

The Study on the Evolution of Formal Structure of the Ujimqin Mongolian Robe

Xiaoxiu Liu

Graduate University of Mongolia, Mongolia Ulaanbaatar 15141, Mongolia
Email: 1197481025@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Liu, X. X. (2026). The Study on the Evolution of Formal Structure of the Ujimqin Mongolian Robe. Social Sciences and Humanities, 3(1), 29–43. ISSN Print: 3104-4328; ISSN Online: 3104-4336.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/SSH.9061>

Published: 2026-01-30

Copyright © 2026 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

The Ujimqin Mongolian robe, a quintessential branch of Mongolian attire, embodies the functional requirements and aesthetic logic of nomadic life through its structural design. This study examines the "structural form" of the Ujimqin robe, employing a combination of textual research and fieldwork to systematically analyze its components—including body segmentation, slit placement, collar and sleeve designs, and lapel arrangements—tracing their diachronic evolution. The research aims to reveal how these structural elements adapted to shifting production methods, climatic conditions, and aesthetic trends across historical periods, thereby elucidating the cultural adaptability and technical rationality behind their transformations. This study holds fundamental significance for advancing material culture studies of clothing and preserving ethnic heritage.

Keywords

Ujimqin Mongolian Robe; Formal Structure; Evolutionary Law

1. Distribution of the Ujimqin tribe

The Ujimqin tribe, a civilization with profound history, was nomadic along Lake Baikal until 1207 AD when they submitted to the Mongol Empire. As a key component of Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire, they became known as the "Ujimqin people" in the 13th century. The term "Ujimqin" combines "Uju" (meaning "grape") and "Qin" (meaning "people"), reflecting their mountainous heritage. Historical records show that during the Northern Yuan Dynasty, Wengundular, the third son of Bayan Khan's grandson Bodialak, governed the tribe. To commemorate their past grazing life in the Grape Mountains of Altai, they adopted the name "Ujimqin." Later, during the Later Jin period, tribal leader Dorji clashed with Chahar Khan and migrated to the Khalkha Chieftain's Khanate in northern Mongolia. Due to internal conflicts among Mongol tribes, they eventually settled in southern Mongolia. After the Qing Dynasty conquered Chahar in 1644, Ujimqin submitted to the Qing. In 1668, the Qing established the League Banner system, dividing Ujimqin into Left and Right

Zasak Banners under the Xilingol League. The Right Ujimqin Banner, now known as West Ujimqin, was ruled by Dorji. The Left Ujimqin Banner, now called East Ujimqin, was governed by Dorji's nephew Seleng, who was also granted the title of Zasak Doru Erdene Bile. The current indigenous Ujimqin people are descendants of the Mongol tribes that served as the two Zasak banners of Ujimqin during the Qing Dynasty.

1.1. The Ujimqin tribe in China

Originating from the Ughurs tribe during the Tang Dynasty, Ujimqin later became part of Genghis Khan's "Golden Family". To escape the Qiangar Khanate's invasions in the 16th century, the Ujimqin people migrated from the Altai Mountains to Xilingol. After submitting to the Qing Dynasty in 1636, they were divided into the Left and Right Banners. The banner boundaries established during the Qing Dynasty solidified tribal territories, creating independent cultural units for the Eastern and Western Banners. To this day, intermarriages between these two banners still prioritize marriages within their respective groups.

Today, the Ujimqin tribe is concentrated in the settlement areas of China, mainly in the East Ujimqin Banner and West Ujimqin Banner of Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, covering a total area of about 110,000 square kilometers. It is the best-preserved nomadic cultural site on the Mongolian Plateau. The East Ujimqin Banner is located at the northeasternmost tip of Xilingol League, bordering Mongolia's Sukhbaatar Province to the north, with a border line stretching 527 kilometers. The total population is about 71,000, with over 70% being Mongolians, and the Ujimqin tribe accounts for more than 90% of the Mongolian population. The administrative system of "banner-Sumu-Gacha" from the Qing Dynasty is still preserved, and the tribal kinship remains clear. The traditional attire, the "Tolik," features knee-length sleeves, a waistband of colorful silk ribbons, and a slit at the hem for easier riding. The women's head ornament, the "Yihe Tarig," is adorned with coral and turquoise linked by a silver chain, weighing up to 10 kilograms, symbolizing family status. The terrain is predominantly typical temperate grasslands, mainly the Uragai Grassland and Baogeda Mountain Forest Area, with water systems like the Uragai River and Nai Lin River, forming a landscape of "abundant water and grass, with cattle and sheep grazing everywhere." The West Ujimqin Banner is located south of the East Banner, adjacent to the Kheshiketeng World Geopark, where grasslands and sandy areas are interwoven, and it is home to the Guoriges Tai National Nature Reserve. Historically known as the Right Ujimqin Banner, it shares the same origin as the Left Banner but has slightly different dialects. The West Ujimqin dialect is influenced by the Chahar Mongolian language, with a population of about 79,000, 65% of whom are Mongolians, and nomadic traditions are more intensive. Today, the large-scale "Obo" sacrificial culture is still preserved, using white horse milk and white felt blankets as symbols of purity. For example, the Habuqigai Obo gathers tens of thousands of

people annually, holding a ceremony that blends shamanism and Lamaism.

Approximately 95% of the main Ujimqin tribe has traditionally resided in the eastern and western Ujimqin banners of Xilingol League. However, historical factors including military garrisoning, ecological disasters, and policy-driven migration have led to the formation of five diaspora groups. These groups are now scattered across five provinces: Liaoning, Xinjiang, Jilin, Qinghai, and Gansu, with a total population of less than 5,000 people. This constitutes 3% of the tribe's total population, and their cultural characteristics have become deeply localized.

The Ujimqin Tribe in Liaoning's Fuxin Mongol Autonomous County originated from Qing Dynasty religious migrants. In 1703, the Qing court commissioned the construction of Ruiying Temple, establishing it as the central hub of Tibetan Buddhism in the East. The tribe recruited 80 lamas and artisan families from Ujimqin Banner to settle there, forming the "Mongolian Lejin-Ujimqin" mixed community. Today, the tribe numbers around 1,500 people, primarily residing near Ruiying Temple in Fosi Town. Their culture blends traditional Mongolian elements with Tibetan Buddhist practices, using copper cymbals instead of Mongolian horns in rituals. The language retains Manchu influences, such as calling lamb "Haonichi". The only preserved tradition is the "Ujimqin Medical Canon" bloodletting therapy, now housed at the Fuxin Mongolian Medicine Research Institute.

The Ujimqin Tribe in Xinjiang's Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture primarily consists of descendants of frontier settlers. In 1764, the Qing court relocated 500 Ujimqin cavalrymen from Xilingol League to Xinjiang with their families. After suppressing the Dzungar rebellion, they established a garrison at the strategic Sayram Lake fortress and eventually settled permanently. Today, the tribe numbers approximately 1,200 members, predominantly residing in Chagan Tunge Township of Wenquan County. Their traditional culture has undergone gradual transformations: the language has merged with the Oirat dialect, religious practices have shifted to Tibetan Buddhist Gelug Sect, and the original shamanic traditions have faded away. Their attire features distinctive "Turkut-style" long vests that contrast sharply with Xilingol League's traditional robes. The only preserved ancestral symbol remains the wolf thigh stone amulet, traditionally worn during rituals.

The Ujimqin Tribe in Qian Gorlos Mongol Autonomous County, Jilin Province, primarily consists of late Qing Dynasty settlers. In 1902, when the Qing government initiated the "Mongolian Land Reclamation" policy, over 40 impoverished herding families relocated to the Songhua River region to lease land from the former Gorlos princes. Today, the tribe numbers approximately 700 people residing in Chaganhua Town. The community has fully adopted agricultural practices, shifting from meat and dairy to corn and millet as staple foods, while the traditional milk tofu-making technique has been lost. Their ancestral worship has evolved from Ao Bao (mangolian yurt) rituals to a dual deity veneration of "Dragon King + Genghis Khan."

The only remaining cultural symbol is children wearing the traditional "Hana Ga" headdress.

The Ujimqin Tribe in Qinghai's Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture primarily consists of ecological refugees from the Republican era. Between 1929 and 1931, Xilingol League suffered consecutive "Black Disaster" and "White Disaster" attacks, resulting in 90% livestock mortality. Hundreds of Ujimqin herders fled to the Qinghai Lake region along the "Steppe Silk Road" to escape famine. Today, the tribe numbers approximately 800 people scattered across Chaka Town in Ulan County, transitioning to semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral livelihoods through barley cultivation and Tibetan sheep herding. Intermarriages with Tibetans have led to mixed ethnic heritage, with 60% of families using bilingual Tibetan-Mongolian communication. The only remaining cultural practice is the traditional "Ujimqin-style" meat preservation method involving winter storage.

The Ujimqin Tribe in Beibu Mongol Autonomous County, Gansu Province, primarily consists of migrants from mining communities during the planned economy era. In 1958, during the "Great Steel Campaign," Inner Mongolia dispatched 200 herding families to support the development of Jingtieshan Iron Mine in Gansu. The Ujimqin clan was selected for their expertise in camel transportation. Today, the tribe numbers approximately 600 people, concentrated in Mazongshan Town. After settling in urban areas, they lost their traditional pastoral skills, with only 15% of the younger generation speaking Mongolian. The traditional Nadam Festival has been replaced by "mining sports meets," and horse racing has been replaced by truck rallies. Cultural continuity has been disrupted, with the only remaining culinary symbol being milk tea that still uses Ximeng brick tea and camel milk recipes.

1.2. The Ujimqin tribe in Mongolia

The Ujimqin tribe in Mongolia, known as *Özömčin* in Mongolian, had a population of approximately 68,000 according to the 2023 statistics from the Mongolian Statistics Bureau. 85% of the population resides in Dornod Aimag, with the remainder scattered across Ulaanbaatar and Khentii Province. Their ancestral roots are the same as those of the China's Xilingol Ujimqin, forming a cross-border ethnic group due to the political division in the 20th century. The five major settlements in Dornod Aimag are Qobas Mountain City, Bayan Dong, Hulunbuir, Matad, and Chagan Aobao, with population shares of 35%, 20%, 15%, 10%, and 5% respectively.

The Ujimqin tribe in Mongolia's Eastern Province underwent four splits and reorganizations during historical migrations. From 1636 to 1691, during the Qing Dynasty's southern border expansion, the Ujimqin people, originally inhabiting the Kherlen River basin, were granted special permission by Emperor Kangxi to migrate south to Xilingol to avoid the threat of the Dzungar forces. However, about 2,000 people remained in their ancestral lands, becoming the Ujimqin ancestral roots in Mongolia. From 1911 to 1921, during the Mongolian independence war, some

pro-Russian nobles led their followers westward to Khentii Province, forming the "Ujimqin Cavalry Regiment" to resist the Beiyang Government of China. After the war, they settled at the southern foot of the Khentii Mountains. In 1930, during the collectivization period, they migrated northward. When the Stalinist model was implemented, the Eastern Province established the "Erinchulu" collective pasture (No.39), relocating Ujimqin herders from Khentii Province to develop the eastern grasslands. Since 1990, Ujimqin immigrants from Ulaanbaatar have returned to the Eastern Province to develop gold mines and border trade, forming new settlements.

1.3. The Ujimqin tribe in Russia

The Ujimqin people of Russia, known as Узумчин in Russian, are not an indigenous ethnic group but a cross-border subgroup that migrated northward from the Mongolian Plateau between the 17th and 20th centuries. With a total population of approximately 12,000 (according to the 2021 Russian Federation census), they are primarily concentrated in three major regions of East Siberia. Their culture exhibits a distinctive blend of Russian and Mongolian influences.

In the migration history of the Ujimqin tribe in Russia, there were four waves of immigration and forced assimilation. In the 17th century, during the spread of Buddhism, religious refugees migrated to avoid persecution by the Dzungar Khanate. More than 300 Ujimqin lamas brought their followers to Buryatia and established the "Tongkazang," the northernmost existing Tibetan Buddhist temple, introducing the Mongolian version of the "Tripitaka" and contributing to the Buryat script reform. In the 19th century during the Tea Route era, the migration of trade settlers followed the signing of the Qing-Russian Treaty of Kyakhta. Ujimqin merchants established trading posts along the "Tea Route" in Kyakhta and Irkutsk, forming the "Akinskoye Community," which monopolized the tea and fur barter trade along the Russian-Mongolian border, with camel caravans reaching the peaks.

The Cyrillicization and lexical extinction of the Ujimqin tribe in Russia: In 1956, the mandatory use of Cyrillic Buryat script led to only 18% of people over 60 mastering the Ujimqin dialect. Younger generations achieved 100% Russian language proficiency, while traditional Mongolian texts are now preserved exclusively in Buddhist temples. In religious practices: Buddhist institutions like Tongkazang retain the "Ujimqin Debate Assembly," though statues now feature flat faces and sable-trimmed robes. Scriptures use a "mixed transcription" format—Tibetan titles with Cyrillic Mongolian annotations. Shamanism: Shaman robes incorporate fragments of Orthodox icons, and ritual drums depict "two-headed eagles." Worship chants blend Sanskrit and Russian prayers (e.g., "Боже мой"). Orthodox assimilation: During Soviet rule, forced baptism resulted in 92% nominal Orthodoxy, yet traditional shamanic burial rites persist. Material culture reflects pragmatic adaptation: Women's "Hamagan" robes combine Ujimqin right-side lapel design with Cossack silver buttons and Buryat blue trim. The "Torgo" headdress now uses three coral beads symbolizing the Holy Trinity.

In summary, the statistics and distribution of the global Ujimqin Mongolian population are shown in the table3.

Table 1. Statistics and distribution of the Mongolian population in Ujimqin

Distribution country	Distribution	Population (people)	Proportion of total population (%)
China (2021 statistics)	Xi-Ujimqin Banner,Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	79000	33.6%
	Dong-Ujimqin Banner, Xilingol League,Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	71000	30.2%
	Liaoning Fuxin Mongolian Autonomous County	1500	0.6%
	Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang	1200	0.53%
	Jilin Qian Gorlos Autonomous County Mongolian	700	0.34%
	Qinghai Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture	800	0.38%
	Sibe Mongolian Autonomou County, Gansu Province	600	0.25%
Mongolia(2023 statistics)	Dornod Aimag	58000	24.7%
	Ulan Bator	6500	2.8%
	Hentiy Aymag	3500	1.5%
Russia (2021 statistics)	East Siberia	12000	5.1%
amount to :		234800	100%

2. Style of Ujimqin Robe from the 13th to 19th Century

2.1. Overall Design

The Ujimqin tribe, renowned across the vast Mongolian Plateau, is celebrated for its distinctive attire—particularly the elaborate and dignified "Deler" robes. These garments feature a broad, substantial body, unique horseshoe-shaped sleeves (Turuq), intricate border trims (Wuqi), a high collar, a pronounced waistline, and characteristic vertical pleats on the back (Haotegel). These visual elements set them apart from other Mongolian tribes. This unique style emerged through a combination of factors: the tribe's geographical location in the heart of the Xilingol Grassland, its historical status as descendants of the Golden Family and the Qing imperial pasture, its economic model of premium livestock farming, and cultural exchanges over centuries.

During the 13th-14th centuries, the Mongol Empire reached unprecedented heights of power, establishing a vast Eurasian empire. Nomadic militarization was highly developed, with frequent long-distance campaigns and migrations becoming the norm. The social hierarchy was rigid, with clear distinctions between nobles (Nayans) and commoners (Kharats). Economically, they relied on robust animal husbandry while acquiring luxury goods through warfare and flourishing East-West trade along the Silk Road. Culturally, primitive shamanistic beliefs remained significant, though Tibetan Buddhism (Sakya School) began to spread among the upper class. Despite being at the end of the Medieval Warm Period, the Mongolian Plateau experienced bitterly cold winters. The Ujimqin robes of this era featured

distinct structural characteristics: a broad, majestic silhouette dominated by straight lines. Their exceptionally wide, loose "barrel-shaped" or "A-shaped" design emphasized functionality over body curves, originating from extreme cold resistance. The spacious interior accommodated multiple layers (like fur coats and undergarments), creating an insulating air layer to withstand harsh temperatures. Loose hems and sleeves facilitated dynamic movements like archery and combat, allowing unrestricted leg mobility. Functionally and culturally, these robes served as unified attire for daily life and battle. Belt styles, materials (leather, silk), and accessories (warriors displaying weapons) revealed wearer's status, wealth, and occupation. Colors held symbolic meanings: white ("Chagan") represented purity and nobility, blue ("Huho") symbolized eternal skies, while red ("Ulan") was also favored. Shamanic attire included specific decorative elements like bronze mirrors and flowing ribbons. The wide and heavy robes are a direct reflection of strength, cold resistance and nomadic lifestyle.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, the Yuan court retreated to the northern desert, historically known as the Northern Yuan. The Mongols were embroiled in prolonged conflicts with the Ming Dynasty, internal disputes among various tribal groups (such as the Tatars and Oirats), and later confrontations between Eastern and Western Mongols (Tatars and Oirats). Social unrest disrupted nomadic economies, yet East-West trade—through tribute markets and smuggling—continued, particularly the vital tea-horse trade with Central China. Tibetan Buddhism (Gelug School) rapidly spread and took root among Mongol elites, exerting growing influence. As the climate shifted into the Little Ice Age, cold intensified. Mongol tribes strengthened their identities through regional fragmentation. The Ujimqin robe of this period evolved in style and structure, maintaining its overall loose silhouette with subtle adjustments. While retaining a broad body, the shoulders became slightly more fitted compared to Yuan-era designs, and the previously exaggerated hemlines softened. This shift reflected the demands of frequent warfare for mobility and subtle influences from foreign tailoring concepts (e.g., Central Asian styles), resulting in a more dignified and robust silhouette. In terms of wearing habits and cultural significance, the robe remained central to both combat and daily life. The introduction of Tibetan Buddhism profoundly transformed aesthetics and spiritual life, making the robe a medium for expressing devotion and seeking religious protection. The aristocracy reinforced their dominance and religious alliances through lavish garments (materials and decorations). Regional variations emerged in clothing details between Eastern and Western Mongols. Color-wise, the Buddhist-recommended yellow ("Xial" or "char") rose to prominence, becoming essential for monastic and religious attire, also favored by nobles. Traditional colors—red, blue, white, and green ("Nogang," symbolizing life)—remained popular. The fragmentation of the state reinforced the tendency of each department to express their own identity through the details of clothing (such as the style of the border,

specific patterns).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Qing Dynasty unified Mongolian tribes and established the banner system (with Ujimqin divided into left and right banners), achieving relative social stability. The Gelug Sect (Yellow Hat Sect) became the state religion, deeply ingrained in society. Economically, the imperial pastures (especially Xilingol) fostered high-quality livestock development, while unprecedented prosperity emerged in trade with inland regions through Mongolian merchants. A large quantity of goods from the interior—including silk, cotton cloth, tea, metalware, and ornaments—were imported into the grasslands. Manchu culture exerted strong influence on Mongolian elites through institutional frameworks, intermarriages, and imperial rewards. The Ujimqin tribe, due to its geographical proximity to Chengde and Beijing and the quality of its pastures, maintained close ties with the Qing court. Nobles frequently paid homage and received imperial gifts. During the mid-to-late Qing period, as social wealth accumulated, the trend of luxurious attire grew increasingly prevalent.

The Ujimqin robe underwent significant transformations in both design and structure during this period, with its overall silhouette evolving into a mature "upward-tapered and downward-flared" form that embodied aristocratic refinement. This evolution established the iconic silhouette of the Ujimqin robe: shoulders remained proportionate yet not constricting, the waistline was noticeably cinched through tailored side seams, hips were slightly relaxed, and the hem extended gracefully in an A-shape. These innovations stemmed from Manchu influence, as Mongol nobility adopted the waist-tapered design of Manchu robes (particularly women's qipao), aligning with Qing dynasty aesthetics. Social demands for robes shifted markedly from peacetime requirements to emphasize status, posture, and solemnity over practicality in extreme environments. Strict etiquette governed attire, including the use of horseshoe cuffs, belt fastening, and full button closure. Distinct dress codes governed different occasions (daily life, festivals, weddings, rituals, pilgrimages) and social statuses (royal nobles, Taiji, lamas, commoners, married/unmarried women), specifying color schemes, fabrics, and decorative elements. Tibetan Buddhist influences permeated every aspect of clothing design, from color palettes to patterns and occasions. Mongolian merchants introduced exotic materials that dramatically enhanced the robes' opulence. The Ujimqin robes of this era featured vibrant colors (high saturation), intricate decorations, elaborate craftsmanship, and luxurious fabrics, creating a visual spectacle of solemnity, grandeur, and sacredness. This synthesis profoundly reflected the dual influences of Tibetan Buddhist aesthetics and Qing court luxury, while also revealing nomadic ethnic preferences for "abundance" and "fullness" in their aesthetic sensibilities. As a result, the Ujimqin robe developed into a highly sophisticated and distinctive ethnic costume system during this period, standing as a prime example of Mongolian traditional attire. More than just a garment, it served

as a multifaceted symbol of social standing, religious devotion, economic status, aesthetic sensibilities, and ethnic identity.

2.2. Collar

During the 13th-14th centuries, the low-collared 'Hollberg' style dominated as the mainstream. Its cross-shaped neckline, resembling a deep 'V' or overlapping trapezoid, featured a simple structure. Designed for easy on/off and quick ventilation when needed, it might include simple trim in noble or ceremonial settings.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, low collars remained predominant in clothing styles, particularly in everyday wear and samurai robes, though the embryonic form of the standing collar ("shagadag") began to emerge. Influenced by Tibetan Buddhist monastic attire like the high-collared "duiga" vest and Central and Western Asian garments, a new collar style—the standing collar, also known as the "small vertical collar" —started appearing among the upper class, including nobles, senior monks, and important ceremonial occasions. Early standing collars were likely low and structurally simple, yet they laid the groundwork for the later development of the tall standing collar. Border decorations became more prevalent during this period.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, high-collar designs (known as "Shagadag") became the dominant and symbolic style, while low-collared styles nearly disappeared. The tall, crisp stand-up collar became a standard feature of men's and women's robes. These collars could reach over an inch in height, often reinforced with multiple layers of stiff padding (cloth or paper) and adorned with luxurious brocade. They featured wide decorative borders such as kujin brocade, gold and silver threads, fur, and sometimes coral or turquoise. The emergence of high-collar designs stemmed from evolving functional and cultural needs: ① Excellent windproof and insulating properties to protect necks from cold winds; ② A posture that conveyed dignity, solemnity, and nobility. ③ The ideal position to showcase precious materials and exquisite embroidery techniques; ④ Influenced by both Qing Dynasty court high-collar attire and Tibetan-style clothing.

2.3. Sleeve

During the 13th-14th centuries, long straight sleeves (known as "horn sleeves") dominated the fashion scene. These sleeves featured moderate to slightly wide cuffs, prioritizing warmth and mobility over other considerations. Horse-hoof sleeves had not yet emerged. While some cuffs incorporated basic tightening features like drawstrings or fur trim for wind resistance and insulation, these were not yet standardized.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, long straight sleeves remained dominant, while the prototype of the horseshoe sleeve ("Tu Ru Ge") began to emerge. A revolutionary innovation appeared during this period: to better protect the back of

the hand and wrists in harsh cold—especially when riding and holding reins—while also facilitating archery and handling, the cuffs started featuring outward-flipped fur trim and a foldable sleeve cap design that covered the hand. This is considered the earliest prototype of the later institutionalized and ornamental Qing Dynasty horseshoe sleeve. Its development was closely tied to the intensified cold of the Little Ice Age and the sustained importance of equestrian and archery activities.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the straight sleeve design evolved into the distinctive horseshoe-shaped cuff with a rounded, outward-curving seam. This innovation solidified the horseshoe cuff's status as a defining feature of Mongolian robes, particularly men's and formal women's garments. The cuff's decorative elements—embellished with luxurious fur or brocade trim—became emblematic of Mongolian ceremonial attire. Functionally, the cuff served three purposes: ① providing thermal insulation for hands during horseback riding, archery, or outdoor activities; ② requiring removal during formal ceremonies to show respect to elders, officials, or living Buddhas; ③ folding over the upper arm for practical use in daily work. Originating from the Manchu "arrow sleeve" tradition, the horseshoe cuff epitomized Qing Dynasty's cultural synthesis between Manchu and Mongolian influences. Adapted by Mongolian artisans, it incorporated nomadic cultural symbolism and decorative aesthetics, with its size and material serving as status markers.

2.4. Slits

The 13th-14th century Mongolian robes (known as "Wuqimag") featured distinctive high side slits that extended from the waist down to the armpits. These vertical cuts served three key purposes: ① Riding essentials: The wide slits allowed complete separation of the robe's front and back panels, shielding the saddle from fabric buildup and enabling smooth mounting and prolonged riding. ② Mobility: The open design freed legs from the fabric's constraints during movement. ③ Temperature control: In hot weather, the front panel could be lifted and tucked into the waistband for ventilation and cooling.

From the 15th to 17th century, the high slit tradition remained intact. As the core functional structure of the Mongolian robe, the high slit was firmly preserved during this period, reflecting the rigid demands of nomadic lifestyle.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the tradition of high slit continued, and the craftsmanship became more exquisite. The edging of the slit edge ("wqi") became unusually wide, gorgeous, and layered, becoming one of the key decorative areas. The height of the slit was often higher in men's robes than in women's robes.

2.5. Collar and fastening

During the 13th-14th centuries, the right-side lapel design ("fei ru ge") became a standard feature in garment construction. This traditional technique involved

overlapping the right lapel over the left, aligning with the nomadic customs of northern grasslands and sharing cultural roots with the Han Chinese's right-side lapel tradition. The primary fastening method relied on long cloth belts ("busi"), which served as the functional backbone of Mongolian robes. These belts not only secured the expansive robe fabric and shaped the waistline to prevent draft penetration, but also combined practical utility, decorative value, and social status symbolism. Button designs during this period predominantly featured cloth disk fasteners, initially appearing in aristocratic attire but remaining a secondary fastening method.

From the 15th to 17th centuries, advancements in garment design and fastening systems saw the right-side lapel retain its stability, with belts becoming central to waistwear and buttons multiplying. While the right-side lapel design and belt's core role remained unchanged, notable transformations emerged: metal or precious material buttons proliferated on noble and affluent garments, typically positioned at the neckline, right shoulder, and armpits. Fabric clasps also became more sophisticated. These buttons combined practical functionality with decorative and hierarchical significance. Fastening methods evolved to integrate belts and buttons as primary securing mechanisms.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, advancements in vest design and fastening techniques solidified the right-side lapel tradition while refining fastening methods. Exquisite metal or precious material buttons ("taoshu") and loops ("haigimu") adorned the right shoulder, armpit, and waist area, with popular choices including gilded bronze engraved silver, cloisonné enamel, coral, and agate buttons. The first button at the neckline ("eruge-wen-taoshu") typically stood out as the most elaborate. While waistbands ("bus") remained essential, their craftsmanship reached new heights through premium materials like silk, brocade, and gem-embellished leather, alongside innovative weaving techniques such as the "three-layered water" style wide brocade. Fastening knots became more sophisticated as well. Influenced by Manchu culture, some women's vests ("wujie") or informal robes featured a distinctive "pipa jin" (literally "pipa-style lapel") design—a short lapel with an arched transition from the right chest to the armpit. However, this style remained secondary to Mongolian-style robes.

2.6. Waist Treatment Method

During the 13th-14th centuries, the waistline naturally relaxed without deliberate cinching, while the wide straight-front robe was externally tightened by a belt. When fastened, the belt created natural pleats above the waist known as "dui zhe" (pile pleats), with the hem below the waistline naturally flaring out. There is no clear evidence of regular pleating on the back ("haote gele"). The design emphasized an external wrapping effect achieved through belt tightening rather than curving the waist through tailoring.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, waist shaping primarily followed natural binding techniques, with the initial emergence of waist-tightening awareness. The waistline still relied mainly on external belts to define its contour. Notably, some noble portraits or finely crafted robes showed subtle signs of side seam retraction. Through tailoring, the accumulated pleats from belt binding became more organized, though the systematic back pleating ("hotgul") had not yet developed. These pleated folds may have been intentionally arranged.

During the 18th-19th centuries, the waist treatment achieved perfect integration of tailored waist cinching and the distinctive "Haotegle" pleats. The side seams were gathered inward to create a fitted waistline, while the regular "Haotegle" pleats on the back became the defining feature of Ujimqin robes. This core craftsmanship not only managed excess fabric, shaped elegant lines, and highlighted social status, but also determined garment hierarchy through the degree of waist cinching, the number of pleats, and their neatness. The "Haotegle" pleats typically featured 3-5 or more vertical pleats centered at the back waist, extending from the waist to the hips or hem. Their functions included: ① enhancing three-dimensional aesthetics and dynamic lines; ② cleverly accommodating excess fabric after belt tightening for a flatter, more elegant back; ③ symbolizing artisanal excellence and the wearer's noble status, while commoner robes had fewer or no pleats.

2.7. Fabric

During the 13th-14th centuries, textiles predominantly utilized locally sourced natural materials, characterized by substantial weight and practicality. Early garments were primarily crafted from fur and felt, with straight-cutting techniques being both material-efficient and relatively simple. Winter garments typically featured tanned sheepskin, wool felt ("isgler"), and heavy woolen fabrics ("nye"). Summer wear often consisted of thinner woolen or cotton fabrics. Silk ("zadala") served as an extremely precious luxury item, exclusively used by nobility, Great Khans, and imperial consorts, primarily obtained through military conquests or East-West trade.

During the 15th to 17th centuries, textile materials became more diverse and decorative. While leather, wool, and felt remained fundamental, trade routes enabled more stable access to cotton and silk compared to the Yuan Dynasty period. Brocade traditions—particularly the Naxishui brocade with Central Asian and Persian influences—continued to evolve, while jacquard satin gained popularity among the nobility. Wool textile techniques also became more sophisticated.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, silk fabrics—particularly jacquard satin, brocade, Zhang velvet, Yun brocade, and Song brocade—became the preferred choice for nobles and affluent nomadic communities. These luxurious textiles featured vibrant colors such as scarlet, azure, golden yellow, maroon, and deep green. Premium woolen fabrics like imported or domestic "Duo Luo Ni" (a type of

woolen fabric) were widely used, alongside fine cotton textiles. While fur coats remained essential, silk robes emerged as the fashionable outerwear. The extensive use of soft, flowing silk fabrics enhanced the garment's silhouette, creating an elegant waistline and graceful, flowing silhouette.

2.8. Process and Decoration

During the 13th-14th centuries, craftsmanship in this period predominantly featured straight-cutting techniques and large-scale panels, resulting in a relatively rough aesthetic. Decorative elements were concentrated in collars, cuffs, lapels, and hemlines, primarily using "wqi" (embroidered borders) crafted from fur or multicolored fabrics to create color bands. The decorative patterns remained relatively simple, commonly including geometric motifs (early forms of cloud patterns, meander patterns, and disc-shaped patterns) and simplified natural designs (rolled grass and floral motifs). Embroidery ("tulaga") began to appear in aristocratic garments, though its scale and technical sophistication were limited, likely influenced by Han Chinese and Persian traditions. Metal decorations such as buttons and badges were scarce and basic in design.

From the 15th to 17th centuries, Tibetan craftsmanship and decorative arts underwent significant evolution. Tailoring techniques became more refined, with the development of intricate "Wuqi" borders (embroidered trims) marked by increased width, multiple layers, and diverse materials including luxurious furs, brocade borders, and gold/silver thread ribbons. These borders emerged as a prominent symbol of social status and wealth. Embroidery ("Tulaga") experienced remarkable growth, expanding in scale and sophistication through techniques like flat embroidery, chain stitch, and appliqué, while achieving richer color palettes. Tibetan Buddhist influences deeply permeated the craft, with Buddhist symbols becoming central decorative motifs such as the Eight Treasures (wheel, spiral, umbrella, lotus, vase, fish, and snake), vajras, auspicious knots, lotus blossoms, Sanskrit seed syllables, and Buddha niche patterns. Floral scrolls and cloud motifs were frequently combined with Buddhist elements. Metal decorations like gilded copper buttons, silver studs, and "He Wuga Y-shaped ornaments" gained popularity, particularly when integrated with Tibetan architectural styles. This synthesis resulted in an overall decorative style characterized by intricate complexity, opulence, mysticism, and profound religious symbolism.

During the 18th-19th centuries, textile craftsmanship and decorative arts witnessed remarkable advancements. Innovations in cutting techniques, particularly the mastery of curved cutting and pleating methods, significantly enhanced garment fit while elevating decorative arts to unprecedented complexity, refinement, and luxury. The intricate "Wuqi" (embroidery) technique reached its zenith, featuring multi-layered borders—sometimes up to dozens of layers—along collars, cuffs, slits, lapels, and hemlines, with total widths exceeding one chi (approximately 33 cm).

Materials ranged from colorful brocades and gold-embroidered satin to velvet, luxurious furs, and gold/silver thread braids ("taohai"), creating striking color contrasts and material textures through iconic combinations like "three-layered water" and "five-edged borders." The embroidery technique "Tulaga" became widely adopted, showcasing diverse motifs: Buddhist symbols (Eight Treasures, Buddha niches, sutras, auspicious patterns), traditional designs (panzhang, cloud motifs, scrolling grass, horn patterns), floral motifs (peony, plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum), animal figures (dragon-phoenix, lions, deer, butterflies), and auspicious characters ("Fu, Lu, Shou, Xi"). While plain embroidery remained dominant, techniques like gold-thread embroidery, seed embroidery, appliqué, and layered silk embroidery also flourished. The vibrant colors, rich compositions, and pervasive use of gold threads created opulent displays. Embroidery covered large areas, often featuring thematic decorations on the front and back center, shoulders, and sleeves. Metal and gemstone embellishments were also prevalent, including large engraved silver or gilded copper buttons, ring-shaped "He Wuga" (for pouches), "pao ding" (studded nails), silver chains, and "habutege" (needle cases or amulet boxes). The most prominent is the "coral array", which is sewn with rows of red coral beads ("Su Lu Ding") on the collar, collar, chest, back, hem and hat, interspersed with turquoise ("Song De"), lapis lazuli, pearls and so on, forming a strong visual impact, which is the ultimate symbol of wealth and status.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive comparative analysis of the styles and structures of Ujimqin Mongolian robes in the 13th-14th, 15th-17th, and 18-19th centuries is presented in the table2.

Table 2. Comprehensive Comparative Analysis of Ujimqin Mongolian Robe Styles and Structures

Characteristic Period	Overall silhouette	Neckline	Sleeve	slit	Neckline and fastening	Waist treatment	Fabric and decor style	Core drivers
13th - 14th centuries	Extremely wide and straight/A-shaped (for cold resistance, archery, and craftsmanship)	Low collar (practical)	Straight sleeve (no herringbone sleeve)	High slit (riding core)	Right lapel + belt (few buttons)	No waistband, natural pleats (no regular pleats)	A heavy natural material (leather, felt, and fur) with simple borders and a rustic pattern, featuring early embroidery.	Survival needs (cold, archery), primitive crafts, military nomadism
15th - 17th centuries	Wider and more refined, with slightly narrower shoulders (maintaining the foundation while accommodating mobility)	The collar's mainstream, the collar's budding (Religious/Central Asian influence)	Straight sleeves as the main style, with horseshoe sleeves emerging as a prototype? (Born of the cold)	Open Stabilizer	Right lapel + belt + buttons (noble)	Natural tie, waistline shaping? (Pleats may be adjusted)	Materials became more abundant (silk brocade), borders evolved (wide/layered), embroidery flourished, and Buddhist motifs became dominant	Fragmentation and turmoil, deepening Tibetan Buddhism, limited trade, and the Little Ice Age's severe cold

	needs)							
18th - 19th centuries	Upward and downward (A-shaped), elegant fit (cutting leap)	High collar (Manchu/Tibetan influence)	The popularity of the riding-hoof sleeve (influenced by Manchu dress, serving both functional and ceremonial purposes)	Open 袂 + Fancy Trim	Right-side lapel + waist belt + formal button fastening (institutionalized)	Tailored waistband with regular pleats on the back ("Haotegel") (Artisanal Excellence)	Luxurious silk with exquisite embroidery (multi-layered/wide), adorned with dense and luxurious embroidery, and coral and gemstone decorations are in vogue.	The Qing Dynasty witnessed the stability of the banners and the Manchu cultural influence, the prosperity of the Yellow Sect, the flourishing of Mongolian merchants, and the accumulation of wealth.

References

- [1] Li Lisha, Changes in the Overlapping Relationship of the Front Collar of Mongolian Robes and Their Significance [J]. Inner Mongolia Social Sciences (Chinese Edition), 2007
- [2] Hong Yufan, Changes in Mongolian Costume [J]. Ethnic Culture, 2018, (4)
- [3] Ao Qi, Characteristics of Mongolian Women's Clothing [J]. Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2002, (8)
- [4] Xu Ying. China Northern Nomadic Ethnic Group's Plastic Art [M]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia University Press, 2006
- [5] Ce Songgen, Art of Mongolian Women's Sewing [M], Chifeng: Inner Mongolia Science and Technology Press, 2020