

**My journey is my home,  
my home is my life**

*Okbash Tent Pole Bag*



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## **My journey is my home, my home is my life**

Circular tents, known as yurts, are an essential item for Central Asian nomads. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz, “yurt” designates the “tent-site”, the “home place” or even the “motherland”, not the tent itself. Western travellers misunderstood the original meaning and “yurt” has become synonymous with the circular tent. Such tents, made of wooden lattices and covered with felt, are easily dismantled and assembled (normally by women) and are carried by pack animals wherever the nomads are journeying in search of pastures for their herds.



A traditional yurt in the Syr Darya Oblast, 1860, by Aleksandr L.Kun

Nomads share with sedentary populations a certain ideal of home where they seek rest and shelter in company of their loved ones. Since their household is mobile and they face many dangers from wildlife and natural phenomena, nomads are even more attached to the notion of a safe haven for their families. As their one and only shelter, the tent has an immense symbolic value, emphasised through the decoration of its felt panels and associated objects. Motifs, derived from the nomads’ experience, embellish these objects and extend symbolic protection like ram’s horns and horse hair or highlight the importance of stars for navigation through celestial patterns.

**Tent pole bag, *okbash***  
**Uzbekistan / Afghanistan**  
**late 19thC-early 20thC**  
**Felted wool**

Bags used to cover tent pole ends, made of felted wool, horse hair and cotton are manufactured by Uzbek nomads across Central Asia. Used in pairs, they are embroidered and embellished with horse hair tassels and woven straps. Made for the bridal dowry, these bags were utilitarian objects of high symbolic value. Commonly decorated with patterns that celebrate fertility or provide protection such as ram's horns and celestial motifs, the *okbash* are an essential item in nomadic life.

