

The Yurt

Education Pack

People and Place:
Linking the cultural,
social and environmental
aspects of the yurt



Activities and Discussion
topics
for 5-13 year olds



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Introduction

Yurts still provide shelter for many people living in East Asia and represent far more in terms of sustainability. Yurts are remarkably beautiful structures, which can act as spaces for a wide number of educational and creative activities. For some people in the West the yurt has become an alternative form of low-impact housing. In addition, the yurt serves as a fantastic cross-cultural resource, encouraging people from all walks of life to live and work together 'under one roof'.

The pack can be used with adults and children between the ages of 5 and 13 in working situations, on a farm or inside a teaching room. It can be used as an information source, providing cultural, social and environmental contexts for yurts and shelter in general.

The pack is divided into Fact Sheets and Activity Sheets, which complement one

another and can be used together or separately. The activity sheets are designed as 'stand-alone' sheets, which can be pulled out and photocopied for distribution with a group.

The pack aims to be a resource material that can be used both within the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens network and within schools and other youth agencies.

It can be used as a handout for visiting groups, and form a starting point for educational activities producing new ideas and leading to further research.

The teachers' notes provide guidance and cross-curricular information to enable the pack to be used within schools, where it is best suited for Key Stage 2 children.

Teachers' Notes

This pack is aimed at 5-13 year olds and references below are made to the specific Key Stages to link in with the following National Curriculum subjects:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Science
- Geography
- History
- RE
- PHSE
- Art
- DT
- ICT

The fact sheets and activities provide background and guidance for teachers, or can be used as photocopiable classroom resources.

Additional practical ideas for children's learning tasks are suggested here to enable teachers to use the pack to support and enhance new or existing subject or cross curricular teaching plans.

Literacy

Fact Sheet 2 - Word Level Work

- 1 KS 1/2- Finding synonyms for 'home' using English and / or other languages.

KS 2/3 - Researching origins and derivations from root words (e.g. 'maisonette' from French maison, 'domicile' from Latin domicilium, Turk, Turkish, Turkey, Turkmen, Turkic, Turkism etc).

Activities 1

- 2 KS 1/2 - (Ref: 'How to pronounce Kyrgyz words' table) Invent and illustrate 5 -10 words for piece of imaginative writing involving characters from a different country or world. Display in a table, giving equivalent English meanings and phonetic guidance for pronunciation.

Fact Sheet 2

- 3 KS 2/3 -(Ref: Turkic meaning of 'yurt' in text.) Write concise, descriptive phrases to explain unusual types/places of dwellings then invent names for them derived from known root words, prefixes and suffixes.

Fact Sheet 1 - Non-Fiction Text Level Work

- 1 KS 2/3- Identify 5-10 key facts about 'Yurt Dwellers'. Present these concisely in an A4 travel brochure aimed at persuading adventurous tourists to join a guided tour of the region.
- 2 KS 2/3 Using the fact sheet, write imaginatively of a day/week in your life as a child of a nomadic Mongolian family, herding and hunting along a migratory route through the mountains and pastures of Central Asia.

Activities 2 - Non-Fiction Text Level Work

- KS 2/3 - (Ref: 'Good and Bad things about our yurt'.) Discuss and draw up a table to show the advantages and disadvantages of living in a yurt. Write a balanced report to summarise these, analysing the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Activities 4 - Sentence Level Work

- KS 1 - Sequencing with oral presentation.
- KS 2 - Sequencing pictures with captions. Communicating information via a time line.

Activities 5 - Non-Fiction Text and picture map, Fictional Text - poem

- 1 KS1/2 -Create picture map of own surroundings.
- 2 KS 2/3 - Read and analyse 'Yurt Poem'. Identify descriptive phrases, similes, metaphors, foreign words, new vocabulary and meanings. Using similar format, write own 'In praise of...' an object, place or person particularly important to you.

Numeracy

Activities 2 - Measure - Using non standard units of length

- KS1 - Using non-standard units of length (comparable with arm reaches, strides, cubits, hand spans etc).

Science

Activities 2 - Materials & Their properties:

- 1 KS 2 -Find three different materials, which are flexible enough to be used as a yurt weatherproof covering. Design and carry out fair tests to find the most waterproof one and best insulator.
- 2 KS 2 -Collect a variety of light-weight, strong, flexible materials which might be suitable to make a model yurt frame e.g. plastic straws, twigs, lollypop sticks, garden wire, basket cane etc. Design and carry out fair tests to find which material is the most flexible and the strongest. Do any of them improve with soaking in water over a period of time? How could you test this?

Forces

- KS 2 -Investigate through fair testing which yurt shape is best for stability in high winds. How do your findings compare with yurt shapes in reality?

Fact Sheet 3 - Life & Living Processes

- KS 2 - Food and diet of a yurt dweller. Comparing their sources of protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals with our own.

Geography

Knowledge and understanding of a contrasting locality

Fact Sheet 1

- 1 KS 2/3: Using atlases/globes, identify main Central Asian countries, capital cities, mountains, rivers etc. Location by grid references. Research a Central Asian country as one less economically developed compared with a European country.
- 2 KS 1/2 -Analyse evidence and draw conclusions about Yurt Dwellers' life-style in relation to their land e.g. why do they traditionally keep the five named animals? What is their diet? Why do they travel back and forth over vast areas? Why do fewer people live in yurts or use them for work each year? Would I like to live a nomadic life?

Facts/Activities 2

- KS 1/2 - Similarities and differences between our own home and that of a yurt dweller.

Activities 3

- KS 2 - Traditional work and food of the yurt dwelling family members.

Fact Sheet 5

- 1 KS 1/2 - Using example, communicate in picture / pictorial map form about your own surroundings
- 2 KS 2/3 Discuss past colonisation of land by others and how it affected the nomadic lifestyle. What could affect it today? How do the nomads live off the land yet sustain it successfully?

History

Fact Sheet 5

- KS 2 - Comparing the effects of Settlers in the past, with the recent influences of colonisation on the nomadic way of life.

RE

Fact Sheet 1

- KS 2/3 - Discuss why, when they die, Kyrgyz townspeople would wish to be buried in high mountain pastures. How does this compare with the reasons for the wishes of members of our own families?

Facts /Activities 2

- KS 1/2 - Comparing our home with a yurt, where signs and symbols denote the family hierarchy and where valued possessions and religious artefacts are significantly placed.

Facts/Activities 5

- 1 KS 2/3 - How the beliefs of the yurt dwellers influence their actions particularly with regards to their care of the environment and respect for life. Comparing the special, often natural places for worship with those of other religions.
- 2 KS 2/3 - Draft and present a 'Praise Poem' in honour of someone, some place or some thing which has particular significance to you.

PHSE & Citizenship

Facts/Activities 2

- KS 1/2 -The importance of an individual's worth, their responsibilities and the need for helpful rules for family harmony. Reflecting on and understanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural differences.

Fact Sheet 5

- KS 2/3 - Recognising the importance of our own environment. In our culture, what lessons can we learn from the nomads' ability to protect and sustain the environment? Compose pertinent sayings to remind us to look after each other or our environment.

Art and Design

Facts /Activities 2

- KS 1/2 -Art: Design and make a model yurt (e.g. clay) or a decorative yurt cover (e.g. textiles).

Design and Technology

Shelters

Facts /Activities 2

- KS 2 DT: Research shelters, design a model one for a specific purpose, make and evaluate it.

Facts /Activities 3

- KS 1/2 - Food technology: Analysing ingredients in commercially produced food. Tasting and evaluating different milk products. Designing a yurt dweller's meal, making unleavened bread, churning milk to cheese, growing yogurt.

ICT

(Refer to suggested subject activities above)

- **Literacy:** Word process the travel brochure and /or 'Praise Poem', import relevant pictures or graphics.
- **Numeracy:** Enter details from class survey of children's homes on to database software, display data in spreadsheet / graphical form to instigate enquiries and draw conclusion.
- **Geography:** Search Internet / CDRoms / Reference books etc. for information on a central Asian country, Yurt dwellers or other nomadic people in the world.
- **Science:** Search Internet to find modern uses of Yurts and materials used in their construction. Research animal / milk products using all forms of ICT
- **Art / DT:** Use 'Draw and Paint' software to generate a colourful yurt design with annotated labels.



Summer Pastures

Each group of yurt dwellers in Central Asia has their own territory of pastures and migration routes. But incoming settlers to the region have often assumed that because the yurt dwellers travel, they don't 'own' land. This has sometimes been used as an excuse to take over nomadic territory.

But the nomadic people consider that **the land belongs to them**. They have a clear understanding of their rights over the land as well as a very careful system of managing it. For example, the land is divided up into **spring, summer, autumn** and **winter** pastures that are used at different times of year.

The summer pastures are particularly special for mountain people, such as the Kyrgyz. The summer pastures are right at the tops of the mountains and are only free of snow for a few months in the summer. At this time the pastures are covered with every **blue mountain flower** you can imagine and plenty of rich, strong grass, which is extremely good for the animals.

Every Kyrgyz family, even if they now live in the towns, thinks of these places as their '**mother land**'. In these places their ancestors are buried and, if possible, it is here that they would like to be buried themselves when they die.

Spring and autumn pastures are lower down the mountains, often in the same place as each other, and are used when the grass has renewed itself. The winter pastures are low in the valleys.

Steppe nomads, such as the **Mongols** or **Kazakhs**, have their summer pastures in the northern steppe and travel long distances from north to south and back again, over the year.

mother land

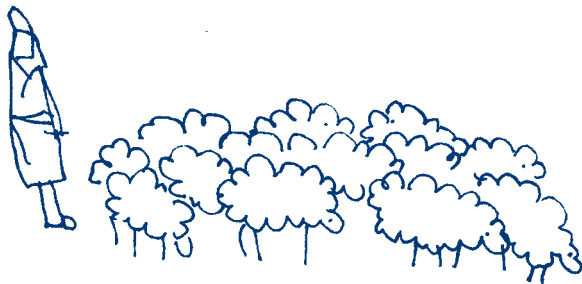
How to pronounce Kyrgyz* Words

(*“ker-guz”!)

Kyrgyz (Ker-guz) Words

Landscape

rockface	jar	(jar)
moon	ay	(eye)
stars	jyldyz	(julduz)
sun	kun	(kune)
sky	acman	(assman)
snow	kar	(car)
cloud	bulut	(booloot)
mountain	to'o	(tor-or)
rain	ja'an	(ja-an)
stones	tash	(tash)
water	su'u	(soo-oo)



Farm/herding

sheep	koy	(coy)
cow	uy	(o-ee)
goat	echky	(ech-kee)
horse	at	(at)
herdsmen	malchy	(malchuh)
shepherd	koychy	(koychuh)
horseherder	jylkychy	(juhl-kuh-chuh)
cowherd	uychu	(oychoo)
winter farm	kashar	(kash-ar)

Clothing

hat	tebetey	(teh-bet-ee)
coat	chapan	(chap-an)
belt	kur	(cur)
trousers	shym	(shim)
boot	otuk	(ertuke)
galoches	koloch	(kerlerch)
scarf	jooluk	(jo'o luck)
blouse	koynok	(kuynerk)
waistcoat	shymal	(shurmal)



Cooking

bucket	chaka	(chaka)
oil lamp	maychyarak	(my-chur-ak)
stove	mesh	(mesh)
bread oven	kazan	(kaz-an)
plate	tabak	(tab-ack)
fire	ot	(ot)
dung	kong	(gurng)
wood	otun	(o-tun)
smoke	tutun	(tue-tune)



How to pronounce Kyrgyz Words

House

brick house	tam'uy	(tam u)
yurt:		
(Northern Kyrgyz)	boz 'uy	(boz-u)
(Kyrgyz)	djurt	(dee-jurt)
(Turkmen)	öy	(oy)
(Mongolian)	ger	(gur)
women's place	epchi-djak	(epchi-jak)
men's place	er djak	(er-jak)
place of honour	tör	(ter)
door	bosogo	(bor-sor-gor)
bedding pile	djuk	(djuke)
table cloth	dastar djan	(das-tar-jan)
cloth hanging	tush kiiz	(tushkiy-iz)

How to pronounce Kyrgyz* Words

(*“ker-guz”!)



sun

kün

sounds like



moon



horse

at

sounds like



cat



sheep

koy

sounds like



boy



fire

ot

sounds like



dot:



moon

ay

sounds like



eye

The Meaning of “Yurt”

There are many diverse nomadic cultures in Central Asia. The four peoples we refer to in this pack are the **Mongols**, the **Kyrgyz**, the **Kazakhs** and the **Turkmen**.

These people speak many different languages and each nomadic language has its own word for 'yurt':

boz üy in northern Kyrgyz

öy by the Turkmen

ger in Mongolian

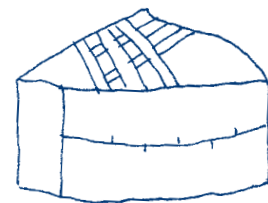
So where does the word 'yurt' come from?

It came into European languages through a misunderstanding by travellers of the Central Asian word 'djurt'. 'Djurt' can mean **land, tent-site or home-place** in Kyrgyz and has a similar meaning in several other Central Asian languages.

'Yurt' (yourte, yurta or jurte) are now used in many different European languages and is also used by many Central Asian nomadic people when they are not speaking their own language. **So when we use the word 'yurt' remember we are using an English word!**

The yurt is a versatile structure. Yurts come in many different shapes and sizes.

The Mongolian ger is lower and wider with straight roof-poles and a conical roof made with wood that may have been carpentered rather than bent into shape. There may also be posts to the roof to support the central crown. This lower tent is best suited to the strong winds of the Mongolian steppe.



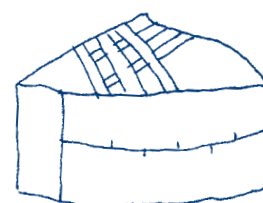
The Turkic type has curved roof poles and no central support posts for the roof ring or crown. All the wood will have been steam-bent into shape, not carpentered.



The Kyrgyz boz üy has a steep roof and is most suited to life in the high mountain regions like Tien Shan, where rainfall can be quite high.

The Turkmen öy has a rounded roof and in summer the walls are often covered over by a sedge screen rather than felt which lets the air circulate in the hot desert climate.

There are many shapes and sizes of yurt



Our yurt

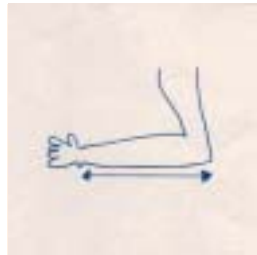
Kyrgyz Measurements

This activity can be done in a yurt or inside a room using the furniture.

Use the Kyrgyz measurements instead of the English.



Kulach








Arshyn



Eki Eli



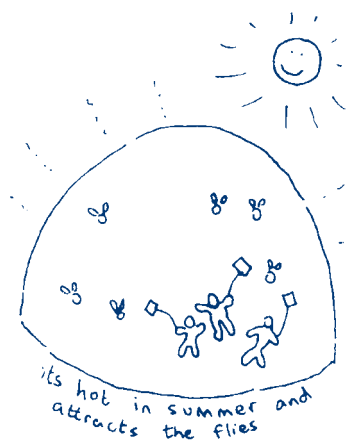
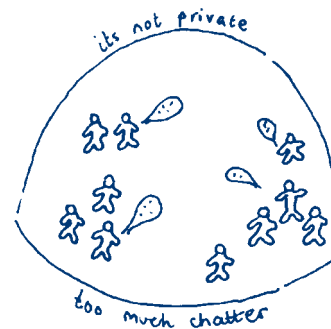
Karysh

-  In pairs, measure how many **arshyn** high your friend is.
-  Get them to measure how high you are.
-  Choose a wall and measure how many **kulach** there are along the length of it.
-  How many **karysh** are there from the door to the window?
-  How many **eki eli** high is the top of your head?

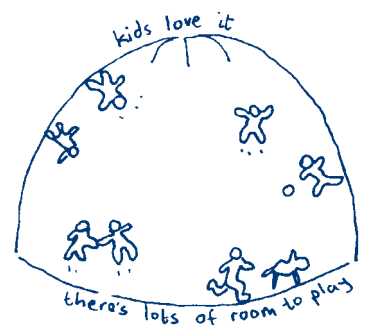
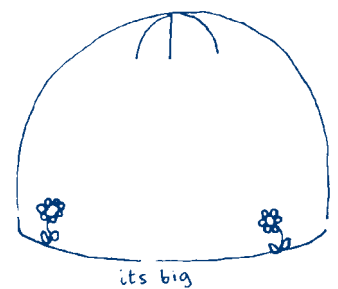
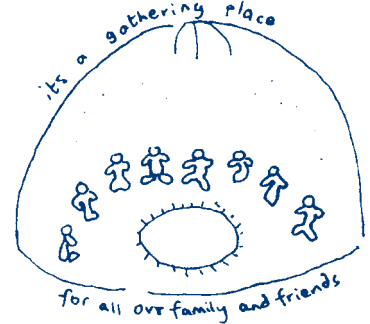
Compare your measurements with those of an adult working with you.


Some things children in this country have said about yurts:

Bad Things...



Good Things...



-  Name four good things and four bad things about living in your house.

Yurts inside and out

The Yurt Structure

The yurt frame is made from **willow** and the covers are usually made from **felt**, which is both waterproof and insulating. Mongolian gers may have covers made from **cotton wadding**, but this is a recent development. The frame is made up of the **trellis**, (which is usually in several parts), the **roof-poles**, the **roof-ring or crown**, and the **door**. These elements are usually made by a 'yurt master'.

The felt covers, the woven bands to hold the yurt together, as well as the textile furnishings and interior decorations, are all made by the women of the family.

To make the wood bend!

All the components of a yurt (apart from the door frame) are bent. So how is it done?

Traditionally, the northern Kyrgyz steam the wood in fermenting sheep's dung, while the southern Kyrgyz used a clay steam oven. Today, a steam box is most commonly used in the region. This is also the system we use in Britain.

First a fire is lit inside a steam generator. The steam resulting from the boiling water is piped into a steam box, which is basically a long 'wood cooker' or steam oven. Different parts of the frame are 'cooked' for different periods of time, depending on their size. It can be anything from 30 minutes to 2 hours. When they are ready, the parts are taken from the box and bent immediately into the correct shape before the wood cools off and sets.

Making the roof-ring or crown

This is perhaps the most exciting part of the yurt to make and it is culturally the most symbolic. It forms the centrepiece for the whole structure and the point from which all the roof ribs radiate. It is made from 2 'cleft' or split pieces of hard wood, such as birch which are steamed and bent around an iron ring in order to make 2 overlapping C shaped semi circles. These two halves are then

pinned together with wooden pegs to form a strong circle. Permanent curved cross-struts are then joined at right angles across the roof-ring to brace it. After this, the holes for the roof poles are burned into the ring. The Kyrgyz name for the roof-ring is **tunduk**, the Mongolian name is **tono**.



The lattice walls and the roof poles

Traditionally, willow is used for the lattice walls and the roof poles because it is a coppice wood, is plentiful in Central Asia and bends and hold its shape well. In Britain, yurt enthusiasts often use ash or sweet chestnut. Willow poles are shaved and then steam-bent, while ash or chestnut are often cleft first.

The number of trellis poles depends on the size of the yurt. Once bent into shape, the poles have holes drilled along their length to attach to each other. They make a lattice pattern when joined together and can be folded down to pack light.

Door Frame

This is comprised of two wooden poles that make the uprights, which slot into two planks which make the top and bottom. It is called **bosogo** in Kyrgyz and **khaalga** in Mongolian.

Covers

Traditionally yurt covers were made out of felt which is made from sheep's fleece. To make the large pieces required takes a great deal of wool and much hard work. Nowadays, while Kyrgyz and some Kazakh yurts are still covered with felt, most Mongolian gers and many Kazakh tents use canvas covers.

Tension Band

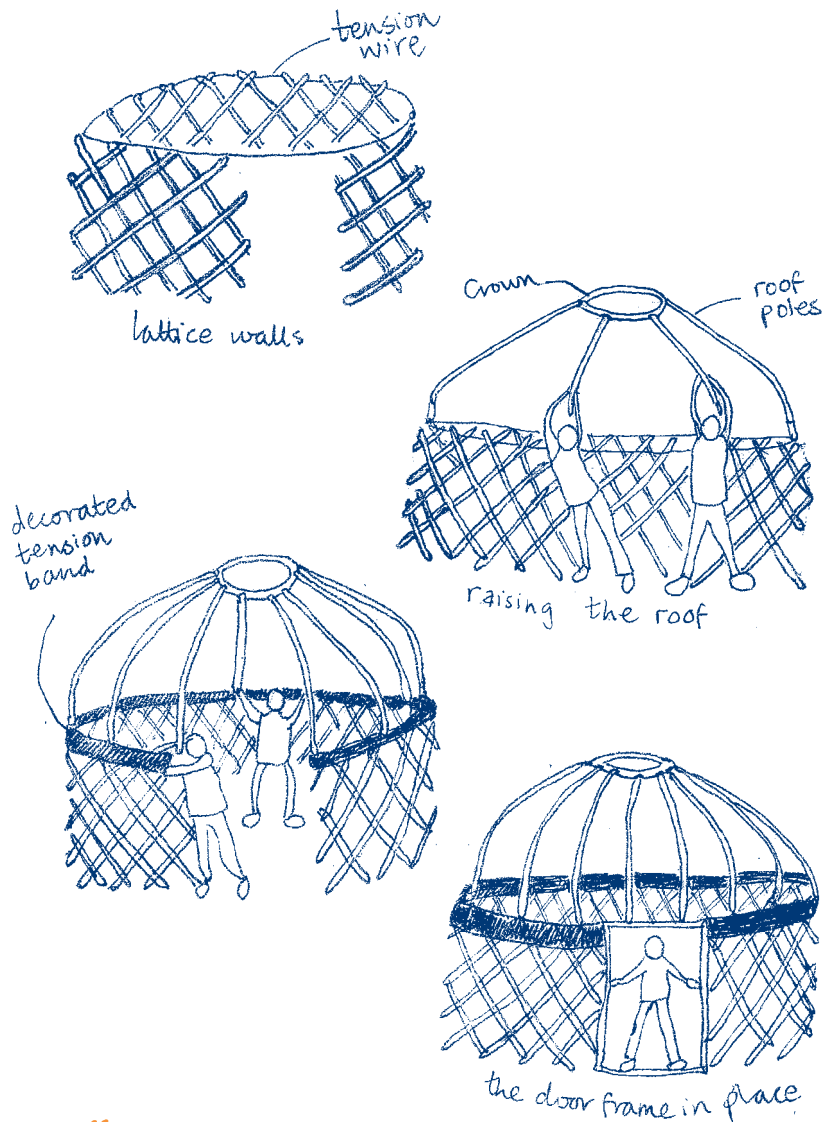
The tension band extends around the trellis from one side of the door frame to the other, holding the yurt together. It is usually woven into colourful patterns.

The homemade yurt

Putting up a yurt


Several people are needed for this activity, good weather and a lot of OOMPH!

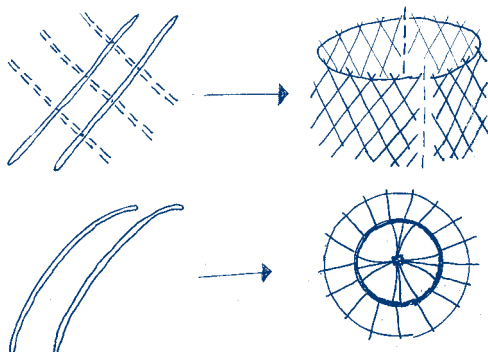
- 1 First pick a site on which to place your yurt.
- 2 Tie the lattice sections together and leave a space for the door frame.
- 3 Fit the door frame into place.
- 4 Add the tension band around the top of the lattice.
- 5 Take two roof poles and fasten them to the top trellis cross pieces. Secure the other ends into the holes on the roof ring.
- 6 Fit a third roof pole into the ring and hoist the roof. Fasten into place.
- 7 Fasten the rest of the roof poles making sure they are secure.
- 8 Pull the 2 canvas covers over the top and sides of the structure and attach together with toggle and loop fastening.




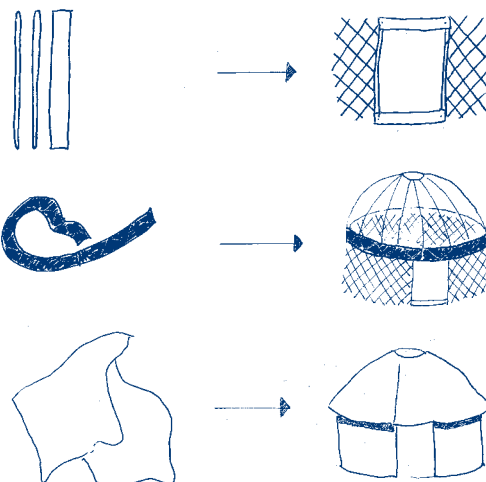
Make a model yurt

You may want to make a model yurt, using whatever material you have available. It could be modelled from clay, or made using pipe cleaners for the lattice wall framework, and art straws or bendy strips of willow to make the roof.

-  Name the different sections of the yurt and find where they fit into the whole.



-  Similarly you could paint your own style of yurt using the rich colours used by the Kyrgyz people. Make your yurt as individual as you can.



Inside the yurt



A wonderful display of bedding and textile work

The Yurt Structure

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The felt covers, the woven bands to hold the yurt together, as well as the textile furnishings and interior decorations, are all made by the women of the family.

To make the wood bend!

All the components of a yurt (apart from the door frame) are bent. So how is it done? First a fire is lit inside a steam generator. The steam resulting from the boiling water is piped into a steam box, which is basically a long 'wood cooker' or steam oven. Different parts of the yurt are 'cooked' for different periods of time, depending on their size. It

can be anything from 30 minutes to 2 hours. When they are ready, the parts are taken from the box and bent immediately into the correct shape before the wood cools off and sets.

Making the crown ring or eye

This is perhaps the most exciting part of the yurt and it is culturally the most symbolic. It forms the centrepiece for the whole structure and the point from which all the roof ribs radiate. It is made from 2 'cleft' or split pieces of ash wood which are steamed and bent around a steel ring in order to make 2 overlapping C shaped halves of the circle. These two halves are then glued together to form a strong circle and braced into place. After this the holes are drilled into the ring to allow for the roof poles.

The homemade yurt

Lattice walls These are made from coppiced hazel, ash or sweet chestnut wood, cut when it is green. They divide into two parts each with 'cleft' or split wooden poles. The number of poles depends on the

A yurt will typically house one family: a husband, his wife, several children and probably an elderly relative, or an older brother or sister

Inside the Kyrgyz boz üy

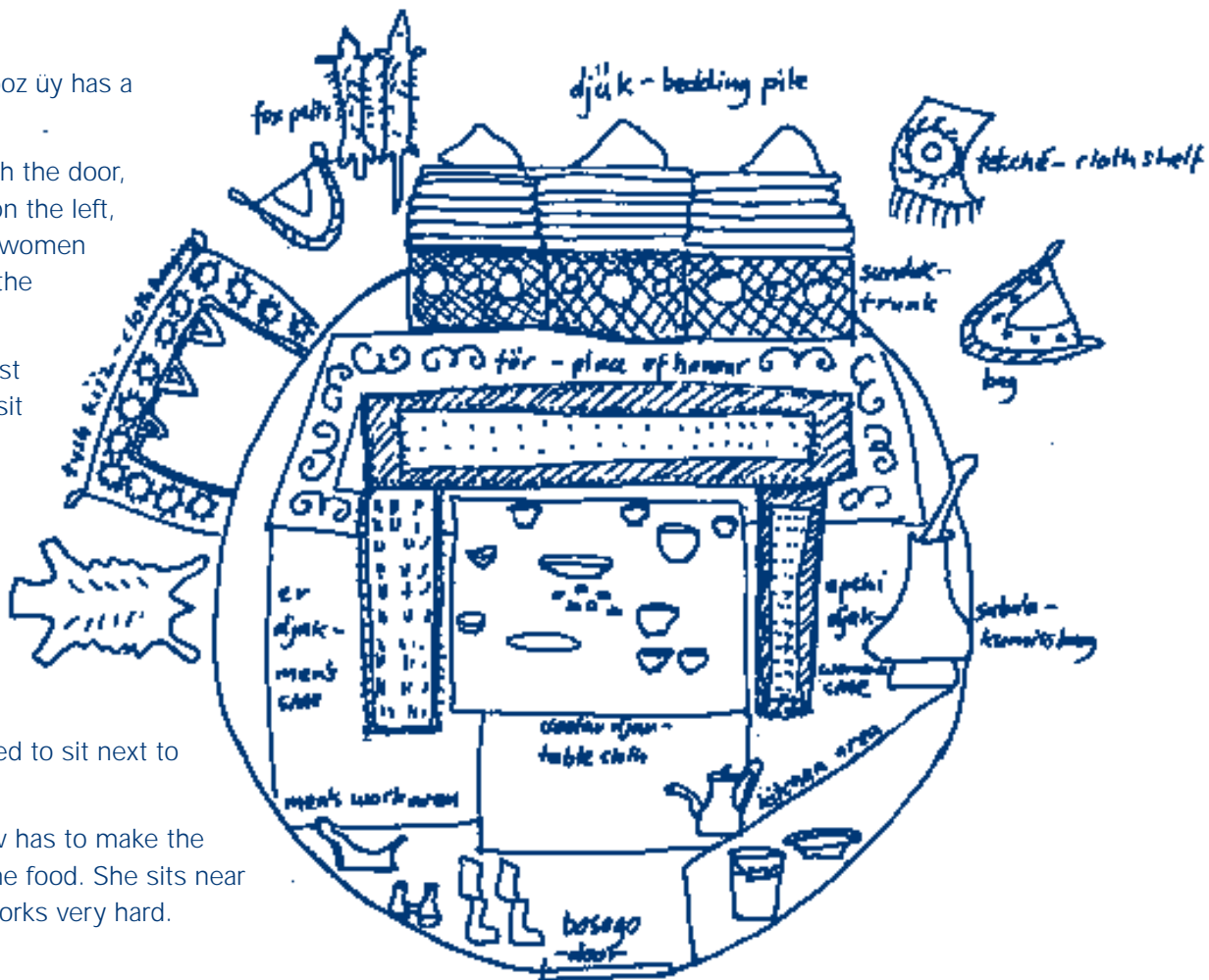
Everything in the boz üy has a special place.

As you look through the door, men and boys sit on the left, in the er djak, and women sit on the right, in the epchidjak.

The oldest and most respected visitors sit in the tör, opposite the door. This is the place of honour.

The children sit next to the door, unless they are favoured guests, who may be allowed to sit next to important elders.

The daughter-in-law has to make the tea and serve all the food. She sits near the kitchen. She works very hard.



- ☀ If you are sitting in a yurt right now, are you all in the right place?
- ☀ Objects in yurts are arranged in the same way as people. Where would the valuables be put? Where would the cooking pot go?
- ☀ Your yurt should be put up in the right direction. Which direction is the tör?
- ☀ Which direction are you sitting in?
- ☀ How could you tell the time by the yurt?
- ☀ Where will the light the sun casts in the tent be at midday?
- ☀ Where will it be at 9 o'clock? At 3 o'clock?

Inside Your House

- ☀ On a large sheet of paper with brightly coloured pens, draw your house from the inside. Make your picture big and bold and show all the most important rooms and the doors. If you have two floors you can do two drawings.

Yurt Food



Food

Because yurt dwellers keep animals and do not grow crops, almost all the food that they eat comes from animals. They eat a lot of meat and milk products.

Milk

Milk is made into over 20 different kinds of food.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, for example, people make foods such as;

- Full fat cow's milk - 'white milk'
- Skimmed milk - 'blue milk'
- Boiled cream curds
- Cream cheese

- Dried cheese balls
- Cream cheese drink
- Yoghurt
- Yoghurt drink
- Boiled butter
- Boiled butter fudge
- Mares' milk
- Fermented mare's milk - kumiss

🌀 How many different foods can you name that are made from milk?

Wild Food

There are many wild plants in the mountains in Central Asia, which can be collected for food. These include wild grains, which are eaten raw, wild onions, thistle roots and rhubarb.

🌀 Name three foods which grow wild in Britain.



Cheese balls drying in the sun



Sheep in Sarai



Collecting the root of a wild thistle

Yurt Food

Bread

When they are on the move, nomadic people don't use bread ovens - how could they carry them? Instead, they have a special way of cooking leavened bread on top of the fire, in a pan called a kazan.

On special occasions, people cook all sorts of special celebratory bread.

- ⚙️ Draw your favourite meal that you think a child from Kyrgyzstan or Mongolia may be interested to try.

Make your drawings big and clear.

Meat

Sheep provide most of the meat that people eat and a family will usually prepare all the meat they eat themselves. The husband or an older son will kill a sheep and all the family helps clean it. Then the wife or an elder daughter will cook it.

- ⚙️ Does your family eat meat?
- ⚙️ Where does your family get its meat from?
- ⚙️ What kinds of meat do you eat?
- ⚙️ Name three different places you can buy meat.



Baking bread in a kazan

Many people across the globe do not eat meat for different reasons. In some cultures, certain animals are considered to be sacred such as the cow in India. In the West, people who choose not to eat meat are known as 'vegetarians'.


- ⚙️ Does anyone from your family not eat meat? Do you know why?
- ⚙️ How many vegetarians do you know?
- ⚙️ What food could they eat in place of meat?



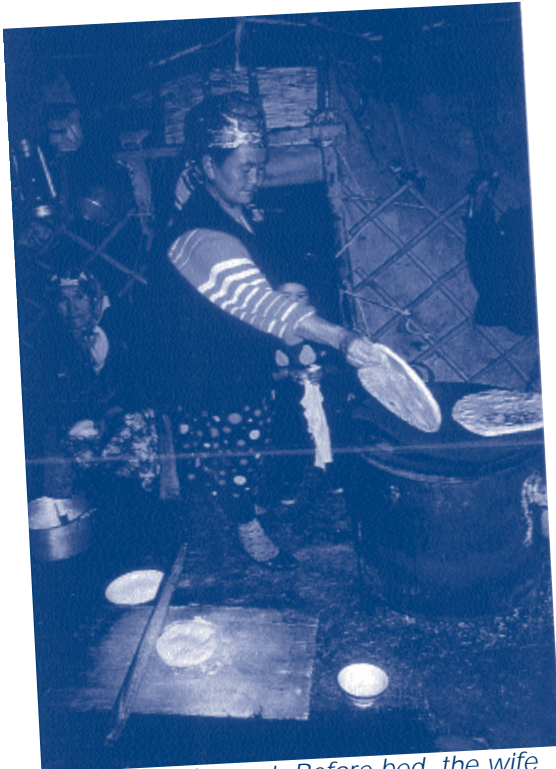
Sheep being prepared

A Mountain Day

This activity describes a typical day in Kyrgyzstan. The mountain life is hard and the days are long. The cards on the front and back of this sheet represent the most regular events of the day for the Kyrgyz mountain people.

 Put the cards in the order that you think they happen.

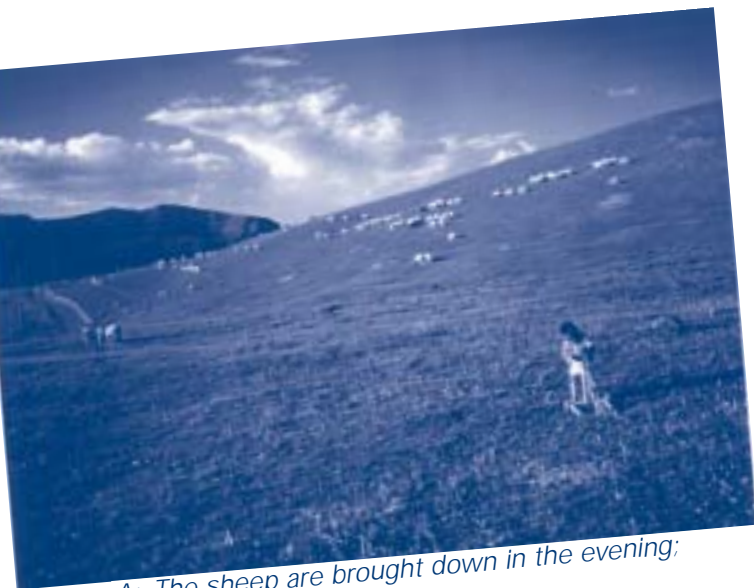
- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____



H: The sun has set. Before bed, the wife of the house makes bread for tomorrow



E: The horses are brought down for milking. The horses are milked five times a day



A: The sheep are brought down in the evening; children play in the meadow



G: Today there will be a special meal. All the women are cooking meat and bread

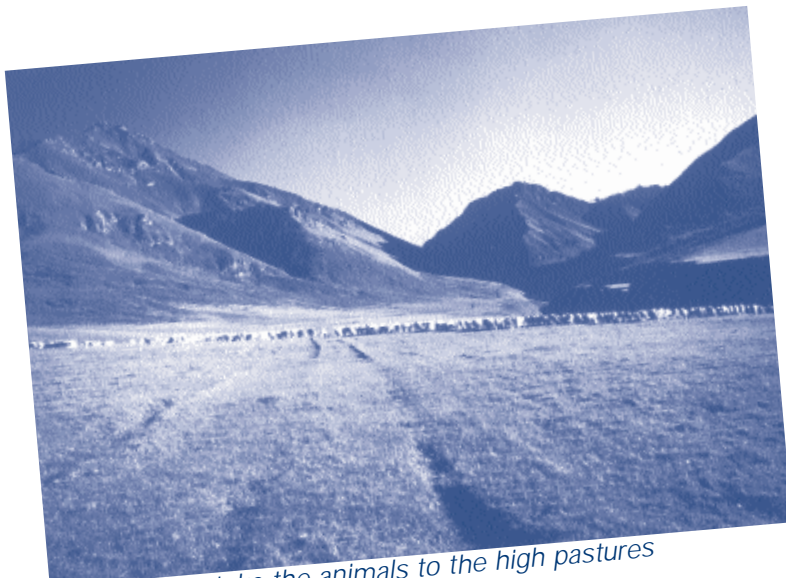
A Mountain Day



C: A guest comes round and is given kumiss to drink



J: The women get up and milk the cows




B: The men take the animals to the high pastures




F: The wife of the house separates the milk and beats the kumiss

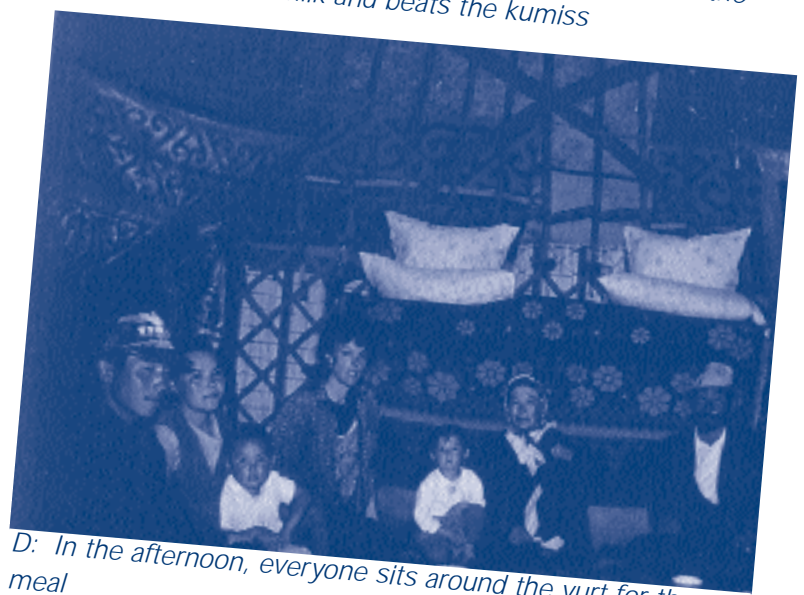
You will need a separate sheet for this activity:

Your Day

 Draw in the eight most important events of your day in order. Put in the times.

My Day

 Draw the four favourite things you do in one day that you'd like to tell a child your age from Kyrgyzstan or Mongolia about.



D: In the afternoon, everyone sits around the yurt for the meal

Yurts and Sustainability



Black place

The word '**sustainability**' refers to our environment ensuring that future generations will have full benefit of the natural systems that we take for granted; such as fresh water, healthy soil for plants to grow, clean air and food to eat. The more that we are aware of our precious earth, the better we can learn to look after it.

Yurt dwellers often say that they have a special relationship with nature, for example, Kyrgyz herders may say that they live in harmony with nature, while Mongolians may say that they work in co-operation with it.



Skins hanging up to dry

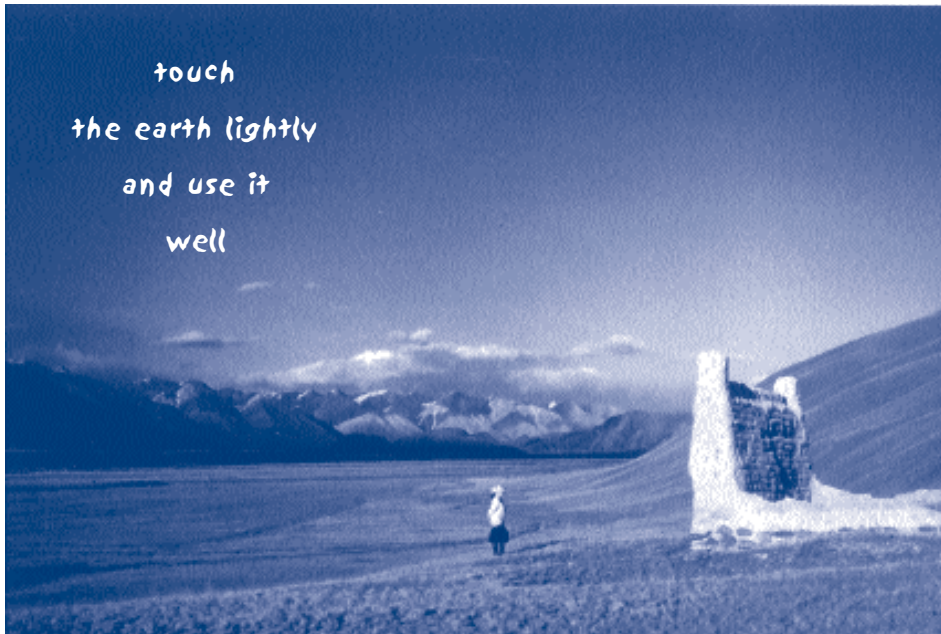
This consideration for nature affects many parts of people's lives, from how they treat the environment and animals, to beliefs about nature's powers and about how humans' and nature's destinies are interwoven.

The peoples' beliefs can be seen in the practical way they make use of the resources available to them. If an animal is killed, for example, then every part is used. All meat and fat is either eaten or preserved for future use; skins are cured for carpets and clothing and even bones have their uses.

The destinies
of humanity
and the
natural world
are
interwoven

harmony
co-operation

Yurts and Sustainability



touch
the earth lightly
and use it
well

A sacred place

There are sayings about how to treat the pastures. The saying "The old place must be cleaner than the new place" shows how people think their camp-sites should be left. "The place is black" means the area near the yurt has become

become

darkened with animal droppings and it is time to move on although much of the animal droppings will be used for fuel. When hunting, animals which are killed are treated with respect and the people believe it is important not to over-hunt.

Many people believe there are **special places in nature which are powerful.**

These may be anything from waterfalls and springs to mountains and even the sky. Powerful places may also be the graves of important ancestors, or one's own relatives. People visit such places, to make offerings and to pray, according to their religious beliefs. People pray for many things - to ask for help with their families, for protection or for greater prosperity.

People believe that the destinies of nature and humanity are very closely connected and tend to treat all things, people, animals and land with respect. This is a way of life that has endured for over two and a half thousand years, **touching the earth lightly and using it well.**

treat
all things:
people,
animals
and land,
with
respect

Trade


Throughout their history, nomadic herders have kept up links with the settled peoples of the region, which has been largely for trade. In the past, horses and animal skins were exchanged for rice and tea and other goods that people could not produce themselves.

Since the Russian and Chinese colonization of different parts of their territory, many of the nomadic ways of life have changed. But it is one so suited to the environment and with such stability that, as yet, the changes are not total.

Beliefs

The people who work in the pastures know all about the grass and plants that grow there. They know which plants are good for the animals, which can be eaten and which are medicinal. The people also know about signs in nature, such as when the weather is telling them to move, when to breed the sheep, whether it will be a bad winter or a good summer and so on.

Our landscape

 Draw a picture of your home surroundings to show someone from Central Asia what is important to you about your environment.

A yurt poem...

Felicitation for ger - Dzee!

On a sacred khadag
With exquisite designs on the other side
With elegant designs on this side
With the Eight Offerings design at the tassels,
Wine in a gilt silver goblet,
Its mouth full brimming:
Surely you wish me to felicitate.

With long white walls and
Artistically serpentine border,
With sea-white roof and
Artfully stitched door,
Four encircling ropes,
Fourfold plaited,
Crossing towards back and front,
With twenty-four ropes
crossing backward and forward,

'Tis a round, white abode.

One item inside the yurt -
Home

Jewel is the roof-ring
Gem the poles
Jade is the lattice-work
Garnet the door
Heart of lotus are the pillars
Hard steel the trivet.

One item inside the yurt -
When the altar chest is opened one sees:
Lamps that illuminate,
Peacock feathers, and
A skull cup,
These items all are there.

On opening the chest in the north-west, one
finds

Among the articles used by men:
Paper and glue,
Graphite and ink,
Writing brush and ink slab,

Scale of two ounces,
Striped flute,
Strong, three plaited lasso noose,
Colorful wrestling jacket and trunks,
Scraper for a fast running horse,
Ribbons used for horses' tails,

All these items are there.

On opening the chest in the north-east, one
finds:

Rolls and rolls of silk,
Basket after basket of teas,
Case upon case of woolen cloth,
All these items are there.

On opening the ornate box at the pillow, one
finds,

Among things used by women and girls:
Eye glasses,
Razors for the hair,
Scissors for needlework,
Thread and needles,
Thimble and all,
Are all there.

On opening the colorful curtain for the bed,
one finds:

Five layers of bedspreads
Trimmed with Tibetan woolen cloth,
On top of them,
Lying folded diagonally,
Six dresses
And two pillows are there.

On opening the cabinet one finds:

A shuus of a sheep,
With a blaze on the forehead
And with a huge white body,
With wide horns
And a broad tail,
Together with a flat white cheese,
Woven goods,
Pressed tea,
Wheat and grain,
Together with milled flour,
All are there.

On opening the cupboard, one finds:

Pitchers and pails,
Pots and pans,
Steel trivet,
Fire tongs,
Down to the axe for splitting firewood
With its spruce handle
And blade of steel,
All are there.

A yurt poem...

Felicitation for ger - Dzee!

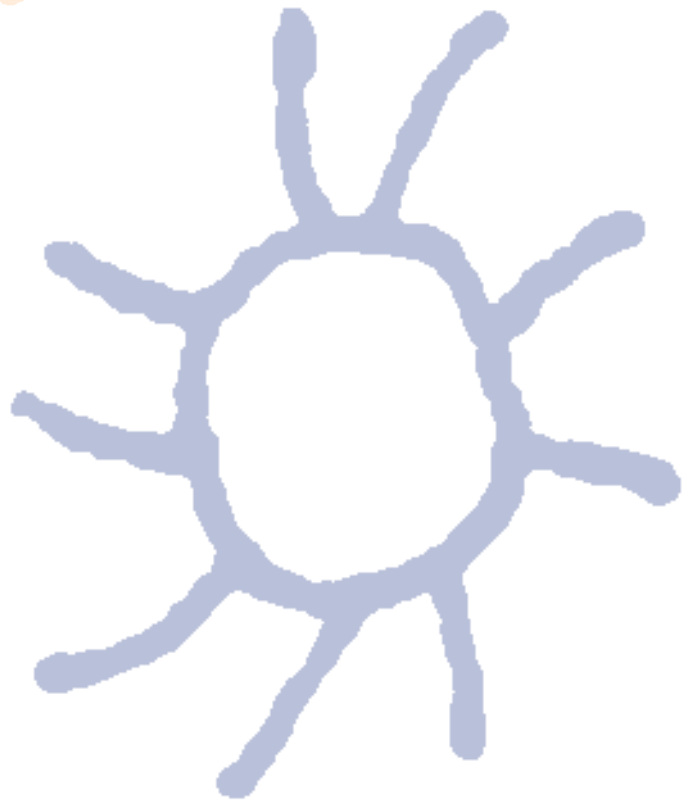
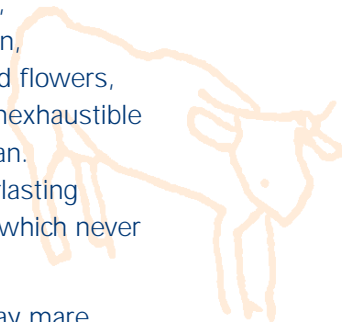
Dzee dear one!:
(The bride was brought to this household)
From a distant land,
From a far-off water,
Escorted by twenty persons,
Supported by two persons;
The high threshold was crossed,
The broad carpet spread out,
Filial obeisance was made
And her long life ensured.

As all scions of man
Have love for their issue,
As the stones of the purple mountains
Are precious to man,
Just as the boundless great earth
Is interlaced with feather-grass,
So do we of the world of man
Have the bondage of love.

Therefore,
Bright as the morning sun,
Thriving as the evening sun,
Blossoming like varicolored flowers,
Your fortunes are indeed inexhaustible
As the limitless outer ocean.
Your dignity is indeed everlasting
As the wish-granting tree which never
wITHERS.

(We) offer the milk of a gray mare
To the Holy lord khan,
(We) offer the milk of a black mare
To the liege lord the khan.
I present respectfully to those honored
Well-wishing of fulfillment (in peace and
well-being).
May all that is desired
Fill their containers!
May all that is wished for
Be (fulfilled) as the scripture!

*(Thanks to Krystyna Chabros for this
Mongolian Praise Poem)*



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Mary Burkett. 1978. Abbott Hall Gallery

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Robert Marshall. BBC Publications

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Janet Harvey. 1996. Thames and Hudson

Further Resources

Websites

www.londonci.demon.co.uk Surrey Docks City Farm web pages have a specific entry on their own yurt and links to many other relevant web site addresses.

www.woodlandyurts.freeseve.co.uk
A Somerset-based company manufacturing ready-made yurts individually crafted in the style of the Mongolian ger. This site gives information on courses in yurt-building and links to other useful sites.

www.pbm.com 'The Construction of a Yurt' a paper written by Ellisif Fkakkari (Monica Cellio) giving full details on yurt specification and components. This file can be downloaded in pdf format or as a word document.

www.farmgarden.org.uk Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens own website which gives full details of the yurt journey completed in 2000 marking the millennium by visiting twelve different projects and touching many more people along the way.

Displays and exhibitions

The Earth Centre, Doncaster has an exhibition of yurt materials as well as a classroom yurt, a traditional yurt from Kyrgyzstan, and a classroom ger. These yurts are used as educational resources both for the public and teaching groups. Contact them on 01709 512000 for information on opening times.

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens have information on City Farm/Community Garden projects who have their own yurts on site. Contact: Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens on 0117 923 1800 or visit the website at www.famgarden.org.uk.

Publications

The Centre for Alternative Technology (C.A.T), produce an informative booklet on yurts and how to build them. To order a copy, place an A4 SAE to CAT Mail Order, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ, enclosing a cheque for £2 made payable to C.A.T plc. Mark the envelope 'Yurt Fact sheet' and/or enclose a note for your request. Visit their website at www.cat.org.uk

Order the latest edition due out January 2001 of the Woodland Yurts' publication '**The Complete Yurt Handbook**' by P.R.King Published by Eco-logic Books priced £14-95. An 120-page fully illustrated instruction and information manual on yurt history and construction.

www.woodlandyurts.freeseve.co.uk
Woodland Yurts, 80 Coleridge Vale Rd South, Clevedon, Somerset BS21 6PG
Tel: 01275 879705

Order further copies of this Shelter pack or the 'Grains' (food related) pack from the **Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens** (FCFCG) price £5-75 including P&P. Enclose a cheque made payable to FCFCG and state the number of copies you require.





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