents. While Yürüks are setting their tents, 40 holes appear attaching the weavings with a rod. Yürüks are proud of these 40 windows¹⁷.

The process of setting the tent starts with laying a tent blanket on a smooth surface and then piles are tacked; this tent blanket is lengthened to the direction of bonds and attached to the tacked piles. Bonds are tied to the pile one by one and loosely. First, “ön direk (the front pile)”, then “orta direk (the middle pile)”, and last “arka direk (the back pile)” are attached into the bowls so height of the tent is risen and piles are placed still onto the ground floor. Just after piles are set, bonds are stretchened and the tent blanket is opened lengthwise and at last bonds are tied to the piles. The tent must be tightened perfectly, or else, the tent might let water in.

¹⁶ Hilmi Dulkadir, *İçel'de Son Yörükler Sarıkeçililer*, İçel Valiliği yay., Mersin 1997, s.73.

¹⁷ Koyuncu, age., 2011, s. 63.

After the tent is set, people sacrifice a goat or a sheep. It is served to people who have helped the set of the tent. Everybody eats it happily. Then, Yürük women unload their loads and start to set internal layout. The weight of a tent can vary between 50 kg. and 70 kg. the width differs from 3 m. to 5 m. and length may be between 5 m. and 10 m.

The interior of a tent has luxury look. It just looks like a weaving exhibition. The internal layout is located in accordance with the entrance door. When you enter through the entrance door, the first thing you come across is a cooker surrounded with a “ocak taşı (cooker stone)”. It is used to cook and in cold weathers to get warm. The cooker is inside the tent. Pores, blocked with fume and soot of fire lit inside in cold weathers, obstruct the cold¹⁸. It is called as “korluk”. This cooker is sometimes a stove. “Başköşe (the main corner)” is reserved for the elderly, visitors and chiefs¹⁹. All food and clothes are protected in sacks and pouches. In red sacks, generally clothes and dowries are protected while pulses are kept inside white woolen sacks. These sacks and pouches are placed on cedars which are above 20-30 cm. and these cedars are tacked on stones or trees. It is done to prevent them from humid. They are also used to lean while sitting down. Mat, gunny, and felt are laid on the floor to avoid possible cold and humid.

Hair tents, which are the most important housing of Yürüks, have a lot of features.

- It is set easily with the regardless of time and place. It is easy to carry, fold, set and detach it. It is not detached in extreme cold, rain, snow, and sun. As it is compatible to weather conditions, there is no need to detach and re-set it.

- Tents are set with a declivity of 35 %. By it, it does not let water inside.

- When it starts to rain and snow, due to goat hair, they do not let water inside. Goat hair is perforated. Hairs which see water expand and block pores occurred during weaving process and inhibit water. Since it keeps cold weather outside, it is not cold inside the tent. During or after the rain or snow, gunnies and tent blanket are swept with a broom. So water is driven outside.

- In hot weathers, the tent releases itself, pores open, and light getting inside through these pores enlighten the tent. And as there is always an air-circulation, it is always cool inside the tent.

¹⁸ Dulkadir, age., s.72.

¹⁹ This main corner is also called “tör”. Tör which is like a cedar or a sofa is furnished with felts, carpets, rugs and valuable animal pelts in different colours and designs. **For detailed information search:** Salim Koca, *Türk Kültürünün Temelleri II*, Başkent Matbaacılık, Ankara 2003, s. 110-111.

- People do not need anything to enlighten on day-time. Air and light coming inside along holes is enough. But when it gets dawn, a gas lamp or a sailor's flashlight hung in the middle of the tent is used²⁰.
- If a tent is a newly woven one, it sometimes lets in rain or snow water. In time, because fumes going up from the fire inside stick to pores, it starts to block water.
- Harmful creatures existing in nature (snakes, scorpions, spiders) can not move or walk on the tent because of its structural characteristic. When the tent is already set, moth can not give harm to it. Mosquitos tend to stay away from goat hair.
- Tent is not affected from burning flame inside, and it does not keep soot in. In Turkish folk songs, singers voice: "Do black tents keep soot?". As long as you do not light fire for a long time inside hair tent, it does not catch fire and burn easily.
- A tent can last for 25-30 years as hair used to make it is durable and strong. So it is an economical and practical housing.
- Yürüks live in a tent together with 2-3 generations (from grandparents to grandchildren) Parents, their children and children-in law²¹ and grandchilren sleep in the same tent. (See Photo:12). So it is a suitable accomadation for traditional families.



Photo 12: A Baby in a Tent
(Photo 12: Mustafa GENÇ Archieves, Mersin-Mut/1998)

²⁰ Some Yürüks using power units have been identified recently.

²¹ When married couples are having sex, they hang "kepenek" a kind of blanket on the tent door. People seeing it, do not disturb the couple.

Conclusion

After Turks arrived and settled in Anatolia, first changes in design and use of materials started with tents. Felt tents were replaced with black tents. So black tents are regarded as a continuation of Turkish tent culture with its functions. As Yürük life-style is getting less frequent, a lot of cultural values which are parts of this life-style are getting lost too. On the other side, there are also some products which resist against this change and are a cultural heritage. One of them is obviously, tents.

Rapid development of technology, increase of mass-media, difficulties caused by financial problems are some of the main reasons which have caused changes in Yürüks' lives. But there are also some facts arising from problems mentioned above and they have direct effect upon Yürüks. Reasons like; increase in the number of villages and plantation, opening forests and mountains to traffic, forest officers' behaviours, guard fee²², people's choosing mountain tourism and high grazing fees and decrease in the number of animals have resulted in a problem for Yürüks to maintain their lives in plateaus. Yürüks have had to give up the way they used to live and start a new life as farming and husbandry.

As a result of change in Yürüs' lives, traditions, they have started to use tents, which used to be inseperable part of their lives, less frequently. With having a sattled life-style, some distinctive parts of their culture have disappeared, changed or had new meanings and fuctions. Yürüks who have settled in towns are still keeping the materials they used to use in their nomad times. Especially their women are stil keeping the rugs, saddlebags, sacks and bags they have woven.

Tents are acting another mission nowadays. In touristic attraction places, they take tourists' attention as a place to have breakfast, or eat gözleme (a traditional Turkish meal) inside. So Yürüks and other people have started to use tents again to profit from them. Although Yürüks are trying to set their tents in celebrations and ceremonies like weddings, feasts, it must be accepted that tent a typical part of culture has had important changes.

²² Oğuz Aktan, "Antalya Çevresinde Konar-Göçer Asabiyeti", *I. Akdeniz Yöresi Türk Toplulukları Sosyo-Kültürel Yapısı, Yörükler Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Kültür Bakanlığı yay., Ankara 1994, s.18.