

The Evolution of the Artistic Expression of Ujimqin Costume

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Abstract

The Ujimqin costume stands as a quintessential embodiment of Mongolian costume artistry, with its artistic expressions evolving dynamically through historical progression. This study examines the Ujimqin costume's artistic manifestations in form, patterns, color schemes, and craftsmanship. Employing a diachronic comparative research methodology, it systematically traces its evolutionary trajectory from traditional nomadic times to modern eras. The research aims to reveal the specific patterns of its artistic language's adaptation to social transformations, innovations in production techniques, and cultural exchanges. It analyzes how the costume achieves artistic innovation and adaptation while preserving its core aesthetic and cultural identity. This study holds significant reference value for understanding the temporal transformations of grassland ethnic art and the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords

Ujimqin Costume; Artistic Expression; Evolution Law

1. Definition of Artistic Expression of Ujimqin Costume

The artistic expression of Ujimqin costume is a comprehensive process, which involves not only the artistic considerations of style, structure, color, pattern, accessories, etc., but also the profound connotation of costume art expression from the historical and cultural background to the cultural connotation, and then to the social value influence and aesthetic emotion expression.

2. Analysis and Evolution of Artistic Expression of Ujimqin Costume

2.1. Color

During the 13th-14th centuries, nomadic military empires thrived in harsh natural environments, where shamanistic beliefs dominated daily life. People worshipped the "Celestial Heaven," the earth, and ancestors. The economy centered on animal husbandry, with luxury goods relying on trade and warfare across Eurasia. Dyeing

techniques remained primitive, making it difficult to obtain stable, vibrant colors, so natural materials were predominantly used. White, known as Chagan, was the most revered color derived from unbleached wool, sheepskin, and felt. It symbolized purity, brightness, auspiciousness, and sanctity, making it the preferred choice for shamanic attire and noble ceremonial robes. The Mongolian proverb "Wearing white and riding a white horse" represented honor. Brown, called Alag, was the most common color derived from undyed wool, cowhide, and camel hair. It symbolized the earth, simplicity, and practicality, serving as the primary hue in nomadic daily clothing. Gray, known as Bor, was created by blending black and white wool or felted, also a practical color. Black, called Har, was relatively rare, derived from dark wool or simple plant dyes like walnut shells. Associated with strength, solemnity, or mourning, it held lower status than white. Due to primitive dyeing techniques, blue (Hulu) became the most important color, primarily using indigo from the Mongolian Plateau. This dye produced light to medium blue hues with limited saturation and fastness, symbolizing the eternal sky. It was the second most revered color after white, especially favored by nobility. Red, called Ulan, was a rare vibrant color achieved through madder roots, imported safflower, and the precious mineral cinnabar. Predominantly used in rituals and by nobles, it symbolized vitality, flame, courage, and celebration. Yellow, also known as xia'er, has limited sources derived from *Phellodendron amurense* and certain lichens, with unstable dyeing effects. During this period, yellow lacked religious symbolism and primarily represented the natural hue of autumn grass, symbolizing warmth and harvest. Additionally, mineral dyes like small amounts of ochre and rare malachite green were mainly used for painting rather than large-scale coloring. The overall color scheme of Ujimqin costumes during this era was characterized by simplicity, stability, and low saturation, predominantly using natural tones of white, brown, gray, and blue through large monochromatic applications. Vibrant reds and deep blues, being difficult to obtain, were only used as accents in narrow trimmings like collars, cuffs, and lapels. The waist belt, called bus, served as the more vibrant element, woven from dyed yarns or fabric strips. Local embroidery patterns, such as the emerging simple geometric designs on Tula ga, typically employed red, blue, and yellow threads.

During this period, the color contrast in Ujimqin robes emphasized natural harmony, with white robes paired with blue edges and brown robes with red edges, rarely featuring strong color clashes. Decorative colors were minimal, with the main robe body remaining monochromatic while decorative hues were confined to narrow border areas. The symbolic significance and cultural connotations of clothing colors during this era primarily included: ① Core of nature worship: White symbolized heaven/sacredness, blue represented heaven/eternity, brown/ochre stood for earth/nourishment, and red signified fire/life/power, directly reflecting shamanism's reverence for natural forces. ② Emerging social hierarchy: White and

relatively pure blue robes marked nobility, shamans, and important ceremonial occasions, while ordinary herders typically wore brown, ochre, or gray robes. Vibrant red trimmings might indicate slightly higher status or wealth. ③ Practicality first: Color choices were constrained by material availability and dyeing techniques. Durable brown and gray were preferred for labor, while white, though noble, was prone to dirt and difficult to maintain, thus reserved for specific occasions. ④ Relatively blurred gender differences: There was little distinction in color between men's and women's robes. Women predominantly used light tones like pale blue and light red accents, while men favored dark brown and dark blue.

From the 15th to the 17th century, Mongolia was divided and turbulent, alternating between war and peace with the Ming Dynasty. The Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism spread extensively and rapidly became the dominant ideology. The Little Ice Age intensified the cold, bringing more dyes and colored fabrics through trade, but the political influence caused significant fluctuations. The strong color aesthetics of Buddhist art profoundly influenced secular clothing. At this time, the sources of dyes expanded, with indigo dye sources becoming more stable through the cultivation or trade of indigo plants. The introduction and improvement of indigo dyeing techniques enabled the production of more saturated and durable royal blue, thus continuously enhancing the importance of blue. A key breakthrough in red dyeing technology came from the production of sumac in Southeast Asia and southern China, which became a more important source of red dye, capable of producing more vivid red. Additionally, the precious imported cochineal red was used by a small number of top nobles, while madder and safflower remained in use, significantly elevating the status of red. Yellow dyeing technology underwent a revolutionary transformation, with the application of saffron and phlox introduced through Xizang trade, making it possible to achieve bright and sacred golden yellow. Yellow was quickly elevated to the highest status in Tibetan Buddhism, such as in Buddha's light and religious authority, rapidly becoming the dominant color in monastic robes, temple decorations, and noble religious attire. Green dyeing techniques also improved, adopting the "blue dyeing over yellow dyeing" method—first using indigo to create a blue base, then overlaying with yellow dye—to achieve more stable greens like grass green and dark green, symbolizing life and prosperity. Purple was obtained through red-blue overlay dyeing or the use of specific plants, making it relatively rare. Overall, dyeing techniques advanced, with more mature craftsmanship and more skilled use of mordant such as alum, iron, and tin, greatly enhancing color fastness and vibrancy. Through trade with Central and Central Asian regions, a significant influx of colorful textiles was introduced. The silk and cotton fabrics obtained during this period, such as brocades and jacquard silks, were inherently rich in hues. Particularly, vibrant colors favored in Buddhism—red, yellow, blue, and green—were widely used. Consequently, the color palette of Ujimqin's clothing during this era became predominantly intense, saturated, and

contrast-enhanced. Influenced by Buddhist artistry, the designs emphasized visual impact and sacredness, with deep blue, bright yellow, scarlet, and dark green emerging as popular choices. Additionally, the adoption of the Buddhist Five-Color System—where blue symbolizes the sky, white represents clouds/water, red signifies fire, green denotes wind/wood, and yellow stands for earth/ritual authority—deeply shaped color selections. Buddhist motifs like the Eight Treasures pattern, featuring all five colors, were commonly applied to borders and embroidery designs. The robe's main colors predominantly adopted the Five-Color System's blue, red, white, and green. Yellow rose to prominence as the exclusive color for monks and the preferred choice for religious ceremonies and noble expressions of devotion, while its use remained restricted among common people.

During this period, decorative elements in clothing became more prominent, with wider borders and multi-layered inlays featuring contrasting colors. Stripes of blue, red, yellow, or white, green, and red were juxtaposed in brocades and silk, creating striking visual contrasts. Embroidery emerged as the primary medium for color expression, utilizing five-colored silk threads with particular emphasis on gold threads to meticulously embroider Buddhist motifs such as Buddha images, the Eight Treasures, flame patterns, vajras, and Sanskrit inscriptions—exhibiting vibrant hues and opulent gold. Metal and gemstone accents further enhanced the splendor, with the golden luster of gilded bronze buttons and silver plaques, along with the sporadic appearance of red coral beads and turquoise, adding vivid accents to garments. While white maintained its noble status, Buddhism reinterpreted it as symbolizing purity, compassion, and Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, leading to its use in religious contexts alongside yellow. However, in daily and warrior attire, its dominant position was challenged by red, blue, and yellow. The symbolic significance and cultural connotations of clothing colors during this period primarily included:

- ① Establishment of religious cosmology: The primary purpose of colors shifted to expressing devotion and seeking divine protection, with yellow representing Buddhist faith and the five colors symbolizing cosmic harmony and the solemnity of Buddhist teachings.
- ② Social hierarchy reinforcement: Vibrant, saturated colors—especially yellow, high-quality red and blue, and intricate decorations—became privileges of nobility and upper-class monks, while commoners continued to use simpler earthy tones like brown, gray, and light blue.
- ③ Tribal Identity and Regional Variations: During turbulent periods, tribes reinforced internal cohesion through distinctive color schemes—some favoring dark blue with red accents, others green with yellow, or intricate border patterns. The Ujimqin tribe, as a dominant group, employed even more elaborate color combinations.
- ④ Gender Distinctions: Women's robes predominantly used softer or richer hues like light red, rose-purple, and green, featuring intricate embroidery. Men's robes maintained blue, white, brown, and dark red as their base colors to emphasize solemnity, though Buddhist influences also led to more ornate decorative

elements.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Qing Dynasty achieved great unification, with the alliance banner system remaining stable. Tibetan Buddhism flourished and permeated all social strata. Unprecedented trade prosperity brought abundant inland resources, including synthetic dyes like alizarin and indigo, premium silks such as Kujin, Yunjin, Songjin, Zhangrong, and various jacquard satins, along with cotton fabrics and massive quantities of red coral, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and gold/silver threads. As the imperial pasture, Ujimqin saw frequent royal visits from nobles, resulting in luxurious attire influenced by Manchu court aesthetics and hierarchical dress codes. The introduction of synthetic dyes during this period revolutionized dyeing techniques. In the 19th century, aniline dyes introduced by Mongolian merchants—such as alizarin, perylene, methyl violet, and indigo—provided unprecedented vibrancy, saturation, stability, and affordability, especially in bright reds, purples, and deep blues. These synthetic dyes coexisted with traditional plant-based dyes, significantly expanding the color spectrum. The influx of colored textiles also peaked, with high-end silks from inland regions—such as golden-ground Kujin, opulent Yunjin, elegant Songjin, glossy jacquard satins, and finely dyed cotton fabrics—dominating the market. Natural dyes and craftsmanship reached their zenith during this era. Before synthetic dyes became widespread, traditional dyeing techniques achieved perfection in producing ultra-pure indigo, gamboge, and saffron yellow. The softness and natural charm of plant-based dyes remained highly esteemed. Beyond this, gemstone colors were extensively utilized. Red coral emerged as the most central and iconic color element, its vibrant, life-infused red symbolizing wealth, status, and auspiciousness. The classic color scheme combined turquoise's blue-green, lapis lazuli's deep blue, and pearl's translucent white. During this period, the color palette of Ujimqin (a Qing dynasty aristocratic region) garments achieved extreme vibrancy, opulence, and intricate contrast, with dense decorations emphasizing visual impact and solemnity. This reflected the dual aesthetics of Tibetan Buddhist "complete solemnity" and the opulence of Qing imperial courts. At this time, colors represented rigid institutionalization and hierarchical structures. Yellow was strictly regulated by Qing policies—bright yellow reserved for emperors and empresses, apricot yellow for princes, etc. Mongolian nobles typically used golden yellow, dark yellow, or yellowish-brown. While yellow remained sacred, secular color hierarchy grew more pronounced. Red rose to prominence as the most prestigious and popular secular color, fueled by synthetic dyes, premium red silk, and coral red, symbolizing joy, nobility, power, and vitality. Nobility's ceremonial robes, bridal gowns, and festive attire predominantly featured scarlet, jujube red, or crimson, with "coral red" becoming the soul color of Ujimqin attire. Blue remained significant—especially azure and indigo—symbolizing eternity and stability, often used as the dominant color in formal men's robes paired with red. White's status declined but retained

purity and auspicious symbolism, appearing in undergarments, summer robes, trimmings, or specific rituals. In Ujimqin, white often formed stark contrasts with vibrant colors. Green and purple dominate the color scheme (with green symbolizing vitality and prosperity, while the vibrant purple from synthetic dyes represents nobility and mystery, often seen in women's robes, trimmings, or embroidery). Decorative hues take center stage, particularly in intricate layered inlays where multi-layered borders form the core stage of color coordination—such as triple-layer, five-layer, or even seven-layer designs. Typical combinations include: outermost layer in black velvet or cashmere for stability; secondary layer in vivid scarlet or azure satin as the main color; middle layer in bright yellow or golden satin to enhance brightness and prestige; inner layer in grass green or pinkish-purple satin as accent colors; innermost layer in natural hues of premium fur (typically beige, gray-brown, or dark brown) to showcase texture and luxury. Embroidery employs high-saturation multicolored threads, with gold-thread embroidery favoring gold and silver threads. The embroidered patterns cover diverse themes—symbolizing Buddhism, tradition, and auspiciousness—with full compositions that leave no empty spaces. The extensive use of gold threads is a Qing Dynasty hallmark, creating a resplendent effect. The "coral array" typically refers to thousands of densely arranged red coral beads forming a dazzling chromatic landscape, often complemented by turquoise, lapis lazuli, pearl white, and gilded silver accessories. This creates a classic "red-blue-green-gold/white" high-contrast, high-saturation combination applied to collars, lapels, front and back, hems, and hats, serving as visual focal points and status symbols. Metallic accents like large engraved silver or gilded copper buttons and rings provide silvery-white and golden luster.

During this period, the color coordination principles of Ujimqin attire followed three key guidelines: ① High-Contrast Principle: Emphasizing striking visual impact, such as pairing a crimson robe with navy blue trim, bright yellow satin stripes, and black velvet edging; or a navy blue robe with crimson trim and coral-red patterns. ② "Fullness" and "Density" Principle: Decorative colors cover extensive areas without gaps, embodying aesthetics of abundance, prosperity, and solemnity. ③ Hierarchical Order: Robes feature 1-2 dominant colors (e.g., red or blue) with rich auxiliary colors and accents from trims, embroidery, and coral gemstones, creating layered yet cohesive designs. Beyond aesthetics, symbolic meanings were prominent: ① Religious Devotion: The Buddhist five-color system became more institutionalized, with vibrant hues symbolizing offerings to Buddha and personal merit. Specific colors directly associated with deities—white for Guanyin, yellow for the Buddha of Life. ② Social Hierarchy: Color complexity served as a strict social marker. Nobles like Zasak, princes, and marquises wore the most vivid crimson, navy, and golden brocade, with widest and densest coral beads and richest embroidery. Tajis and Tabu Nangs used secondary colors like carmine and navy, with narrower trims and smaller beads. Common herders avoided bright yellows

and apricot hues, using purple, gray, dark green, or brown cotton fabrics with minimal coral gemstones or dyed red beads, and simple or no embroidery. Monks wore purple-red or yellow robes according to religious rules, with color variations reflecting social status. ③ Qing Dynasty court aesthetics permeation: The veneration of scarlet red, extensive use of gold threads, and intricate inlaid patterns were profoundly influenced by Qing court attire styles. ④ Wealth and status flaunting: Expensive imported silks, synthetic dyes, and massive quantities of red coral gems became direct means to showcase economic power. "Wearing gold and silver" manifested in grasslands as "red robes with gold inlays and coral pendants." ⑤ Ujimqin regional characteristics solidification: Robes or borders featuring coral elements create a dominant crimson tone with blue and green as complementary hues. Gold threads and inlays add golden brightness, while black and white fur borders stabilize the framework. Coral red serves as the distinctive color symbol, distinguishing it from other Mongolian tribes. For instance, the Khalkha emphasize blue-green tones, while the Buryat retain more understated elegance. ⑥ Gender differentiation: Women's clothing showcases wider color choices, favoring vivid or soft tones like scarlet, rose-purple, rose-red, emerald green, and lake blue. Decorative elements like borders, embroidery, and coral create elaborate patterns focusing on floral motifs and butterflies. Men's attire predominantly uses more subdued colors such as navy blue, dark red, maroon, dark green, and grayish-blue. While adorned with intricate decorations, their overall appearance appears slightly more restrained compared to women's robes.

In conclusion, the comprehensive comparative analysis of the color system of Ujimqin clothing in the three stages of the 13th-14th, 15th-17th and 18th-19th centuries is shown in the table1.

Table 1. Comprehensive comparative analysis of color system of Ujimqin clothing

CharacteristicPeriod	Primary color and source	technical feature	Color Combinations and Decoration	Symbolic core	Social hierarchy	external action
13th - 14th centuries	The dominant natural colors are white (for the noble), brown (common), gray (common), and black (rare). The primary dyes include blue (indigo), red (madder, rare), and yellow (unstable).	Primary dyeing: mainly plant-based dyes, with poor color fastness and low saturation. The material's natural color is relied upon.	Monochromatic simplicity: large areas of solid color. Accent colors: narrow borders (red/blue), simple embroidery colors. Low contrast, harmonious.	Nature worship: white = heaven/sacred, blue = heaven/eternal, brown = earth, red = fire/life. Pragmatism.	Initial differentiation: White/blue robes = nobility/samans. Brown/gray robes = commoners. Vibrant accents ≈ slightly higher status.	Subtle: Eurasian trade brought a small amount of colored silk (aristocrats), and local color aesthetics were dominant.

15-17th century	The introduction of the five Buddhist colors: indigo (symbolizing elevation), red (representing status), saffron (symbolizing sanctity), green (through tie-dye), and white (representing new meaning). The use of trade-colored fabrics increased.	Technical improvement : The application of dyeing agents improves color fastness and saturation (especially red and yellow), and can produce a more pure green color.	Toward intense: increased saturation and contrast. Decorative elements: multi-layered borders (five-color combinations), full embroidered Buddhist motifs (five colors with gold thread), and initial metallic/gemstone accents.	Religious symbolism: Yellow represents Buddha's light and ecclesiastical authority (the most sacred), while the five colors symbolize the universe and Buddhist teachings. Red and blue maintain their established status.	Enhance: Yellow = monastic/elite religious attire. Vibrant colors + intricate decorations = elite privileges. Commoners remain simple.	The Tibetan Buddhist tradition profoundly reshaped the color symbolism and aesthetics of the region, characterized by intense saturation. Central Asian and Central Plains trade introduced colored cloth dyes.
18th - 19th centuries	Exquisite Splendor: Red (Synthetic Dye/Silk/Coral-the most prestigious), Blue (Turquoise/Indigo), Yellow (Golden/Yellow/Grade-Style), White (Contrast), Green/Purple (Widespread). Gemstone colors: coral red (core), turquoise blue-green.	Technological revolution: The widespread use of synthetic dyes (vivid, stable, and affordable) made silk dyeing the mainstream. This marked the peak of traditional dyeing techniques.	Exquisite institutionalization: extreme saturation and stark contrast. Dominant decorative hues: ultra-wide multi-layer borders (color symphony), densely embroidered patterns (multicolor + gold thread), and a 'coral array' dominance (red, blue, green, gold, white). Every inch is densely packed, leaving no empty space.	Multifaceted integration: religion (five-color ceremonial attire) + institutional hierarchy (Qing aesthetic) + wealth display (coral/silk) + regional identity.	Highly institutionalized: Color/decor complexity = strict hierarchy (princes → Taiji → commoners). Bright yellow is forbidden. Coral quantity/quality = status.	Decisiveness : The Qing Dynasty's hierarchical system. Mongolian merchants imported synthetic dyes, vast quantities of silk, and coral and gemstones. Tibetan Buddhist color symbolism was deeply ingrained. The court's opulent style permeated every aspect.

2.2. Pattern

During the 13th-14th centuries, nomadic societies were dominated by spiritual beliefs including grassland shamanism, Tengri worship, and nature spirit worship. The dependence of nomadic production on natural forces made patterns serve as mediums for human-divine communication. War culture fostered symbols of bravery, while the aristocracy initially encountered patterns from Central Plains and Central Asia, though these had not yet been deeply internalized. Clothing patterns predominantly featured abstract geometric designs, with the Uliger hee (intestinal pattern) being a typical example. This infinite spiral pattern symbolizes eternal life and continuous fortune, often appearing in two-way continuous loops at collar, sleeve, and hem seams of leather robes. The Oni hee (coiled grass pattern) is a simplified spiral of grass leaves, metaphorically representing lush pastures and

livestock reproduction, commonly seen on boot soles and belt edges. The Ari hee (thunder and cloud patterns) features jagged or connected angular lines, symbolizing thunderous power and celestial authority, often used on weapon sheaths and metal decorations for horse gear. Checkerboard and diamond patterns symbolize the division of the earth, occasionally appearing on felt saddles. Totemized animal patterns are frequently used in clothing designs, with eagle wings and wolf teeth patterns presenting abstract feathered serrations and triangular teeth, embodying strength, speed, and protection, concentrated in warrior leather armor and quivers. The argali horn pattern, a variant of coiled horns, symbolizes abundant hunting and tribal prosperity, used on men's waistbands and knife handles. The "Five Livestock" symbols use minimalist contours to represent horses, cattle, sheep, camels, and goats—△ for sheep horns, ○ for horse hooves—stitched onto children's swaddling clothes for protection. Furthermore, due to nature worship, natural phenomena were often incorporated into clothing patterns. The sun and moon motifs, featuring circular and curved designs, symbolize the core of shamanic cosmology and occasionally appear on the headdresses of noblewomen. The fire motif (Galaa hee), shaped like a rising triangular flame, represents the source of life purification and is exclusively used on ceremonial robes.

The patterns of this period primarily focused on structural nodes like seams and openings, as well as functional components such as weapons and horse gear. The garments themselves featured predominantly plain-colored surfaces. Decorative techniques included embossing and engraving—common methods for leather and wooden bone artifacts—with bold, forceful lines. Other techniques involved wool knitting and stitching, exemplified by geometric trimmings along robe edges using colored wool braids, and shallow relief animal motifs carved into metal fasteners and knife decorations. These designs conveyed dynamic energy with simplified details. The cultural symbolism of Ujimqin's clothing patterns from this era represented shamanistic cosmology through visual interpretations, geometric patterns establishing order, animal motifs harnessing spiritual power, and natural symbols connecting with deities. For instance, the coiled intestine motif symbolized cyclical nature, thunder patterns represented divine authority, eagle and wolf imagery conveyed spiritual possession, while sun, moon, and fire motifs served as ritual mediums. Functionally, these patterns reinforced tribal identity and survival prayers, with aesthetic considerations subordinate to religious and practical needs. During the 15th-17th centuries, the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism, promoted by Altan Khan, became the official religion of the Mongols. The "horse market" trade between Han Chinese and Mongols introduced silk and porcelain patterns, marking a period of coexistence and competition between shamanic remnants and Buddhist symbols. Noble patterns were the first to be Buddhistized. Buddhist symbols were initially incorporated, such as the swastika (Hushuu hee) representing eternal Dharma, which quickly spread to the front of robes and embroidery on boots. The

Eight Auspicious Symbols (Namdag hee) included the Dharma Wheel, Precious Umbrella, Golden Fish, Precious Vase, Lotus, White Conch, Auspicious Knot, and Victory Banner. Initially appearing as standalone elements on silver belt buckles and hairpins, they later formed composite designs. Buddhist niche/tower patterns took on miniature architectural forms, used as central silver decorations on noblewomen's head ornaments. Sanskrit seed syllables like "Om Mani Padme Hum" were engraved on protective silver boxes and sutra scrolls. The Buddhist transformation of grasslands saw lion-tiger patterns (Arsalan/Bar) evolve from shamanic totemic beasts into Buddhist guardian deities, adopting solemn static forms adorned on lama robes' shoulders and noble waistbands. Garuda replaced eagle patterns as symbols of demon subjugation and religious protection, used on temple textiles and ritual garments. Traditional scrollwork patterns blended with lotus elements to symbolize purity, becoming new hem decorations on robes. Central Plains auspicious patterns like bat motifs (Sharva), homophonic with "fu" (blessing), first appeared on trade-acquired silk fabrics. Cloud patterns merged with traditional designs, featuring smoother lines to signify good fortune. Coin patterns and coiled dragon motifs, introduced through porcelain and silverware, symbolized enduring wealth. Finally, the transformation of shamanic motifs: wolf teeth and fire patterns faded into the background, surviving only on amulets and saddle pads; thunder patterns evolved into decorative borders.

During this period, decorative motifs evolved from peripheral elements to central designs. For instance, large floral patterns adorned the front and back of robes, while boot shafts were densely embroidered with Buddhist symbols. The craftsmanship became more sophisticated compared to the 13th-14th centuries, with embroidery techniques — particularly silk and velvet threads — widely employed to create intricate Buddhist motifs, commonly seen on garments and footwear. Silverware featured exquisite inlay techniques, while coral and turquoise inlays on belt buckles and headdresses showcased the Eight Auspicious Symbols. Influenced by Thangka art, compositions adopted symmetrical center layouts and layered arrangements. The Ujimqin costume patterns of this era primarily served as declarations of religious transformation, transforming sacred spaces with Eight Auspicious Symbols and Sanskrit inscriptions. Original grassland motifs like lion-tiger patterns and Garuda were reinterpreted to align with Buddhist beliefs, while shamanic symbols were either suppressed or assimilated. Functionally, these patterns identified religious identity and demonstrated noble piety, while their aesthetic appeal underwent significant enhancement.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, under the Qing court's "Manchu-Mongol Unity" policy, the princes of Ujimqin frequently entered into marital alliances with the Qing imperial family. Tibetan Buddhism deeply penetrated the populace, while Mongolian merchant caravans imported vast quantities of textiles and handicrafts from the Central Plains. The pattern system entered its golden age of grand fusion

between Buddhist, Manchu, Han, and Mongolian motifs, witnessing the secularization and complexity of Buddhist designs. For instance, the Eight Auspicious Symbols evolved into standardized circular compositions adorning silver bases for head ornaments and brocade-trimmed robes. Geometric Buddhist cosmological patterns like mandalas and mandalas were used on high-ranking lamaic robes and princely ceremonial tents. Buddhist Jataka tales were embroidered on monks' robes and living Buddha cushions. Tibetan script on the "Six-Syllable Mantra" decorative bands became a common border motif, appearing on robe edges and boot sleeves. Manchu institutional patterns like hierarchical dragon designs were incorporated—five-clawed golden dragons were exclusive to Qing emperors, while Ujimqin princes used four-clawed python patterns embroidered on ceremonial garments. The square patch motif evolved into circular "treasure badges," symbolizing Taiji titles through lions, tigers, and other fierce birds, adorning ceremonial robes. Palace cloud-shoulder patterns combined auspicious cloud motifs for bride garments. Central Plains auspicious patterns like "Fu-Lu-Shou-Xi" characters were directly embroidered on robe hems and pillow tops. Four-season flowers — peony symbolizing prosperity, and lotus, chrysanthemum, plum, and orchid representing seasonal peace—were often fully embroidered on women's robes. The Bogu motif, combining tripods, vases, and scrolls, symbolized literary success, appearing on scholar waistbands. Butterfly-and-flower and fish-lotus motifs represented marital bliss and childbearing, becoming core patterns on bridal robes. Beyond this, there exists a refined reinterpretation of grassland motifs. The "Five Livestock" group pattern, featuring realistic depictions of cattle, sheep, horses, camels, and sheep encircling floral elements, symbolizes pastoral prosperity and has become a signature design on nomadic robes. The Panjiang pattern, combining coral beads with traditional geometric motifs and Buddhist-inspired materials, has been elevated into a silver chain-adorned headdress. The reindeer motif, a distinctive feature of the Ujimqin branch, is embroidered on the back of the fur robe.

The patterns of this era dominated all visual planes of clothing, creating an extreme style of "no place without ornamentation." For instance, robes were fully embroidered, boot shafts featured panoramic embroidery compositions, and silk head ornaments utilized ground color embroidery. The craftsmanship of patterns reached its pinnacle, particularly in embroidery techniques that achieved perfection through diverse needlework methods. Techniques like gold-leaf embroidery, seed embroidery, and zipper embroidery showcased three-dimensional patterns. High-relief craftsmanship was commonly used for dragon and lion motifs on waistbands. Lacework craftsmanship presented delicate and translucent floral patterns on head ornaments. Enamel dotting was employed to add color to partial Buddhist ritual patterns. The compositional paradigms of patterns also matured, including central radiating styles (e.g., a sun-shaped pearl at the top of head

ornaments with coral tassels radiating like light) and symmetrical balance styles (strict symmetry between front and back robe patterns and cloud-shaped shoulder decorations). Continuous narrative styles featured uninterrupted floral and scrolling grass patterns on boot shafts. During this period, Ujimqin clothing patterns became a collaborative field of multiple powers, with Buddhist symbols ensuring sacred legitimacy, Manchu heraldic patterns declaring political subordination, and auspicious patterns from the Central Plains projecting secular desires. However, primitive grassland motifs like the Five Livestock and Panchang remained to preserve cultural roots. Functionally, these patterns strictly differentiated social hierarchies, flaunted wealth, and systematically expressed blessings, while aesthetic value became one of the core values.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the core dimensions of Ujimqin costume patterns in the three stages of the 13th-14th, 15th-17th and 18th-19th centuries is shown in the table2.

Table 2. Comparison of Core Dimensions of Ujimqin Clothing Patterns

Characteristic Period	13th – 14th centuries	15th – 17th centuries	18th-19th century	Evolutionary trajectory analysis
Primary beliefs	Shamanism and Natural Worship	Samanas vs. Buddhism → Buddhism prevails	Deep integration of Tibetan Buddhism	Original belief → institutionalized religion
Core themes	Geometric pattern (coiled intestine, grass, and thunder pattern) Totem animals (eagle, wolf, sheep) Natural symbols (Sun, Moon, Fire)	Buddhist symbols (卐 / Eight Auspicious Symbols) Buddhist animal (lion/gold-winged bird) Zhongyuan Auspicious Pattern (Bat/Cloud)	Buddhist symbols (Eight Auspicious Symbols/Mantras) Ming Dynasty Coat of Arms (Python/Bu) Zhongyuan Auspicious Pattern (Longevity and Flowers) Refined grassland pattern (Five Livestock Cluster Flower)	Single domestic → multiple external sources Abstract symbols → concrete narratives
Color Scheme	Natural colors (ochre, white, blue, black) Symbol: the natural order of heaven, earth and man	Religious colors (yellow/red/blue) rise Trade Color (Carmine/Turquoise) seeped in	Institutionalized religion color Luxury Color (Coral/Orpiment) Five Elements Five Colors System	Natural simplicity → religious symbols → wealth hierarchy markers Low Saturation → High Saturation Color Clash
Composition logic	Edge Dot Function nodes first	Centered focus (Buddha niche) Hierarchical layout	Full coverage, full embroidery style Strict symmetry Continuous Narrative	Local to Global Random → Procedural
Core Process	Engraving/Woolen/Woodcut	Embroidery Rise/Silver Inlay	High-precision embroidery (gold embroidery/seed embroidery) Three-dimensional silverwork (relief/engraving)	Coarse → Fine Flat to 3D
social function	Samantha's Spirit Communication / Tribal Identity / Survival Blessings	Religious conversion symbol / Noble piety display	Ranking, Wealth Display, System Blessings	Practical belief → identity politics → composite symbol

Aesthetic Weight	Subordinate religion and utility	Religious and decorative	Decorative becomes the core value	Functionalism → Visualism
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3. Conclusion

This study systematically traces the historical evolution and core transformation patterns of Ujumqin costume art through diachronic analysis. The research demonstrates that the artistic evolution of Ujumqin costumes is not a simple linear succession, but rather a dynamic process of adaptive adjustments and creative transformations while preserving cultural essence. The evolution of Ujumqin costume art vividly reflects the vitality and adaptability of its nomadic cultural heritage. A thorough understanding of these evolutionary patterns not only holds significant practical value for the scientific protection and living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, but also provides valuable case references for comprehending the survival and development strategies of ethnic arts in the era of globalization.

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