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Intercultural dialogue in artistic creation: from archaeological images to the modern artwork

Abstract. The article presents a project dedicated to the development of the “Paradise Garden” dress design, inspired by the aesthetics of the Maya civilization and combining Maya embroidery techniques with Russian artistic embroidery. The aim of the research is to raise the professional level of students and instructors through the realization of historical and artistic ideas in educational project practice. To achieve this, an analysis of exhibits from the National Museum of Art in Mexico City (Mexico) was conducted, alongside a study of the construction and decoration of clothing on terracotta statuettes created by the Maya. A comparative analysis of embroidery types was carried out, followed by the artistic design and experimental implementation of the item. As a result, a constructive and technological foundation was determined (a simple rectangular basic pattern with separately crafted volumetric elements of artistic embroidery). Types of stitches (chain stitch, colored satin stitch, Kadom veniz, goldwork) and materials (linen fabric, textured threads, modern hardware) were selected and adapted.

Keywords: collection, Maya civilization, artistic composition, materials, embroidery, intercultural integration.

The article presents the experience of the step-by-step development of one of the eight looks from a clothing collection dedicated to the Maya civilization. This project (the collection) realizes the idea of a dialogue between cultures of different epochs, in which the constructive forms of Maya clothing, elements of traditional Maya embroidery and Russian artistic embroidery are harmoniously combined.

The aim of the research is to raise the professional level of students and instructors by reinterpreting the ideas of the past through the means of traditional art crafts, thereby enriching professional experience with new meanings.

The practical significance lies in the development and testing of a methodology that allows for combining, within a single project, the aesthetics of Maya art with the traditions of Russian artistic embroidery.

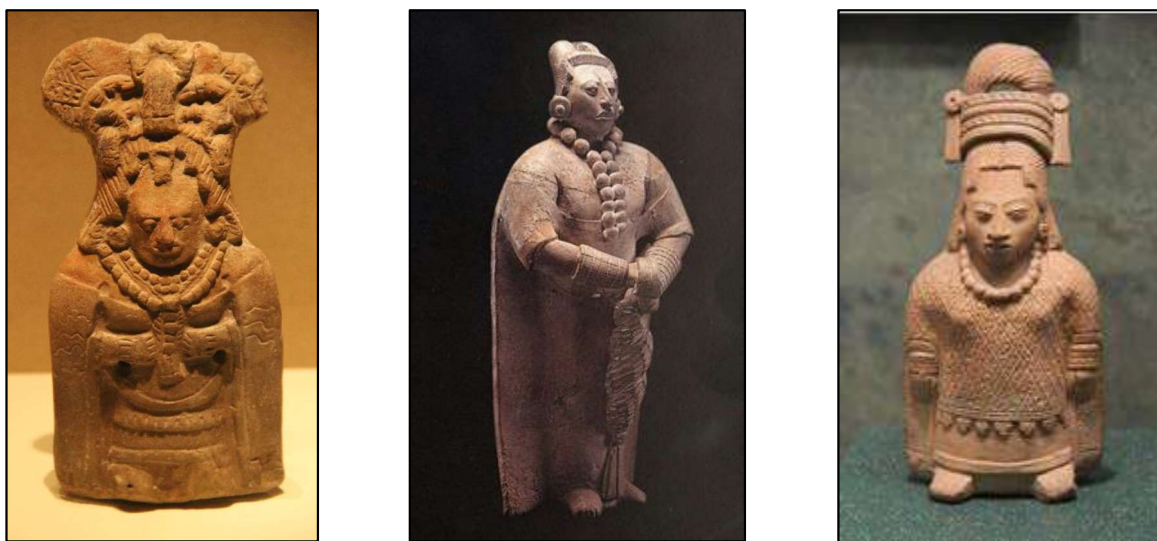
The project implementation was preceded by extensive research, the objectives of which included: the search for a constructive form, a primary ornamental motif and compositional and technological solutions that would allow

for combining the aesthetics of Maya art with decoration executed using the means of Russian artistic embroidery.

To search for the constructive form of the garment, a primary information source was identified: students were required to familiarize themselves with the artifacts of the National Museum of Art in Mexico City, whose collections house a unique collection of archaeological and anthropological artifacts from the pre-Columbian era found on the territory of Mexico [5]. Working with museum exhibitions in the educational process significantly broadens students' horizons, becoming an effective means of introducing them to culture and forming self-education skills.

Since samples of Maya clothing have not survived, an analysis of the construction and silhouette plasticity of the clothing of terracotta statuettes was conducted to identify the most interesting design solutions, the cut of which would be suitable for decoration with artistic embroidery.

Based on the study of museum exhibits, the basic cut of the model was determined, based on a rectangle and the method of fabric folding without complex modeling. Statuettes in such attire depict people of high social status; the garments themselves are decorated with ornaments and decorative elements (Figs. 1-3²⁰).



Figs. 1-3. Terracotta statuettes from the exposition of the National Museum of Art in Mexico City

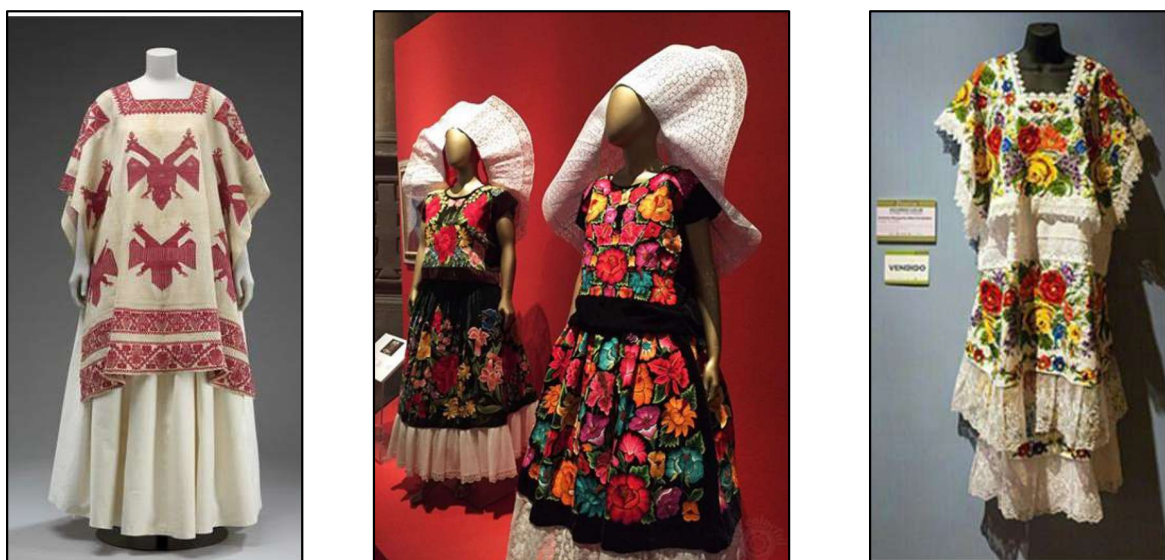
Initially, the items were planned to be made of linen fabric; however, neither the type of artistic embroidery intended for decorating the item nor its main ornamental motif were predetermined.

²⁰ Fig. 1. File:Jaina Terracotta Figurine, Campeche, Late Classic, 600-900 AD 38.jpg - Wikimedia Commons. – URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jaina_Terracotta_Figurine,_Campeche,_Late_Classic,_600-900_AD_38.jpg (Accessed: 25.08.2026);
Fig. 2. – URL: https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/58335757668934617/?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=yandexsmartcamera (Accessed: 25.08.2026);
Fig. 3. Holidays in Mexico – 4 // LiveJournal : site. – URL: https://iii0iii.livejournal.com/648244.html?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=yandexsmartcamera (Accessed: 25.08.2026).

A review of available sources revealed that the Maya decorated items with multicolored patterns, which were produced on looms or embroidered. The nobility used feathers (quetzal feathers were especially valued), jade, turquoise, as well as gold and copper inlays for decoration.

Embroidery was used by the Maya tribe; however, its material samples have not survived, and it is not feasible to determine the execution technique based on decorative terracotta artifacts. In this regard, it was decided to study and use historically close types of embroidery preserved in modern culture as a reference sample. Traditional types of Mexican embroidery, which, according to researchers, originated in pre-Columbian times, were studied. A comparative analysis with certain types of Russian artistic embroidery was conducted, which allowed for the determination of technical techniques to be used.

Unlike Russian artistic embroidery, Mexican embroidery is very bright and multicolored, featuring large textural stitches. Embroidery on national costumes is of particular interest. (Figs. 4-6²¹).



Figs. 4-6. Samples of traditional national costumes of Mexico

Themes of embroidery patterns – floral motifs and images of animals. The composition is most often border-like, consisting of multiple strips united by a single theme, or freely filling the entire surface of the item. Artistic embroidery is executed with tonal transitions, necessarily using threads that are contrasting in relation to the

²¹ Fig. 4. Pin on board Character design clothes-6. – URL: <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/11610911539017991/> (Accessed: 17.09.2026); Fig. 5. Yandex Images: Search by Image. – URL: [https://yandex.ru/images/search?cbir_id=12729944%2F_ehzipwOl7Dt4n-dG_0TuDQ475&tmpl_version=releases-frontend-images-v1.1866.0__27c41996fbca8653e8ceff3f4e6ef76564c2c8c1&rpt=imageview&lr=2&url=https%3A%2F%2Favatars.mds.yandex.net%2Fget-images-cbir%2F12729944%2F_ehzipwOl7Dt4n-dG_0TuDQ475%2forig&cbir_page=similar](https://yandex.ru/images/search?cbir_id=12729944%2F_ehzipwOl7Dt4n-dG_0TuDQ475&tmpl_version=releases-frontend-images-v1.1866.0__27c41996fbca8653e8ceff3f4e6ef76564c2c8c1&rpt=imageview&lr=2&url=https%3A%2F%2Favatars.mds.yandex.net%2Fget-images-cbir%2F12729944%2F_ehzipwOl7Dt4n-dG_0TuDQ475%2Forig&cbir_page=similar) (Accessed: 17.09.2026); Fig. 6. File:Centro de Textiles del Mundo Maya 3.jpg – URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ACentro_de_Textiles_del_Mundo_Maya_3.jpg?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=yandexsmartcamera (Accessed: 17.09.2026).

fabric. Embroidery is done using silk, mouline, wool, metallic threads (“like gold and silver”), employing a wide variety of fabrics – cotton, satin, chintz, velvet. There are examples of artistic embroidery on homespun fabrics. Cross-stitch, tambour stitch, set stitches and satin stitch are applied.

The technologies for performing artistic embroidery have been analyzed. For this purpose, photographs of Mexican masters at work have been studied, which allowed for a comparative analysis of this process with how it occurs at the Department of artistic embroidery of the Russian university of traditional art crafts.

Firstly, the Mexican and Russian frame embroidery hoops used for artistic embroidery are visually similar; however, upon detailed examination, it was observed that in Mexico they are combined with stands, which is inconvenient when moving the hoops (Fig. 7²²). In Russia, hoops are often turned over to secure the threads or are set at a slight angle for a better hand position, so the frame and the stands are not fastened to each other.

Secondly, a significant volume of artistic embroidery is performed by a single Mexican master. During active searches, it was possible to find images in which masters use a hook instead of a needle and “Iris” cotton yarn, which significantly simplifies the embroidery process (Figs. 8, 9). In Russia, a hook is sometimes also used for tambour stitching, for example, in Olonets or Arkhangelsk embroidery, but in this case, a finer mouline thread is used, due to which the stitch loops become smaller in size, and the tambour embroidery is supplemented with nets or set stitches, which is significantly more difficult. In the learning process, students master these types of embroidery, but only using a needle and not a hook.



Fig. 7. Embroidery frame



Fig. 8. Process of tambour embroidery using a hook



Fig. 9. Materials used in traditional Mexican embroidery

²² Figs. 7-9. The process of traditional Mexican tambour embroidery – URL: https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/603412050055653482/?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=yandex_smartcamera (Accessed: 02.09.2026).

Following the analysis, the main types of artistic embroidery to be applied to the item were determined:

- chain stitch: this type of artistic embroidery is traditionally used in both countries (Russia and Mexico);
- colored satin stitch: this technique allows for enriching the item with a voluminous texture;
- goldwork: the attire of the Maya nobility was adorned with gold and copper inlays. Embroidering with metallic thread will help accentuate the main object, making it more expressive.

After selecting the types of embroidery, it was necessary to determine the compositional and ornamental solution. This design was required to carry a specific semantic meaning, combining the rich color palette of Mexican embroidery, the techniques of Russian artistic embroidery and the artistic stylization employed by the Maya. Artists did not merely transform natural forms but subordinated them to strict canons in order to convey sacred meaning.

One of the sacred symbols of Maya mythology is the Ceiba (the kapok tree), which, in their belief system, connects the world of humans with the underworld [3]. According to Maya cosmogony, four trees hold up the firmament (sky), while the fifth connects the earth with the heavens. This tree is so immense and lush that its roots reach the underworld (the realm of the dead), while its branches touch the firmament. In nature, this tropical tree of the mallow family reaches a height of 60–70 meters (Fig. 10²³). Mature trees produce several hundred fruits – large (15 cm) dehiscent capsules containing seeds. The inner walls of the capsules are covered with numerous fluffy, yellowish, shiny hairs resembling cotton (Figs. 11²⁴, 12²⁵).

Another symbol of mystical power, demonstrating the transition between levels of being, was butterflies. These symbols – the Tree of Life (Ceiba) and soaring souls (butterflies) – formed the basis for the creation of the artistic image of the dress, which was named “Paradise Garden”.

After completing a series of fore-sketches featuring various options for incorporating artistic embroidery into the constructive and technological model of the garment, a mock-up was produced and an embroidery composition was developed based on the collected and studied material. The center of the embroidery composition on the dress hem is a stylized flowering Ceiba tree with butterflies hovering in its canopy. The main accent of the garment is a large butterfly located on the bodice (front panel), imitating a detachable collar.

²³ Fig. 10. A tree that is in no hurry // TVRUS & TVRUS plus : web-site. – URL: https://www.tvrus.eu/news/derevo-kotoroe-nikuda-ne-toropitsya/?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=yandexsmartcamera (Accessed: 07.09.2026).

²⁴ Fig. 11. File:Starr 080305-3330 Bombax ceiba.jpg – URL: https://ru.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Wikivoyage:Вики_любит_памятники_2026 (Accessed: 07.09.2026).

²⁵ Fig. 12. Pin on board NAftDT – URL: <https://ca.pinterest.com/pin/584834701650541946/> (Accessed: 07.09.2026).

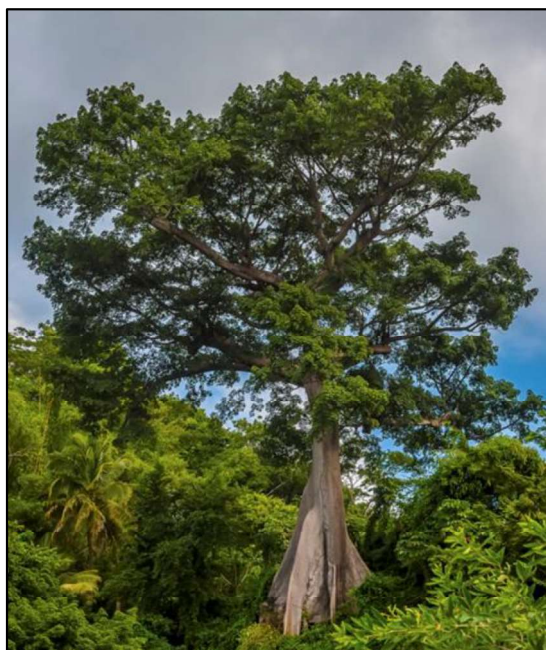


Fig. 10. Ceiba tree



Fig. 11. Flowers of the Ceiba tree



Fig. 12. Fruits of the Ceiba tree

For the realization of this item, a natural fuchsia-colored linen fabric was chosen. The saturated color scheme was chosen deliberately, as the intense color enhances the feeling of blooming and natural energy and fits perfectly into the overall color palette of the collection.

However, the choice of a loose-fitting dress with long sleeves, the construction of which is connected to the back of the garment, combined with abundant, dense and large-scale embroidery, created a complex technological challenge. Large, heavy forms of tambour embroidery cannot bend, which affects the fabric's drape and plasticity. This can significantly distort and deform the shape of the garment. Taking this circumstance into account, all large elements of the artistic embroidery were executed separately, featuring smooth color transitions of the threads (in the tradition of Mexican embroidery) and were then appliquéd to the main garment at the center core (Fig. 13²⁶). Only the stems and leaves were embroidered directly onto the main fabric of the dress (Fig. 14).

The most labor-intensive element of the artistic embroidery proved to be its central element – the butterfly. The creation of this object was distributed between two students. Within the framework of the academic discipline “Artistic embroidery mastery”, they were required to study the “Kadom veniz” technique. To ensure that this type of artistic embroidery was not overlooked, the technological techniques of Veniz were incorporated into the tambour embroidery. This allowed for achieving a visual lightness of the butterfly's wings. As a result, thanks to various refinements, an innovative combination of textile materials and threads of different textures was achieved, along with the integration of various types of artistic embroidery: Kadom veniz, chain stitch, colored satin stitch and goldwork. The combination of modern decorative elements (rhinestones, beads, sequins) and a complex, multicolor, yet

²⁶ Figs. 13-15. Photo by the author of the article.

harmonious solution within a single embroidered decorative element of the dress alludes to the rich and abundant decoration of Maya artifacts. The Maya employed multicolored patterns, as well as inserts of turquoise, copper and gold in their clothing decoration (Fig. 15).



Fig. 13. Separately embroidered elements:
“Ceiba flowers”



Fig. 14. The process of tambour embroidery
on fabric



Fig. 15. Finished piece: “Paradise Garden” dress

The conducted research and the creation of the “Paradise Garden” dress, dedicated to the Maya civilization, have confirmed the effectiveness of the proposed design and research activities for students, followed by the materialization of the project through the medium of Russian artistic embroidery.

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