

Peter Andrews' work on nomadic tents first came to my attention when, in 1973, my late wife, Veronika, and I were carrying out research for the Textile Department of the Royal Ontario Museum on felt and felt-making in Iran. Our interest then lay predominantly in the felts used to cover many of the framed tent types appearing in a broad swathe across the full length of Asia from Turkey to Mongolia, referred to familiarly as the "felt belt". I made a mental note when reading Andrews' "The white house of Khurusan. The felt tents of the Iranian Yomut and Göklen",¹ in the library of the British Institute in Teheran, that the wool from approximately 200 sheep was required for making the felt covering of one such dwelling. We saw no framed tents on that occasion, and were prepared to believe that they had all but disappeared from Anatolia and were quickly disappearing from Iran as well. It was just at that time, however, that Professor Andrews was venturing deep into the interior of these regions, and meticulously documenting the tents of the tribesmen that he found there. His work was greatly facilitated by the assistance of his Turkish wife, Mögöl, "who was always there to help" and who could easily communicate with Turkic-speaking women when a man could not. Numerous articles on tents and tent types followed, fuelled in part by a Ph.D. thesis completed at S.O.A.S. under the supervision of Professor A. D. H. Bivar in 1980.²

For the purposes of his study, the author defines a tent as a structure with a covering "which can be separated from its supports, and both can be transported". A major distinction is between the framed tent "in which the supporting structure and the covering are independent", and the velum tent which "consists of interdependent cover and supports: removal of either would cause the collapse of the other" (p. 3). The present publication, devoted to framed tents, is the crowning element of fieldwork and historical and ethnographical research which has endured for more than a quarter of a century. The as yet unpublished part II will cover velum tents. Part I consists of a text volume containing 560 pp. and a volume of illustrations including 93 plates and 214 very useful drawings. Both should be consulted in conjunction with a map of nomad tent types from the Tübingen Atlas of the Middle East (TAVO),³ unfortunately unavailable to me when preparing this review. The author includes 56 variants of the framed tent and two types of temporary shelters. The principal categories of tents are designated as trellis (the conventional "yurt"), rib (a derivative of the trellis type, with radiating, umbrella-like ribs), bender (in which withies are stuck in the ground opposite each other, bent to meet in an arch and fastened at the tops), tunnel (a variety of the bender tent in which the arches are raised parallel to one another to form a vault), armature (a bender type constructed of two sets of arches on different axes which cross at right angles), vaulted (a tunnel type featuring a ridge bar which runs along the vault crown, often with terminal pole supports), and arched (an armature type resulting in a semi-ovoid or hemispherical frame with rounded ends; it represents a transitional structure between framed and velum tents). They are considered variously in the volume by type

rather than by region in Afghanistan, Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan. The subject and the territory correspond to the author's ambition as an architect to make "a survey of nomad tents throughout the Muslim world" (p. 1). His own field work was carried out in Iran, Morocco, Qatar and Turkey. For tents from other areas discussed he is dependent upon descriptions gleaned from the literature, from conversations with fellow researchers, from the nomads themselves, and upon the interpretation of photographs and drawings. Two chapters were contributed by colleagues: one, by M. Centlivres-Demont, on trellis, rib and armature tents in northern Afghanistan; and another, by Richard Tapper, on the social and symbolic features of the felt huts of the Şahsevân nomads of Iranian Azarbaijan, and the haired tents of the Durrāni Paštūns of north-central Afghanistan. The volume incorporates a glossary and an extremely valuable, concise, comparative terminology for the components of 27 of the 56 varieties of tents described. It concludes with a current bibliography, which cites maps as well as published works and unpublished MSS. Additional terminology is frequently incorporated into the description of individual tent types. Some readers will find the lack of indices disappointing, although the table of contents is detailed enough to provide easy access to tent types, tribal affiliations and territorial divisions.

In order to facilitate comparison among the various tents described, each entry is divided into a series of headings which, data permitting, are repeated from one entry to the next. Not surprisingly, those headings documenting the author's own research are invariably far more comprehensive than those based, to cite the least elaborate example, on the interpretation of a single photograph made by a third party. Considered in this fashion are "Distribution" over the landscape; "Designation", or terminology used to describe the structure in the various places it is known; "History", outlining the ethnic background of the tribe in question; "General Characteristics", noting affinities and differences within a given subdivision of tent types; "Special Characteristics", providing minor differences in terms of the general type; "Affinities", supplying information about the development and inter-relationships, but not the historical relationships, of the type; "Framework", outlining in considerable detail the precise nature and construction of the supporting structure; "Felts", describing in equal detail the covering of the said structure; "Cordage", the various girths, ties, shrouds and lashings used to hold the structure together; "Cane screen", used largely for sheathing the walls; methods of "Pitching" and "Striking", "which often affect the structural design" (p. 8); "Transport", by camel or pack-horse, which also affects design; day-to-day "Operation"; "Plan", indicating the facing direction of the doorway and the internal use and arrangement of space; "Decoration", concerning the felts, and what are often woven trappings affixed to the interior; "Ceremony" and "Ownership", which often include information about inheritance patterns, weddings, and a woman's dowry; "Camp form", enumerating the number of structures in a community and their layout; "Camping", documenting dates and patterns of transhumance; "Modifications", establishing recent changes and innovations to the traditional structure; "Climate", setting out in considerable detail weather conditions and temperatures encountered in the areas where a particular tent type is found; "Associated types", identifying structural relationships binding one variant to another; the "Sources", whence the information was taken; and a "Short bibliography", which serves largely instead of notes for the entry. The range of subjects covered, the often fascinating detail in which they are described, and the precise use of terminology to distinguish between apparently similar types of structures, render this publication more of a reference work than even a comprehensive survey. In those cases where fieldwork produced sufficient data, the entries satisfy the author's further objective of recording a tent sufficiently well "to allow its reconstruction in the event of its disappearance" (p. 9). Few will read the work from cover to cover, but many from a wide range of disciplines, not to mention craftsmen seeking to emulate traditional methods, will find it an incomparable and unique source for information on tent types which cannot be found elsewhere. It will also serve as an exemplary model

¹ *Iran*, XI (1973), pp. 93-110.

² Peter Andrews "The felt tent in Middle Asia: the nomadic tradition and its interaction with princely tentage" as published as *Felt Tents and Pavilions in Köhner Ethnologische Mitteilungen* (London, 1999).

³ Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Nr. A IX 5: *Vorderer Orient: Nomadenzeltformen*.

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and foundation for future research in the field of nomadic studies, for nothing could be more central to a nomad's existence than the dwelling in which he lives. For those wishing to verify or further the author's work without going into the field, a number of tent types are referred to which can be examined in European collections.

Professor Andrews' research on tents is not limited to the Middle East, or even to the Islamic World incorporating Egypt and the Sudan to the west and Afghanistan to the east. He makes frequent passing reference in this study to Mongol tents, and has written about them extensively in his recently published Ph.D. thesis.⁴ Whether because of tribal interaction, or more likely due to climatic conditions, terrain and the means of transport available, there are many structural and social similarities between Mongol tents and those of their numerous and diversified Turkic neighbours. A major question to which still only hypothetical responses can be given is when and how tent types were adopted and adapted by one group or another. Tents have a very limited lifetime, which according to the author's research may extend to about twenty years for the frame and three to five years for the felt covering. Furthermore, since the nomadic economy and lifestyle sees to it that, once worn out, all such materials are reused and recycled, little if anything is ever abandoned or thrown away. Physical evidence of tent types which have come and gone in the more distant past is, therefore, all but non-existent. Because the nomads themselves have left few written records describing their dwellings, any attempt to trace the evolution of types which preceded contemporary examples must invariably depend on the interpretation of accounts written by travellers from sedentary societies who encountered them, and on manuscript illustrations and the occasional representation in early printed books. There is one major exception, and that is the evidence provided by the thirteenth-century text known as the *Secret History of the Mongols*. Professor Andrews interprets the expression "*ger tergen*", which occurs seven times in that source, to mean "cart tent", and argues here (pp. 35, 115, 190) and elsewhere⁵ that it was customary then for the Mongols to transport fully mounted tents on carts. My colleague, Wayne Schlepp, and I, who have also published on the subject, take exception to this interpretation of *ger tergen*, preferring instead "tents and carts" or "households".⁶ Differences in interpretation such as this could have major repercussions on our understanding of the historical development of the nomad tent, and of the introduction and use of the trellis tent in particular. The pursuit of the origins of the contemporary framed tent clearly needs to be undertaken with caution.

In the hope that there is still time before part II of this study appears, I would like to encourage the inclusion of regional maps in the text volume itself to illustrate tribal territories and occurrences of tent types. Failing that, the TAVO map mentioned above should be distributed as part of the book. It would also be helpful if the volume of illustrations were given page numbers as well as the present system of references to tent types. Another useful addition would be to introduce comparative charts showing at a glance the presence, or absence, of specific characteristics for each tent described. The possibility of such modifications notwithstanding, this work is a true *tour de force*, for which the author can only be congratulated.

⁴ See above, note 2.

⁵ "We know, of course, that in the *Secret History of the Mongols* the cart tent, *ger tergen*, is represented as the normal dwelling of the Mongols in the time of Činggis Qan, and that even the large tents of his own court were *ndo-ger tergen*" ("The Shrine Tents of Činggis Qan at Ejen Qoro 2", in K. Sagaster, ed., *Antoine Mostaert 1881-1971* C.I.C.M. Missionary and Scholar, vol. 1, *Papers*, Louvain Chinese Studies IV [Leuven, 1999], p. 3).

⁶ Michael Gervers and Wayne A. Schlepp, "Felt and 'Tent Carts' in The Secret History of the Mongols", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 7, pt. 1 (1997), pp. 93-116, esp. pp. 98-103.