MONGOLIAN GER - MAKING

A ger is a traditional portable dwelling of the nomadic Mongolians. Generally, ger components consist of a wooden framework, a felt cover, and ropes. From various primitive dwellings to the modern ger with its delicate and unique ornaments, a complex system of aesthetic characteristics defines the Mongol ger-architecture, which has been passed on for generations.

The size and design of the ger components, the structure’s outer and interior decorations and its furniture were developed to be comfortable as well as portable and light, allowing pastoral nomads to easily load it on their livestock to move to new pastures. The ger comprises all types of traditional arts.

The ger is composed of toono (crown), uni (spokes), khana (latticed wall), toiruulga dewsger (floor cover), khavt (doorboard), khaanulga (door) and bagana (pillars). It is impossible to imagine a ger without any ornaments and decorations; likewise, it is impossible to imagine the Mongols without the ger or the horse. Engraved ger parts typically come in three types: embossed, curved, and concave. Engraved ger parts typically come in three types: embossed, curved, and concave.

PAINTING AND DECORATING GER FRAMEWORK

The components of the ger that are used for nomadizing are painted with naturally coloured paints, such as ochre, whereas the ger intended for settled life is decorated with various ornaments and decorations.

All the decorations and ornaments created on the ger components are matched to each other in design and colour and are thus endowed with specific meanings. For example, toono (crown) resembles the sun and uni (spokes) resembles the rays of the sun. All of the other ornaments and decorations on the door and furniture in a ger match to each other in terms of colour and style.

The bogjin khe or ring ornament is widely found on ger components. This ornament symbolizes tying, binding together, or strengthening, which is meaning well suited to a structure that is made up of many different individual parts.

The ger door, being both the exit and the object that invites guests to enter, is decorated with magnificent ornaments. Every ornament that decorates the ger parts has its own meanings. Together they compose the unified symbolic meaning of togetherness or unity.

Sudsan ugalz or vein patterns made with gold are inlaid in the ger parts and furniture. Gold sheet is used for making such an inlay on the objects. To make inlay, the gold sheet has to be soaked and dried in the air.

Meanwhile, the background object is painted with dark red colour and varnished accordingly. Then a traditional tool called tsoolgo is placed on the newly painted object and the gold sheet is attached with smooth stroking. After taking off the tsoolgo, the pattern is formed on the object.

The crown and its cover

The örkh, the cover of the ger’s crown (the circular piece with radial spokes on the top of the ger) is a prototype of the toono (crown). The toono is composed of a circle frame and auxiliary joints. There are various types of toono, including khorol toono and burgasan toono. Khorol toono has two frames, one big and one small, whereas a bogjin tsamkhraat toono or toono with ring spokes has a structure resembling the crossings of three wooden sticks. The toono is categorized by how it is made, such as matmal (bended), zuimel (compound), and sarkhinag (comb-like).

Most often, the frame and the inner side of the toono is painted with a dark red colour and decorated with gold ornaments with various engravings and paintings. Alkhan khe or fret ornament and tsatsgen khe or flower ornaments are usually found on the crown decoration. Moreover, typical ornaments used for the toono decoration include khaan bugaivich, khatan sükh, khorol, zooson khe, örtsei ever ugalz, navchin khe and sülen khe.

Spokes

Spokes are the sticks that link the crown on the roof of the ger with the walls. The tip of one end of the spoke is set in the crown hole, while the other end is set atop the lattice wall and tied with a braided cord. The number of crown holes and spokes must match in number. Initially, spokes, which are called tsuulbar uni, were made of willow wood. Later, they are made of more common forms of wood. Willow spokes are painted in single colour, such as red, while hewed spokes are painted and decorated with various different colours and patterns. The most common form of ornament is ever ugalz, or horn scrolls, which are delicately painted with matching colours, such as blue, green and yellow, on a red background.
Latticed wall

The wall of the ger is flexible, allowing it to be folded and moved. Depending on the number of its walls, the ger size can be different. In other words, Mongolians measure the ger size by the size of its walls. The smallest ger has two walls. As the number of wall pieces increases, so does the size of ger. Walls made of willow and other types of wood are joined with the use of narrow camel-hide thongs. The timber wall, in contrast, is joined like pieces of a puzzle.

Because the khana represents the symbolic meaning of prosperity itself, it is not decorated with any ornaments.

Door

The door is composed of a double board, an inner and outer fringe, a centre and four corners. Every part of the door is decorated with traditional ornaments and patterns. There is a tradition of making doors that consist of four, five, six, eight, and nine panels and are decorated with independent colours and decorations.

Chest, wardrobe, the front and back of couch, table, chair, a bar on which the airag-skin is fixed, cage for deity, table for sutra, box and other objects are made of wood. Their front or outer sides are crafted by decorating with various forms of dying, carvings, embossments, ornaments and adornments. Their making and sizes are suited not only for loading and as well as for everyday use.
Pillars

The bagana or pillar is the main support of the ger. Depending on the design of the crown, atsan tolgoit bagana (fork-capital of pillar) and alkhan tolgoit bagana (fret-capital of pillar) are used. Also, pillars can be constructed with or without face sides.

Normally, a ger has two pillars. However, depending on the ger size, there could be more than two pillars. The pillars are painted dark red, and its top and two sides are patterned with multi-coloured ornaments imitating plants and animals, such as ever ugalz (horn scroll), khamar ugalz (bossy pattern), dragon pattern and cloud patterns.

This kind of style is found in the decorations of pillars and other parts of temples and monasteries. Besides various paintings, pillars can also be decorated with fillet and engraving techniques.
GER FLOURINGS

Tövruulga devsgэр refers to the various felt rugs, cushions, and floor pieces used inside of the ger. These felt rugs are stitched with camel wool threads and decorated with traditional ornaments, such as tümennasan, alkhan khee and shurguulga (fret patterns).