Cultural Rituals for Young Children in Mongolia

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Abstract

Aim. The purpose of this work is to explore and thematically present the cultural rituals for newborns and young children and interpret the meaning of the ritual related to the Mongolian traditional way of life. In this article, we explore the origin, characteristics, development, symbols, and contributions of Mongolians to various rituals, such as blessing, bathing and naming newborns, first hair cutting ceremony, cutting fox shape with sheep wool felt, new dress blessing for young children, making trick to brown rabbit.

Methods. The work is presented based on observations in daily life, secondary research documents, empirical materials, analysis of scientific research papers, and the use of the comparative method in the Mongolian cultural context. All of the rituals for young children presented in this paper are not only historical rituals but also commonly implemented in daily life, specifically in rural Mongolia.

Results. These findings provide evidence of the continuity and importance of Mongolian rituals for newborn babies and young children, underscoring the enduring uniqueness of traditional Mongolian beliefs and practices for protecting, curing, and blessing. Despite the challenges of globalisation, Mongolian traditional rituals remain a valuable cultural expression, preserving their distinctiveness across generations.

Conclusion. The rituals reflect the deeply spiritual and symbolic relationship that Mongolians have with the natural and supernatural world, as well as their commitment to protecting the emotional and physical well-being of their young children through cultural rituals.

Keywords: ritual, newborn baby, protecting, blessing, remedy, ceremony

Introduction

Every nation or ethnic group has various ceremonial practices to symbolise blessings, respect, and mourning during significant events that mark both joy and sorrow in the lives of its people and families. Since ancient times, humans have created customs, rituals, and magical practices to protect young children from accidents, injuries, and misfortunes, accumulating a wealth of experience in their application during specific moments of daily life. As a general rule, "In family rituals or civil celebrations, oral literature — such as blessing words and songs — plays a significant role, clarifying the purpose of these rituals while expressing the morals, ideals, and aesthetic values of the nation" (Alimaa et al., 2022, p.424). Among these, customs, rituals, and magical practices related to children hold particular prominence. In Mongolian culture, prior studies have treated these rituals as supplementary topics. However, there has yet to be a large-scale scientific study that comprehensively examines rituals specifically related to children and explores their unique characteristics. This gap in research is what prompted the selection of this study. Rituals concerning children present a fascinating research topic, as they preserve an ancient form of verbal art that holds a significant place in Mongolian culture.

According to Charles M Super and Sara Harkness (1996), every parent has an understanding of children's nature, developmental structure, and the meaning of their behavious, which is shared among members of their cultural group or subgroup. These understandings are shaped by the cultural context in which parents live and are interconnected with their views on other aspects of life, such as parenthood, family, and an individual's place within society. Additionally, parents' own childhood experiences may influence their approach to raising their children. Super and Harkness (1996) referred to these interconnected beliefs, organised into broader categories, as parents' cultural belief systems or parental ethnotheories.

Parents' cultural belief systems have been studied from an interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating human development and social anthropology. In research on human development, Lev S. Vygotsky's (1978) intellectual framework is often used to con-

nect individual development with cultural meaning systems. When examining parental belief systems, the *developmental niche*—a theoretical framework developed by Super and Harkness (1986) and further explored by Harkness & Super (1992; 1994)—is commonly applied. This framework is particularly valuable for understanding the relationships among parental belief systems, child-rearing practices, and the physical and social environments in which children live. Irving E. Sigel, Ann V. McGillicuddyDeLisi, & Jacqueline J. Goodnow, (1992) proposed four key reasons for considering parents' beliefs:

- "Parents' ideas represent an intriguing form of adult cognition and development.
- Parents' ideas help explain their actions.
- Parents' ideas are a critical aspect of the *context* in child development.

Studying the beliefs of two generations offers insights into cultural transmission and change" (p. 5).

Historically, Mongolians have lived as nomadic tribes, with traditions passed down within families, emphasising respect for nature, reverence for elders, and a deep connection with animals (Michelet, 2015). For example, by the time children start walking (around 1 or 2 years old), parents teach them to carry dried cattle dung into the *ger* (uyrt) to make a fire. By ages 2-3, children begin to care for lambs and young goats, and by ages 4-5, they learn to gather dried dung for fire and prepare horse milk (Jargal et al., 2024). Until recently, horseback riding was an essential life skill in Mongolia, and even young children would naturally learn to ride. Traditionally, Mongol herders moved seasonally, with designated locations for each family or tribe in the fall, spring, winter, and summer.

Research Method

Customs, rituals, and superstitions related to children represent a unique form of culture and oral literature. Therefore, it is crucial to gather primary sources, scholarly articles, and relevant documents to better understand their characteristics. This study was conducted from a time-series perspective, employing observational methods, comparison, and interpretivist approach. Review was conducted on the series original materials for Mongolian ethnographic field research includes books, works published by previous researchers, and oral sources. This study contributed to the knowledge of cultural education by its integration of various aspects of child-related rituals, such as their characteristics, origins, symbols, and development, into a cohesive framework.

Newborn Baby Gender Blessing, Bathing Ritual

The ceremony of washing and naming a newborn is one of the most respected rituals within the family and household circle, and it has been celebrated by Mongolians since

ancient times. The birth of a child (whether a girl or a boy) who will continue the family lineage has long been highly valued, as expressed in the saying, "If a person is born, food will increase". Various rituals are performed to honour this event.

Mongolians often inquire about the gender of a newborn in elegant, poetic ways. For example:

"Are you a deer hunter?"
"A sable dresser?"

The use of the word "give" in the blessing reflects the hunting era. During this time, men in the family were hunters, while women cared for the children, prepared food, and crafted clothing from animal skins. A shift in social roles is also reflected in poetic phrases such as:

"A horse keeper?"
"A milkmaid?"

These blessing words, which inquire about the roles of male and female figures, acknowledge the gifts they bring. This blessing may have originated later, connected to the division of labour within the family (Dolgorsuren, 2000). The figurative language in these blessings carries dual educational value, as it emphasises the importance of work.

The ritual of washing newborns has been an integral part of Mongolian culture since ancient times, tracing back to the era of shamanism. This practice evolved with the introduction of Buddhism in the 16th century and has been maintained for centuries, as documented in historical sources. It has been significantly influenced and integrated with Buddhist rituals (Munkhnasan, 2021).

Throughout history, this ritual has played a crucial role in ensuring the physical and mental well-being of children. During the Mongol Empire, it was noted by various travellers and historians, who highlighted its importance within Mongolian society. The continued practice of the baby-washing ritual, despite the influences of modernity and globalisation, reflects the enduring nature of Mongolian customs (Munkhnasan, 2021).

In Southern Mongolia, it is customary to hold a *khuusun tsai* festival on the third day (sometimes the fifth or seventh day) after the birth of a child. During this event, invited elders perform the sprinkle ritual. This involves applying *orem* (a special substance from milk) to the child's forehead, symbolising good fortune and the blessing of the god of luck, believed to reside in the head. In some regions, this festival is referred to as *khuusun myalaalga*. Typically, *myalaalga* is to sprinkle ritual is performed using the right hand's annular finger, which is considered the most sacred finger among the five. This finger is linked to the god of annular, and it is used in rituals such as offering a sample of alcohol to the gods. It is also believed to be the finger most revered for performing the sprinkle ritual.

For male children, the navel is tied with a black thread, symbolising the child's development into a healthy, strong man (Battogtoh, 2018). According to literature

on the subject, the exact origin of circumcision in this context traces back to an ancient Tasmanian ritual, thought to have been performed during the winter of the year Genghis Khan was born. This ceremony involved creating a warm *mantsui* (swaddling with sheep skin) and wrapping the navel with a goatskin *tasam* (leather string). It was traditionally held on the 3rd of the 10th lunar month and is known as the "wedding of the *tasam*", during which the goat's hair was cut into strips to tie the baby's navel or cradle with a string known as "Tasaman Khun" (Dulam, 2022). The wedding of day *tasam* falls on December 23 each year, and studies state that this custom is still practiced in Inner Mongolia today. The ritual is deeply symbolic, representing a form of elder wisdom passed down through generations.

In Tuv Khalkh tradition, a child is washed three days after birth, although in older customs, this ceremony occurred around the time when the umbilical cord fell off, typically around 6-7 days after birth. The baby washing ceremony is considered the first respectful ritual to honour and welcome the newborn into the family, marking the arrival of a precious human being who is born into this world in human form. It is a way of introducing the child to human values and customs (Battogtoh, 2018). This ceremony is held within the family circle, and the mother-referred to as the mother who helped the childbirth is also honoured during this time.

After the child grows, the mother who helped the childbirth is visited again during the Mongolian New Year. This mother leads the washing ceremony by providing the child with a three-belted *mantsui* and giving him or her a name. The *mantsui* serves as a symbol of the child's growth, safety, and protection, and it is believed to ensure the child grows up without accidents. It is considered important not to let the mother's belt touch the ground, as doing so would break the symbolic connection of safety and respect (Otgon, 2014).

To protect the child's life, a deer's tusk or a fish's mouth is often nailed to the cradle of a male child as a symbol of longevity. The child is bathed in black tea sourced from the springs near their birthplace, followed by a bath in a broth made from boiled sheep's marrow. A yellow paste is then applied to the child's forehead to symbolise good conduct, while white is applied to the shoulders as a symbol of purity. An elder or respected individual chooses the right and left ears of the child and whispers the child's name into him or her. This act is tied to the symbolic significance of direction in Mongolian family customs: the right side is associated with baby boy, and the left side with baby girl (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

In the Oirat tradition, the Mongols view the period up to three days after the birth of a child as a transitional phase, a time "between two worlds," when the child has not yet truly entered the world (Sharayeva, 2011). On the third day after birth, the ritual of formally "birthing" the child is performed. This three-day period and its symbolic "three zones"-representing the past, present, and future; the three continents-upper, middle, and lower; and the infinite vast universe-reflect a deep-seated Mongolian belief in the power of the number three. It also symbolises the wish for peace and happiness for the parents, mothers, and children (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

Washing the newborn with spring water from a land where the umbilical cord has fallen is deeply rooted in the nomadic culture of the Mongols. The act expresses a connection to nature and the land, symbolising the unity between the child and the world they are born into. This act of washing is echoed in the saying, "My water washed by the mother land", which reflects the Mongols' reverence for the natural world and their belief in the profound bond between the land and life.

The act of washing the child is imbued with deep symbolic meaning. Water, a sacred element, is used to purify both the physical and spiritual body. Washing a newborn in consecrated water is believed to cleanse the child from negative influences and protect them from evil forces (Erdenechuluun, 2025). The ritual also marks the beginning of the child's life journey, ensuring that the child is placed under the care and blessings of their ancestors and gods. Dressing the child in new clothes after the bath symbolises renewal, a fresh start, and the hope for a prosperous life ahead (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

According to ancient Mongolian tradition, a baby is bathed in water blessed by a Buddhist monk or shaman 6-7 days after birth (Sampildendev et al., 2006). This ritual involves using water that has been blessed by a religious figure, with various herbs and milk added to symbolise purity and fertility. Another common practice is bathing the baby in a salted broth made with rice and juniper. The salt is used for cleansing the body, while juniper, like rice, symbolises fertility and purification (Boykova, 2021).

The ceremony is typically held within the family and household, without formal invitations to guests. However, traditionally, the mother of the child is invited to the bath and is regarded as the most honoured guest (Erdenechuluun, 2025). In modern times, the child's bath is often performed by respected family members such as the father, mother, or close relatives. During the washing, blessings are recited to symbolise health and well-being for the child. After the bath, the child is dressed in new, clean clothes, marking the start of a new chapter and offering protection from evil.

The ritual of washing carries profound symbolic meaning. Water is considered a sacred element that purifies both the physical and spiritual aspects of life. Bathing the newborn in consecrated water is believed to remove negative influences and protect the child from evil forces (Erdenechuluun, 2025). This ceremony also marks the beginning of the child's life journey, symbolising protection, guidance toward goodness, and placing the child under the care of ancestors and gods (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

The ritual of washing children is practiced across Mongolia with shared symbolism, although regional and ethnic variations exist. In some areas, sacred springs are used for the ritual, with the water believed to possess healing properties. In other regions, water from the nearest river or well is used (Boykova, 2021). In Western Mongolia, influenced by Kazakh culture, goat's milk is added to the washing water, enhancing the ritual's significance. In northern regions, where shamanic practices are more prevalent, additional steps such as fumigating the child with juniper smoke are performed to purify the child's aura (Zakirova, 2017).

Ritual of Naming a Newborn Child

The practice of naming a newborn in Mongolia is a highly significant event, one that reflects the family's beliefs about strength, longevity, and prosperity. The choice of a name is carefully considered, taking into account the child's year, month, planet, and time of birth. Traditionally, the child's father would select the name with the conviction that it would ensure the child's lineage flourishes. The belief is that the name carries energy-positive or negative-so great care is taken to avoid naming a child after famous individuals. Mongolian naming practices have evolved over centuries, becoming an integral aspect of cultural identity. Historical texts and ethnographic research highlight the importance of naming in Mongolian society (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024). The arrival of Buddhism in the 16th century significantly influenced this practice, with Buddhist monks playing a crucial role and blending religious and cultural traditions (Erdenechuluun, 2025).

The naming ceremony usually takes place within the first week after birth and involves close family members, the person who helped the childbirth, and a Buddhist monk or shaman (Munkhnasan, 2021). The event typically begins with the selection of an auspicious day based on the horoscope, reflecting the deep connection between symbols and daily life in Mongolian culture. The naming is often a collective decision, with the adoptive and birth mothers, fathers, grandparents, and appointed monks contributing to the final choice (Erdenechuluun, 2025).

When parents are ready to choose a name for their child, they often hold a stick and ask one of the respected individuals present to "give the child a happy name". This name should symbolise a prosperous and joyful life. Alternatively, the parents may select two or three names in advance, place them in a pot of rice, and sift the rice to reveal the first name that appears. The ritual of placing the names in the rice symbolises the growth of the child's reputation.

Once the name is chosen, it is whispered three times in the right ear if the child is a boy, or in the left ear if the child is a girl. This practice follows the ancient Mongolian belief that the right side is associated with men, while the left side is assigned to women (Boykova, 2021). Whispering the name into the child's ear is also intended to protect them from evil spirits.

After this, the chosen name is announced aloud to the family and community, and everyone offers their well wishes, officially welcoming the child into the family. This communal participation signifies the collective responsibility for the child's upbringing. The ritual is believed to shield the child from malevolent forces and ensure a prosperous future (Munkhnasan, 2021).

Historically, during the Mongol Empire, it was common for children to be named after heroic figures such as Genghis Khan, reflecting the societal reverence for historical leaders (Munkhnasan, 2021). With the spread of Buddhism, however, the naming tradition shifted, and many children were given Tibetan names, names of gods, or names corresponding to the planets they were born under (Erdenechuluun, 2025).

In ancient times, when a child had died, the new child might be given names like *Khunbish, Terbish*, or *Adilbish*, or even be called names such as dog or rambler (*badarchin*), as a way to defy death or to protect the child from harmful spirits (Vyatkina, 1960). This practice stemmed from religious beliefs that the hidden gods could harm the newborn, and such names were thought to deceive them (Sampildendev, 1985). Additionally, it was considered disrespectful to give a child the same name as a parent or grandparent, as it was believed to bring bad luck or dishonour to the child (Erdenechuluun, 2025).

The basic structure and symbolism of naming ceremonies in Mongolia are similar across regions, but there are distinct variations based on local customs, cultural influences, and spiritual beliefs. In some areas, where shamanic traditions are more deeply rooted, the naming ceremony involves elaborate rituals performed by shamans. These rituals often include chanting, offerings, and prayers to invoke spiritual protection and blessings for the child. In contrast, regions influenced by Buddhism typically have lamas leading the naming ceremony, with Buddhist prayers and blessings integrated into the proceedings (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

The timing of the naming ceremony also varies across Mongolia. Some communities hold the naming ritual immediately after the birth, while others wait for an auspicious day according to the lunar calendar to ensure good fortune for the child (Munkhnasan, 2021).

First Haircutting Ceremony

The first haircut (*daahi urgeeh*), is a significant and deeply symbolic ritual in Mongolian culture, typically performed on children between the ages of 2 and 5 (Boykova, 2021). This ritual dates back to ancient nomadic traditions and has its roots in shamanistic practices. The core belief behind the hair cutting ceremony is that shaving the child's hair cleanses them of negative influences and prepares them for a prosperous and positive future (Javzandulam et al., 2024). The act of cutting the hair is seen as a way to release the child from evil forces, ensuring a healthy and successful life ahead.

In the time of the Mongol Empire, the hair cutting ceremony became an important public event, gaining political and social significance. It was used by powerful figures like Genghis Khan to promote unity and loyalty among the diverse tribes of the empire. Large-scale ceremonies, where many tribes and families participated, helped strengthen social bonds and foster a sense of collective identity (Munkhnasan, 2021). This aspect of the ceremony evolved further with the introduction of Buddhism in the 16th century. Monks played an important role in the ritual, incorporating religious practices, sacred texts, and blessed objects such as amulets and sacred threads, which were believed to protect the child from harm and guide them toward good fortune (Boykova, 2021; Erdenechuluun, 2025).

In modern times, although the hair cutting ceremony has retained its core elements, it has adapted to contemporary lifestyles. The traditional selection of auspicious days

and times, based on astrology and local customs, often does not align with the busy schedules of urban life, especially in cities like Ulaanbaatar. As a result, many families now hold the ceremony on weekends or at times that suit their personal schedules. Furthermore, while traditional songs and blessings are still part of the ceremony, modern elements such as professional photographers, food receptions, and contemporary venues have become common (Munkhnasan, 2021). The fact that the hair cutting ceremony is maintained in both urban and rural settings underscore its importance to the cultural fabric of Mongolian society. It continues to serve as a powerful rite of passage, reinforcing the deep connection between the individual, the community, and the spiritual world.

In Mongolia, the hair cutting ceremony is a significant event that marks a child's growth and entry into a new phase of life. The ritual is conducted at different ages depending on the child's gender: for girls, it typically occurs at even ages, and for boys, at odd ages. This distinction reflects cultural beliefs and practices linked to gender and age (Boykova, 2021). The ceremony is usually held in the child's home or a specially designated location and is celebrated among close family members and friends. It begins with a Buddhist monk reciting sacred scriptures, an act that imbues the ceremony with spiritual significance. The child is dressed in brightly colored traditional Mongolian clothing, symbolising both joy and cultural pride. During the ceremony, milk is passed around and shared, symbolising purity and a connection to life and nourishment (Boykova, 2021).

The central act of the ceremony involves cutting the child's hair. This is typically done in stages, beginning with the parents, followed by the grandparents, and then extended family members or friends. The person who first cuts the child's hair is believed to influence the child's future. Ideally, the person cutting the hair should be someone who is successful and has led a prosperous life, as it is believed that the child will follow a similar path in the future (Munkhnasan, 2021). The act of cutting the hair symbolises the removal of any misfortune and marks the child's journey into a brighter future.

In different Mongolian ethnic groups, variations exist in the specifics of the hair cutting ceremony. Among the *Khalkh, Dorvöd, Bayad, Myangad* and *Khotgoid* people, the most respected family member typically begins the hair-cutting process, whereas in *Buryat* ethnic culture, it is the person who helped with the birth of the child who performs this honoured role (Erdenechuluun, 2025). Among the *Myangad* people, regardless of age or gender, it is the eldest member of the family who initiates the cutting of the child's hair (Javzandulam et al., 2024).

Gifts are an essential part of the ceremony, and they symbolise good fortune and future prosperity. These gifts often include money, books, or livestock according to the tradition and highly symbolic gift, representing the child's future potential and connection to the mother land (Munkhnasan, 2021). By giving these gifts, family and friends contribute to the child's future well-being, reinforcing the communal nature of the celebration.

The hair cutting ceremony, in its many variations, continues to serve as a powerful cultural tradition that connects the Mongolian people with their heritage, family,

and spiritual beliefs. It not only marks an important milestone in a child's life but also serves as a way to bless and guide the child toward a prosperous and successful future. In the hair cutting, an additional significant practice involves the treatment of the child's cut hair, specifically the ear. The ear, after being cut during the ceremony, is treated with great reverence due to its symbolic and spiritual significance. It is either kept as a sacred keepsake or offered for sacrifice, depending on local customs and traditions (Javzandulam et al., 2024).

The ear is not discarded because it is considered to carry the essence of the child's early life and spiritual health. In many Mongolian traditions, the ear is viewed as a powerful symbol of the child's well-being and connection to their spirit. If the child later falls ill or experiences developmental issues, the ear may be consumed by the family as part of a ritualistic practice aimed at removing evil spirits and curing the illness. This act is believed to purify the child and restore their health by eliminating negative influences (Fernández Giménez et al., 2024).

Sprinkle Ritual for Child's New Dress Blessing

One of the most common customs among Mongolians is to make a new *deel* (traditional Mongolian costume) for a child. After putting the new *deel* on the child, the mother ties a belt around the child's waist and pulls it up by the hem.

Table 1.
Sprinkle Ritual Among Ethnic Groups of Mongolia

In Inner Mongolia	Ordos	Kalmykia
On your front porch The foal's hooves are trampled, On your northern skirt Sheep and lambs, let the fat and oil stick to your inner skirts, Don't touch the dust, Touch the oil, Put the good of the world on your shoulders, The good of the sciences on your chest, Carry the number, Wear a silk robe, The *deel* (traditional Mongolian costume) is fragile, the owner of the deel be eternal Better yet, go forth!	Nephew, may the owner of the deel be blessed! Do not touch the dust , do touch the oil, do not touch the speed, do not touch the finger, do not touch the throat button, do not touch the finger with a drill! do not touch the lapel button, do not touch the fat! do not touch the armpit button, do not touch the milk and butter! Do not touch the button of the score, do not touch the raisin candy! The owner who wore it will be eternal May it be abundant!	Wear a dress once The clothes you are wearing May you be blessed with wealth, may you enjoy life, and may the owner live forever, and may you enjoy many beautiful things! May you wear clothes, become the owner of generousity, and be blessed with long life and prosperity!

Source. (Javzandulam, et al., 2021; Lovor, 2007; Khabunova, 2005).

The sprinkle ritual ceremony, associated with Mongolian children's traditional clothing, plays a significant role in shaping cultural expressions related to wealth, longevity, and prosperity. The words spoken during the sprinkle ritual ceremony are symbolic, as they wish the child a future filled with fortune, long life, and abundance. This blessing is linked to animals that have specific cultural significance, such as horses and sheep, which are viewed as "warm-horned animals" in Mongolian tradition (Battogtoh, 2018). These animals hold an important place in Mongolian life, with horses representing strength, loyalty, and a connection to the Mongolian nomadic way of life, while sheep are seen as a symbol of wealth and sustenance.

The sprinkle ritual ceremony's words often include references to foals and white sheep, promising them to the child as symbols of prosperity and well-being. Sheep have historically been essential in Mongolian feasts and festivals, contributing to the livelihood of families, while horses were considered indispensable for transport, agriculture, and war. In Mongolian folklore, horses are often depicted as mystical, loyal beings that can communicate with their masters and assist them in times of need. This deep respect for horses is a cornerstone of Mongolian cultural identity, as seen in the epics and songs about these noble creatures.

In the Ordos region in Table 1, the sprinkle ritual focus on preventing the child from touching dust, symbolising a desire for purity and prosperity. The child is often promised an abundance of food and wealth, as seen in the tradition of covering the child's *deel* with raisins and sweets. This symbolises the idea of the child being enveloped in good fortune and abundance. Similarly, in the Kalmykia, the words to sprinkle ritual emphasise the child wearing new clothes and performing charitable acts, symbolising both prosperity and generosity.

Over time, these traditional practices have evolved, especially in urban areas where traditional clothing is now purchased from shops rather than handmade. While this shift represents a departure from the traditional craft of clothing-making, it also highlights the enduring relevance of the sprinkle ritual ceremony, which continues to be a meaningful ritual. The essence of the blessing-that the child will live a long and prosperous life, adorned in fine clothes and blessed with abundance-remains consistent, despite variations in the specific practices across regions.

In essence, the sprinkle ritual ceremony and the associated proverbs are not only a reflection of Mongolian culture but also a way for communities to share common values and cultural symbols. These proverbs, with their variations and similarities, serve as a reminder of Mongolia's rich heritage and the ongoing connection between traditional customs and modern life.

Fox Shape Cutting Ritual for Newborn Baby

The tradition of using fox pendants or amulets for children in Mongolia is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs that blend elements of folklore, symbolism, and protective rituals. The practice involves cutting out felt foxes and hanging them on children's clothing or as accessories, with the belief that these foxes protect the children from evil

and ensure their well-being. The fox, in Mongolian culture, symbolises intelligence, loyalty, and protection. It is regarded as a clever and alert animal, capable of generating strong, positive energy, and it is seen as a guardian of children against harmful forces.

The practice of cutting and wearing a felt fox is often accompanied by a legend that ties the fox's role as both protector and mischief-maker. According to the story, the fox, curious and bored, encounters a family with a sleeping baby. The fox tries to deceive the child into waking up by claiming the mother has left, only for the child to be reassured and lulled back to sleep by the fox's words. The father, aware of the fox's trickery, cuts a felt fox and attaches it to the child. When the fox returns and sees the pendant, it recognises that the child is protected, saying, "This baby has a fox", and leaves. This story reflects the importance of the fox as a figure of protection, not just through its association with cunning and intelligence but also through its loyalty to its offspring, much like the role that parents and guardians play in a child's life.

The tradition of creating these pendants varies for boys and girls. Boys typically have symbols associated with strength and defense, such as bows, arrows, weapons, and animals like lions and falcons, often alongside the felt fox. For girls, the pendant includes symbols of beauty and protection, such as colourful ribbons, pearls, bells, and scissors, which emphasise the desire for a strong and prosperous future. These items, along with the felt fox, are believed to shield the child from harm and ensure they grow into a capable and strong individuals.

In addition to the fox, the pendant is often accompanied by a *teeg*- triangular arrangement of five colours. Each color holds specific symbolic meaning:

- Blue represents the eternal sky, symbolising the vast and unchanging forces of nature that guide and protect.
- Green symbolises the earth, reflecting the nurturing and sustaining power of the land.
- White stands for pure air, representing clarity, goodness, and spiritual protection.
- Yellow signifies fertility, a wish for health, growth, and prosperity.
- Red symbolises the hearth, warmth, and the family's foundation.

Together, these elements create a powerful protective amulet that symbolises the harmonious balance of nature, life, and spiritual forces. The tradition of cutting the felt fox and attaching the pendant is not only a form of cultural expression but also a way for parents to safeguard their children's future and guide them towards a life of health, strength, and prosperity. The legacy of this practice endures in Mongolian society, intertwining cultural heritage with the well-being of future generations.

Remedy For Crying Baby

In Mongolian culture, a child suddenly crying out in fear, often referred to as a tantrum, is a phenomenon that has long been associated with various spiritual beliefs

and traditional methods of seeking relief. The notion that children can be affected by supernatural forces or frightened by unseen entities is common in many cultures, and Mongolians have devised specific rituals and practices to soothe such fears and ensure the child's well-being. One of the traditional methods used by Mongolians to alleviate the distress caused by a child's tantrum or sudden fear involves the use of candle oil. According to Mongolian folklore, when a few drops of candle oil are placed into a cup of water, it is believed that the oil creates a visual manifestation of the frightened animal or spirit that caused the child's fear. The image that appears in the water is interpreted as a sign of the source of the child's disturbance. This ritual is often performed by an elder or someone in the family with spiritual or healing knowledge.

The purpose of this practice is twofold: First, it helps identify the cause of the child's fear, which is thought to be linked to the presence of a malevolent spirit or an animal that has frightened the child. Second, it serves as a symbolic act of calming and protecting the child. By revealing the cause of the fear, the family can take steps to alleviate it, either through further spiritual rituals or by placing protective charms around the child to ensure they are safe from harm.

This practice highlights the Mongolian belief in the importance of spiritual balance and protection, with rituals passed down through generations to safeguard children from the unseen forces that may influence their emotions and health.

The Trick to Making A "Brown Hare"

The belief in Mongolian folklore that children should not be called by their full names late at night and the myth of turning babies into brown hares is deeply rooted in traditional views on protecting children from supernatural forces and misfortune. According to these myths, calling a child by their name during the night is believed to attract spirits or evil entities, which could harm the child. This is part of a broader cultural belief that nighttime is a time when the spiritual world is more active, and the boundaries between the physical and spiritual realms are less defined.

The myth involving a child being carried around by the nose with soot of firewood, turning the child into a brown hare, also speaks to the Mongolian belief in transforming the child's vulnerability to supernatural threats into a harmless, peaceful state. The brown hare, in this case, is seen as a protective figure, embodying safety and tranquility. It symbolises the child's transformation into an animal that is not susceptible to harm from ghosts or other malevolent entities, allowing the child to sleep peacefully without fear.

The idea that a "brown hare" transformation protects the child from phantoms and evil messengers also ties into the broader concept of *sujig*, which is related to a psychological or spiritual imbalance. In Mongolian folklore, illness or misfortune is often viewed as a consequence of spiritual disturbances or emotional trauma, and practices like these are ways to restore balance and protect the child from harm.

The saying "Heal with a broom" and the reference to suspicion as a form of sickness also reflect the traditional Mongolian perspective on psychological and emotional well-being. If a child exhibits symptoms of fear, anxiety, or disturbance, it was believed that they were being affected by supernatural forces, and the use of physical objects like a broom or the act of symbolic transformation (such as becoming a brown hare) was seen as a means to clear away these negative influences and restore the child's health and peace of mind.

Overall, these beliefs reflect the deeply spiritual and symbolic relationship that Mongolians have with the natural and supernatural world, as well as their commitment to protecting the emotional and physical well-being of children through cultural rituals and mythological practices.

Conclusion

This study is unique in that it provides a comprehensive examination of traditional customs and rituals related to Mongolian children, analyzing and defining their cultural and social significance. The findings reveal that these customs and rituals are an integral part of Mongolian life, spanning from the beginning of human life to adulthood. They play a crucial role in preserving traditional customs, the unique mentality of the Mongolian people, and reflect cultural diversity. Ritual forms such as festive blessings, symbolic words, spells, and chants are widespread in all aspects of Mongolian life. What sets them apart is their focus on the health, protection, and future well-being of young children.

Rituals such as bathing, naming, and hair cutting are deeply rooted in Mongolian social and cultural heritage, representing enduring beliefs and practices. These rituals not only promote the physical and psychological well-being of children, but also help maintain Mongolian socio-cultural continuity.

While these rituals have evolved and developed over time, influenced by ancient shamanism, Buddhist ideas, and social changes, they remain vital to Mongolian spirituality, beliefs, and expressions of Mongolian identity, cultural heritage, and customs.

Although variations in child rituals exist among different Mongolian ethnic groups, the study found that their fundamental structure, purpose, and symbolism are consistent. For instance, rituals such as bathing and naming children are performed in ancient ways, with minor differences based on the ethnic group or clan's specific characteristics.

This study makes a significant contribution to Mongolian cultural studies by summarising and analysing child-related rituals from a historical perspective using detailed scientific methods. It highlights that these rituals have not only served to protect and honor children but also played a crucial role in social life, cultural continuity, and the upbringing of individuals.

These findings provide evidence of the continuity and importance of Mongolian rituals, underscoring the enduring uniqueness of traditional Mongolian beliefs and practices. Despite the challenges of globalisation, Mongolian traditional rituals remain a valuable cultural expression, preserving their distinctiveness across generations.

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