

The Nomadic Embroidery Tradition Is A Sophisticated Mongolian Intangible Heritage

Battsetseg Chuluunbaatar¹, B. Jadamba² and D. Sereeterdorj³

¹Ph.D Student, School of Fine Arts and Technology Mongolian National University of Education, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

²Academician, Mongolian National University of Education, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

³Dr. Professor, School of Fine Arts and Technology Mongolian National University of Education, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Address: Baga toiruu-14, 8th khoroo, Sukhbaatar district Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia-210648

Email: ch_battsetseg@msue.edu.mn

How to cite this paper: Chuluunbaatar, B., Jadamba, B., & Sereeterdorj, D. (2025). The nomadic embroidery tradition is a sophisticated Mongolian intangible heritage. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 1(1), 37–44. ISSN Print: 3104-4263; ISSN Online: 3104-4271. <https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9006>

Published: 2025-07-07

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and

Erytis Publishing Limited.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Abstract

Stitching Coin Table represents one the most valuable of all Mongolian contributions to the artistic and cultural history of mankind. This is a tradition, whereby Mongolians added decoration, embroidery, stitching and patterns to their traditional clothes and other traditional items - using many kinds of thread. The coin table is a technique that can raise patternmaking and decoration to a high level of artistry. It uses special and sometimes unique stitching techniques, shapes, tools, and materials.

Mongolia should conserve this heritage for the benefit of the younger generation by integrating it into our lives and thus restoring it.

Keywords

Intangible heritage; technology; traditional handicrafts; coin table; embroidery; intangible cultural heritage

1. Introduction

From the earliest times, our Mongolian ancestors have passed on the heritage of symbols that they created, and which are now to be found in the artefacts that they made.

There are 5 main categories of nomadic intangible heritage, and 1 of them is the embroidery culture.

Researchers have found that the origins of embroidery go right back to the beginning of primitive human society. Mongolian traditional embroidery has resulted from the creative innovation, hard work, skills, and crafts.

Originally, Mongolian embroidery served the practical needs of inhabitants before it became 1 of the wonders of human creativity. It had practical application as part of

communications as well as being an art form. As it transitioned from an ancient tradition to developing modern embroidery, it has served practical human needs while at the same time giving both aesthetic and intellectual pleasure. Younger generations have been learning it with growing interest and it is 1 of the tools that are used to develop practical craft skills.

To repeat, this skill forms part of the Mongolian heritage and has contributed richly to the cultural heritage of the world.

According to researcher Avidai,Ch in the book “National Crafts and Techniques of the Mongolian Nomads”, it was the custom to give a small wooden stitching box to 10-year-old girls on an auspicious day, to teach them stitching and embroidery from an early age. From that age on, a girl would collect tools like needles, tape measures, scissors, and fabrics, and begin to learn how to embroider and to stitch.

2. Embroidery as a type of craft

Embroidery is a handicraft. It includes features of aesthetic expression, the skill of the Artisan - and ethnicity. It is a craft, and it cannot be reproduced precisely ever again which is 1 of the things that distinguishes craft from other artefacts.

According to the scholar Yadamjav (2004) There are 5 main categories in fine arts – painting, sketching, sculpture, architecture... And crafts. There are many forms of craft: carving, sculpture, paper quilting, knitting, applique, painting, rugs, ornaments, felt products, wood and metalwork.

The art of embroidery has developed over the centuries. Its use as decoration has spurred creativity art and distinctive craftsmanship around the world, helping even to maintain the uniqueness of nations and peoples. In the case of Mongolia, the craft of embroidery has illustrated the ways of life and the ambitions of nomads, and in so doing has created special techniques, designs, and patterns. Although rooted in people’s practical needs, as it developed it became the foundation for knitting techniques, sewing techniques and other relevant craft technologies. A scholar Songino .Ch (1999,p3)Has defined the “craft” of embroidery as covering all the following skills: designing, measuring, making patterns, stitching, sewing, gluing, developing, decorating, tying, braiding, and knotting. In other words, - it is mainstream art that involves many different skills and activities.

3. The tradition of embroidery

As the ancient nomads settled in pasturelands, they bred and domesticated wild animals. That led them to develop techniques of transforming raw materials into products. Such activity led to the development of sewing fabric, processing metal, and producing woodwork. As time passed, the nomads developed their techniques to create distinctive styles which they then passed on through the generations.

And the discipline involved affected the upbringing of children, encouraging them to develop habits of study and hard work.

As older people shared their distinctive traditional techniques, so young people developed craft skills and “practical intelligence”. This has produced several beneficial effects, viz:

- Mental preparedness for life.

Understanding the importance of working hard – and flexibility in work. That develops a child’s ability to anticipate future developments.

- Developing motivation

the child must think about how craft results were achieved and as they see the results, they develop enthusiasm for the process.

- learning how things work.

How am I going to do this thing? How strong do I need to be? What care do I need to take? Will it require perfect eyesight? How long should I be prepared to sit patiently? What time do I need to allow to be punctual and to deliver on time?

- Practicality.

What is the optimal sequence of actions and activities? How will I make it/cook it/draw it/stretch it out/braided/wrap it? How much time is it going to take - hours, days, weeks, months?

- Learning lessons.

At the end of the process - what have I learned? What mistakes have I made and how can I correct them to achieve good results? How does my product compare with others?

- developing-self-esteem.

Learning that you can do things well, being motivated to try again and discover how to do even better, and so forth.

- thinking ahead

learning to select the right tools and materials in advance; noting errors and missing steps in the process to avoid such mistakes in the future; preparing design solutions and selecting the optimal one; deciding what inputs will be needed and calculating costs and revenues.

- innovation.

Developing new designs means thinking about changing colours, shapes, sizes modelling and learning advanced technologies. It involves selecting appropriate new raw materials and tools.

The reform of all kinds of technological education in the digital age will require the upgrading and developing of traditional craft technology in Mongolia. Our studies show that there has been some such study in embroidery and a small amount of research in developing the techniques of coin table. Developing modern digital techniques makes it even more important to introduce the fundamentals and the teachings of our craft heritage - both tangible and intangible - to the next generation.

4. Craft type classification

The forms of embroidery are: flat, free-form or raised forms, stitching materials that use thread, braid, knots, and fabric - and threads that can be self-coloured, white and golden.

Embroidery stitching can be divided into:

- straight stitch
- chain stitch
- back stitch
- feather stitch
- running stitch
- outline stitch
- Cross stitch
- Oriental decorative stitch.

We have covered many kinds of embroidery stitches - and we can concentrate on stitching techniques with the coin table now.

Literature review of ribbon making stitch using coin table.

- Art researcher Batchulun. L wrote (Soyol Journal, 1982) about discovering the ribbon-making tradition and artefacts that were kept in the museum in Mandal-Ovoo soum in Umnugobi.
- Chuluunbat.D, the craftsmen, brought costumes to the attention of the public in Ulaanbaatar in 1989
- also in 1989, Majaa, the museum director in Umnugobi, wrote a brief introduction to coin table knitting in the journal "Mongolian women".
- In 1990, the teacher Tseren-Ochir.Ya published an article in a journal called "Mongoljingo" which introduced the tradition and the techniques of making embroidery - probably the 1st full article on the subject.
- From 1987 to 2008, the researcher Batbuyan.Ts successfully taught 5400 secondary school pupils, 357 technology student teachers and student designers about using a coin table.
- In 2009 and in 2014, researchers Tseren-Ochir.Ya, Batbuyan.Ts published a book entitled "Embroidery Crafts with the Coin Table".

Embroidery stitching with a coin table is a traditional craft which was also used to make ritual objects such as traditional knives. Examples of coin table embroidered artefacts can be found in the Bogd Khan Museum, the National Museum, the National History Museum, and the local museums - Erdenezu, Dundgobi, Umnugobi provinces; they include skull caps with pearl patterns, capes, clocks, gardens, snuff boxes, decoration on traditional Royal groups including the toys and other belongings of the 8thBogd Khan.

At the age of 5, the 8th Bogd was discovered, declared, and arrived in Mongolia from Tibet. He was introduced to Mongolian customs and lifestyle, and he was taught religious rituals\ - and shown objects decorated with coin table embroidery stitching. There was a small model ger, in pieces, which could be assembled like a

puzzle, from different parts - walls, poles, columns etc.

- Personal possessions of the 8th Bogd and Queen Dondogdulam.

Picture 1. The ger where the Bogd khan played when he was five years old.



Picture 2. The turban used by the Bogd Khan



Picture 3. Mongolian shoes of Queen Dondogdulam



5. How the coin table can be used to embroider Ribbons.

Picture 4. A coin table



“Coin table stitching” belongs to the Mongolian decorative arts and crafts tradition. Stitching embroidery onto ribbons with a coin table features special techniques tools and materials. Coin tables come in different shapes and designs – for example, they can be ordinary, for special occasions, or equipped with a sewing box.

According to the art historian Batchulun, the coin table in the Umnugobi museum has a sewing box, while the one in the museum in Mandalgobi is adjustable. The “An embroidery coin table zoos-shiree” design is elaborate, representing a ger, including the central column and roof, and thus symbolizing Mongolia as well as the ger.

Stitching is a decorative art in the luxury category. It often uses silk thread – and many colourful threads resemble the colourful poles in a Mongolian ger. Stitching decorates many accessories, such as snuff pouches, purses, hats, skull caps, deels, bedsheets or traditional boots.

It serves to decorate costumes with traditional patterns, and offers many advantages – like:

- Replacing applique – very fine ribbons can carry single or two-colour stitching.
- Coin table stitching is much faster than applique – a 120–150-centimetre ribbon can be made in one hour.
- Using 4 to 32 threads at once allows the width of the thread to be anything from 0.2 to 2 mm.
- Finer threads make for nicer ribbons. Ribbons stitched with 12 to 13 threads look beautiful and very neat.

6. Types of coin table stitches.

The curriculum for the “Traditional technology” course for training art teachers includes coin table stitching.



Picture 5. Types of coin table stitches

The course teaches students traditional models, designs, decorations, and ornaments. Students learn about materials and calculating financial aspects. They learn how to make objects while following instructions as well as improving their ability and creating their own objects or products.

Students of the “Traditional technology” course develop knowledge and skills in several areas:

1. Design stages; improving creative skills, how to use tools safely, how to select the optimum materials, match colours, using symbols, techniques of assembling components, research methods, and documenting the technology.
2. Prototyping: drawing, graphs, illustrations, making detailed plans. Making prototype objects to specification, using cotton or other materials to decorate them.
3. Self-improvement – continuing to study on their own after the course is complete, using the knowledge acquired through the training. They will improve their personal resilience and develop better materials, specifications, operational safety – and get steadily better results.

Student assessment of the course.

40 students of the first year of design technology took the coin table weaving course and when surveyed, reported the following weaknesses and strengths of the classes.

Table. Features of advantages and disadvantages

Positive experiences	Negative experiences
Improved concentration	Stitches uneven
Developed creativity	Getting the right tension - tightness or looseness of the thread
Improved hands/fingers mobility	Selecting the right thread
Education in making good stitches	Getting the ribbons to match
Ability to knit multiple colours in ribbon making	Developing specifications
Using 4 to 32 threads to make ribbons	Making mistakes in linking patterns
Ability to focus - mindfulness	Time management

Conclusion

- Technological education that meets modern requirements can successfully teach traditional crafts to the next generation.
- Nomadic Mongolian crafts represent an independent art form that includes many types of skills, such as designing, measuring, weaving, sewing, pasting, starching, embroidering, decorating, expanding, invigorating, braiding, folding, tying, knotting, and it is a big industry.
- Coin table stitching using a variety of threads is one of the unique types of Mongolian embroidery. It reflects the The tradition of decorating articles and clothes with the coin table stitches, and so the students' creativity will be developed and the knowledge handed down by their ancestors from ancient times will be passed on to future generations.

References

- [1] Batchuluun, L., (1984). "Art and Culture" journal. Ulaanbaatar.
- [2] Baasanhuu, A., (2010).. Culture of Mongolian Oirad ethnics. Ulaanbaatar.
- [3] Gongorzhava, G., (2008). Tradition and Culture of Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar.
- [4] Damdinsuren, D., (1995). Famous artisans in Ikh Huree. Ulaanbaatar.
- [5] Batbuyan, Ts., Tseren-Ochir, Y., (2009). Zoos Shiree- Crafts". Ulaanbaatar.
- [6] Batbuyan, Ts., Tseren-Ochir, Y., (2014). Zoos Shiree- Craft" Ulaambaatar.
- [7] Nyambu, H., (2002). History of Mongolian costumes. Ulaanbaatar.
- [8] Nyambu, H., (1992). Mongolian ethnics. Ulaanbaatar.
- [9] Gongorzhava, G., (2008). Mongolian traditions and culture Ulaanbaatar.