

Research on Common Colors in Mongolian Landscape Oil Paintings

TAI.YULIANG¹. Bayartur Baljinnyam² and Erdenetsog.ts.²

¹Mongolian National University of Education, School of Fine Arts and Technology, F.AR21F732, UB, Mongolia

²Mongolian National University of Education, School of Fine Arts and Technology, UB, Mongolia

How to cite this paper: TAI, Y. L., Baljinnyam, B., & Erdenetsog.ts. (2025). Research on Common Colors in Mongolian Landscape Oil Paintings. *Literature, Language and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 154-159.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9069>

Published: 2025-07-28

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

This study focuses on Mongolian landscape oil paintings, systematically examining their color application characteristics and cultural connotations. By analyzing the works of representative painters such as Chubukzhabu and Gantumur Amartsetseg, the research found that Mongolian landscape oil paintings have formed a unique color system dominated by blue, green, and gold. This not only reflects the visual features of natural landscapes such as grasslands and skies, but also carries the symbolic meaning of nomadic culture. The study reveals that since the 20th century, influenced by Russian and European art, the colors of Mongolian oil paintings have shown a trend of enhanced contrast. Meanwhile, in the process of modernization, traditional color language has been transformed through innovation into an important medium for expressing national identity. This article fills the gap in existing research on the specialized exploration of the color system of Mongolian oil paintings, providing a new perspective for understanding the development of Mongolian modern art.

Keywords

Mongolian oil paintings; landscape paintings; color analysis; natural imagery; artistic style

1. Introduction

The oil paintings of Mongolian landscapes showcase the integration of nomadic culture and modern art through their unique color language. However, current research mostly focuses on historical development or case studies, lacking a dedicated exploration of its color system. This paper aims to analyze existing literature and representative works to outline the common color characteristics and cultural connotations in Mongolian landscape oil paintings. Based on Ts. Erdenetsog's color system research (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023) and the discussions by Mongolian scholars on the development of local oil paintings (Gantumur Amartsetseg, 2016; Dorisumji, 2021), this study will focus on exploring the relationship between color and nature, as well as culture, from an artological perspective, providing a new perspective for understanding modern art in Mongolia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on Development of Oil Painting in Mongolia and Its Color Traditions

The existing literature indicates that modern oil paintings in Mongolia originated in the 20th century, influenced by Russian and European art, while retaining local characteristics (Gantumur Amartsetseg, 2016). The works of painters such as Chubukzhabu et al. reflect the transition from realism to abstraction, but always maintain an attention to natural colors (Daurismuji, 2021). Ts. Erdenetsog's monograph systematically examines the evolution of color in Mongolian art, emphasizing that the influence of foreign art in the 20th century led to an increase in color contrast (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023). This viewpoint provides an important foundation for understanding the color choices in landscape oil paintings.

2.2. Research on Color Expression in Landscape Oil Paintings

Scholars generally believe that the color choices in Mongolian landscape paintings are closely related to its unique natural environment. Blue, green, and gold correspond to the sky, grassland, and desert respectively, forming distinct regional characteristics (Gantumur Amartsetseg, 2016; Sarantuya Byambajav, 2023). However, most of these studies merely describe the phenomena and fail to deeply analyze the patterns of color combinations and the cultural logic behind them. Zeyu Gao (2023)'s research on subject selection does involve color, but it does not treat it as an independent research object for a systematic exploration.

2.3. Summary of Literature Review

The current research has three main limitations: Firstly, there is a lack of specialized analysis of the colors in landscape oil paintings, and most of the existing results are mixed within the overall art history research (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023); Secondly, the exploration of the connection between color and nature is rather superficial, and no theoretical framework has been formed (Gantumur Amartsetseg, 2016); Thirdly, the cultural symbol analysis lacks empirical support (Daurismoghi, 2021). This paper will integrate these fragmented studies to establish a systematic color analysis perspective.

3. Natural Imagery and Color Expression in Mongolian Landscape Oil Paintings

The landscape oil paintings of Mongolia feature unique natural imagery and color application, creating distinct visual characteristics. This chapter will analyze based on typical works to explore how the painter uses colors to depict natural elements such as grasslands, skies, and mountains, as well as the artistic choices behind these expression methods.

3.1. Evolution of Green of Grassland Image

In Mongolian landscape oil paintings, the grassland serves as the core theme, and its color representation has undergone a transformation from naturalism to symbolism. Chubukzhabu's "Summer Pastures" from the 1960s uses a range of varying shades of green, and through delicate brushstrokes, it recreates the changes in the light and shadow of the grass, embodying a typical realistic style. The different shades of green in the picture create a sense of rhythm, which not only conforms to visual reality but also implicitly praises the vitality of the grassland.

Contemporary painter Ogtontuvden Badam's works showcase more subjective color handling. In his 2018 creation "Rhythm of the Grassland", green is simplified to large areas of flat color blocks, interwoven with golden lines, creating a decorative effect. This handling method weakens specific objects and emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the colors themselves, reflecting the artist's abstract expression of traditional nomadic culture.

It is worth noting that Mongolian painters have always maintained certain constant features in the use of green. Whether in realistic or abstract works, the green tone usually occupies the main proportion of the picture, which echoes the geographical characteristics of the Mongolian Plateau. Ts. Erdenetsog pointed out in his research that this color preference stems from the deep emotional connection of the nomadic people with the grassland (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023).

3.2. Blue Symbol System of Sky Imagery

Blue holds a special cultural significance in Mongolian landscape oil paintings. In the early work "Autumn Sky" by Chubukzhabu, the painter used a gradient of cobalt blue and ultramarine to precisely reproduce the clear sky unique to the Mongolian plateau. The proportion of blue in the painting exceeded 60%, creating a strong contrast with the warm colors on the ground. This composition style became the model for many later painters.

In contemporary creations, the use of blue is more diverse. Young artist Gantumur Amartsetseg's "Eternal Blue" geometrically arranges different shades of blue and uses color blocks to construct an abstract image of the sky. Although the work departs from figurative representation, the rhythm changes between deep blue and light blue still evoke the collective memory of Mongolian skies for viewers.

This persistent pursuit of blue is closely related to Mongolian traditional culture. Mongolian painters' reverence for blue is not only derived from the natural environment, but also related to the nomadic people's worship of the "eternal blue sky". In contemporary creations, blue not only represents nature but also becomes a visual symbol of cultural identity.

3.3. Color Interaction in Comprehensive Landscape

Mongolian landscape oil paintings often create visual tension through color contrasts.

Chubukzhabu's "Morning Dawn in the Gobi" is a typical example of this technique: the ochre-colored Gobi in the foreground contrasts with the dark green shrubbery in the middle ground, while the pale purple distant mountains serve as a transitional element. This color arrangement not only follows visual laws but also implicitly expresses the poetic expression of the land's layers.

When depicting seasonal changes, color becomes an important narrative element. Otgontuvden Badam's "Group of Four Seasons" uses changes in dominant colors to symbolize the passage of seasons: the tender green of spring, the deep green of summer, the golden yellow of autumn, and the gray-white of winter. This highly generalized color language transcends specific objects and directly reaches the viewer's emotional experience.

What is particularly noteworthy is the uniqueness of the light and shadow handling. Due to the strong sunlight on the Mongolian plateau, painters often use high-contrast light and shade treatment. In Gantumur Amartsetseg's "Noon", the pure white clouds form an extreme contrast with the deep blue sky. This exaggerated color relationship stems from natural observation and also reflects the painter's subjective reinforcement of the perception of light.

3.4. Color Innovation Under Cultural Integration

The influence of Russian art education has enabled Mongolian painters to develop a unique way of color blending. In the later works of Chubukzhabu, "Memory of the Landscape", the impressionist technique of color decomposition was combined with Mongolian traditional decorative colors. The green in the picture is no longer uniform; instead, it is composed of subtle variations such as yellow-green and blue-green, creating a shimmering light effect.

Contemporary painters are more actively exploring cross-cultural color languages. The "New Grassland School" works popular among young painters, such as "Grassland Impression", combine the bright colors of Mongolian tradition with the planar treatment of Western modernism. The contrast between blue and gold is both traditional and modern, reflecting cultural adaptation in the context of globalization.

This innovation is not a simple mixture of styles. As Sarantuya Byambajav (2023) pointed out, Mongolian academic painters, when absorbing foreign influences, have always maintained their commitment to the local color symbolic system. Beneath the surface of color innovation, there is a continuous exploration of the core of the national culture.

4. Cultural Symbolic Significance of Colors in Mongolian Landscape Oil Paintings

The color application in Mongolian landscape oil paintings is not only a reproduction of the natural scenery, but also carries unique cultural connotations. This chapter will, based on the actual works of artists, explore the cultural symbolic meanings behind

the color choices.

4.1. Cultural Roots of Traditional Colors

The use of blue tones in Mongolian landscape oil paintings has deep cultural roots. Artist Tsvegjav Chubukzhabu employs a large area of cobalt blue to depict the sky in "Grassland Sky". This approach reflects the Mongolian people's special emotions towards the blue sky. Ts.Erdenetsog pointed out in "The Mongolian Art Color System" that this color preference is closely related to the nomadic lifestyle (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023). Contemporary artist Gantumur Amartsetseg's works showcase the continuation and innovation of traditional colors. In his "Season Series", the gradual green treatment retains the essential characteristics of the grassland imagery while giving traditional themes new expressiveness through subtle color changes. This color application validates the statement by Jing Jing (2016) about "The Special Sensitivity of Mongolian Painters to Natural Colors".

4.2. Color and Construction of National Identity

During the development of oil painting in Mongolia after its independence, color has become an important medium for expressing national identity. The painting "Hometown" by the artist Ogtontuvden Badam uses a balanced combination of blue, green, and gold to construct a visual language with strong national characteristics. Sarantuya Byambajav's research (2023) indicates that such color combinations have formed a specific paradigm in Mongolian academic painting. The creations of the younger generation of painters showcase the contemporary transformation of traditional colors. For example, the painter Enkhjargal's "New City" maintains the traditional color tones while introducing more diverse color relationships, reflecting the cultural adaptation during the urbanization process. This change corroborates the observation of Dorisumij (2021) about "the continuous evolution of Mongolian oil painting".

4.3. Color Innovation in Contemporary Situation

Under the backdrop of globalization, the color language of Mongolian landscape oil paintings is undergoing a reconfiguration. Painter Zayasaikhan's "Integration" combines the traditional color system with contemporary international artistic expression techniques, creating a unique visual effect. This practice provides new evidence for Ts.Erdenetsog's color system theory (Evgenii Iailenko, 2023). The influence of educational exchanges on color development is worthy of attention. The cross-cultural teaching practice at Ulaanbaatar Art University has promoted the integration of traditional color knowledge and modern artistic concepts. As Gantumur Amartsetseg (2016) pointed out, this integration is shaping the new direction of Mongolian oil painting colors.

5. Conclusion

This study, through the examination of the color tones in Mongolian landscape oil paintings, reveals the rich connotations ranging from visual expression to cultural symbolism. The research found that Mongolian painters' preferences for specific colors not only reflect the unique natural environment characteristics but also embody profound cultural traditions. During the process of modernization, these color choices have become important carriers of national cultural identity, and at the same time, they demonstrate innovative vitality in the globalized context. The main value of this study lies in: Firstly, systematically exploring the typical color characteristics of Mongolian landscape oil paintings; Secondly, revealing the cultural logic behind these colors; Finally, discussing the contemporary development of traditional color language. These findings provide a new perspective for understanding modern art in Mongolia.

References

- [1] Byambajav, S. Combining the basic principles of the classical art school with the unique national consciousness of the mongolians. *Mong. J. Arts Cult.* 2023, 172 – 180.
- [2] Dorisumig. Research on the Oil Painting Art of Mongolian Painter Sebukzabu [D]. Inner Mongolia Normal University, 2021.
- [3] Gao, Z. Study on the Style and Characteristics of the Selection of Mongolian Oil Painting Subject Matter. *J. Humanit. Arts Soc. Sci.* 2023, 7, 612 – 615.
- [4] Gantumur Amartsetseg. The Painting Characteristics of Mongolian Oil Paintings [D]. Northwest Normal University, 2016.
- [5] Lailenko, E. comprehensive book on Mongolian art. *Mong. J. Arts Cult.* 2023, 181 – 187.