National Institute Of Fashion Technology - Mumbai

Craft Cluster Initiative by-
Knitwear Design Department

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Cluster location - Osmanabad

Craft documentation - Banjara work

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Art being a very subjective term, marks its presence in infinite and diverse forms consisting of anything and everything. At present, art is an integral part of our lives as it acts as a breather for both our ideas and skills.

This document is about the banjara tribe and their beautiful works which they incorporate in their dressing. Since this art is dying slowly, we the students and the teachers of N.I.F.T. took up an initiative to help the tribe continue their works and sell their pieces in the markets for their livelihood as well as to protect their art.

This document covers the their history, lifestyle and their costumes in detail. It also includes information about the different villages and tribes. In addition to this, we as designers have come up with innovative designs that can use banjara work like never used before. This way, the tribe learns something new and earns a good amount of money and we open our minds to innovation.
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Acknowledgement

The documentation of the art wouldn’t have been possible without the help of our mentor Mr. Sanjay More who strived for excellence in us. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to him for his undying support and invaluable guidance. Also if it wasn’t for him and the National Institute of Fashion Technology, we wouldn’t have been able to visit Osmanabad and see the beautiful works performed by the banjara women.

A special thanks to all the villagers in Tuljapur for their patience and corporation. Also their welcoming attitude made us feel like we are at home.

We also thank Mrs. Bhawna Rawat who gave us this opportunity to witness the art and for briefing us about this new subject.
Introduction

We the students of the knitwear design department got an opportunity to witness the banjaracraft performed by the women in the villages of Tuljapur. We have covered this craft as well as the people related to the craft and have made a detailed document for the same.

**Objective**- The main objective was to explore and learn the craft, lifestyle, culture and costumes for the banjara community by interacting with them. We had to understand the problems they face personally and also problems that are craft related and come up with solutions for the same. We also had to come up with new ideas so as to use their craft in our modern innovative designs. This would help them earn money and continue the dying craft.

**Methodology**- Before we left for the trip we did some brain storming about how to study their craft, lifestyle, culture, costumes etc. we collected raw data about the area, the craft, the raw materials, the people and their lifestyle, their culture, the villages, etc. during the first week of the project called the research period which was done in college.

We stayed in the village for 10 days and collected information by the following methods- survey, observation, questionnaire and sampling. We also maintained a learning diary that has all the information about the places we visited each day and information on the craft.

After coming back from the trip, we spent a week on the documentation. We compiled all the information that the 8 members of the group had collected and made a fair document and a power point presentation for the jury panel.
About banjara

The Lambani communities are gypsies by tradition and live across Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh, and Northern Karnataka. They also go by the name “Banjara”. The Lambani community are said to have originated from the area between Bikaner in Rajasthan, India and Bahawalpur in Pakistan.

Colorful is the one word that comes to mind when we think of this enthusiastic tribe of India. They live in settlements called Tandas. Urdu, Telegu, Kutni, Lambadi are amongst the popular languages spoken here.

A woman of Banjara tribes in Orissa is accustomed to wearing "ghaghra" and ‘choli’ (a blouse). Ghagra is a whirling skirt made of red, black and white cotton, with pieces of mirrored glass embroidered on it.

The craze for Jewels is of the highest degree amongst these tribes. Anklets, silver earrings, hair plaits and bone bangles add charm to the enriched culture of Banjaras. Banjara Tribe is very famous in whole India as they occupy most of the states in India, and continue the legacy of this beautiful craft of colorful baby wool embroidered mirror work, coins, and multi-colored bead work. The women of this tribe practice this craft, mostly for themselves and very rarely to sell and earn. They create their own attire and accessories and pass this craft to generations ahead, though now the western influence liberates the younger generation and they disapprove to wear the traditional attire for their daily routine. This is an alarm that if not pulled up, the craft endangers to drown completely amidst the evolving society.

Banjaran carrying pot full of water
Location and geography

Osmanabad

'Osmanabad' was named after the ruler of Hyderabad state, Osman Ali Khan. TuljaBhavanimandir is located in Tuljapur town of Osmanabad district. It is one of the Shakti Peethas in Maharashtra.

**Geography**- Osmanabad district is situated in the south east of Maharashtra. It falls in the Marathwada region. Osmanabad city is located in the west central part of Osmanabad district. Solapur district is located southwest of Osmanabad wherein Solapur is the nearest sizable city. Osmanabad is on Balaghat Plateau.

The district occupies an area of 7569 kms.
Tuljapur

Tuljapur is a town in Osmanabad district. Osmanabad, Bhoom, Paranda, Washi and kalamb are the nearby towns.

Geography-Tuljapur town is home to the TuljaBhavani temple.

Elevation : 642mts (2126 ft)

Population: 34,011. Of which 17,580 are male and 16,431 are female as per reports released by census India 2011.

Literacy Rate: 87.17% In which, male literacy rate is around 92.72% Female literacy rate is 81.31%

LokSabhaconstituency : Osmanabad

VidhanSabha constituency: Tuljapur.
Temperature and climate of Tuljapur

The city has a tropical climate. There is good rainfall during summers and very little rainfall as the winter approaches.

The average temperature in Tuljapur is around 26 degrees Celsius.

The average rainfall here is nearly 877mm.

Most of the rainfall occurs in September, averaging 204mm. The highest temperature is in May; around 32 Degrees Celsius. December is the coldest with the temperature being nearly 21 degrees Celsius.

Rivers

Terna River falls closest to Tuljapur town.

Transport

Tuljapur has a very good connectivity with cities like Pune, Mumbai, Kolhapur, Miraj-Sangli, Pandharpur, Nagpur, Parbhani, Latur, Nanded, ParaliVaijnath, Hyderabad, and Nizambad.

NH9 and NH211. NH211 connects Osmanabad to other major cities.

There is an airport in Osmanabad district situated approximately 10kms from Osmanabad city. The airport does not see any air traffic apart from the visits from the state government aircrafts.

The nearest operational airports are Pune International airport and ShriChhatrapatiSambhajiRaje International airport.
History

According to J.J Roy Burman, in his book titled, Ethnography of a Denotified Tribe TheLamanBanjara, the name Laman is popular long before the name Banjara and the LamanBanjaras originally came from Afghanistan before settling in Rajasthan and other parts of India. He states that according to MotirajRethod, the Lamans were originally from Afghanistan and there is an independent province and village called Gor in that country.

Lambadas are of North-west Indian origin, who lived primarily by their earnings from transportation on the pack bullocks. There is evidence to show that they supplied food grains etc. to the Moghuls when they invaded the Deccan. However, there is some dispute about the nature of their Moghul connection.

The tribe, forced by the compulsions of trade, was continuously on the move, and this probably helped to preserve its only form of wealth, cattle, from localised droughts, which are quite common even to this day. However, in the absence of concrete historical evidence the reasoning could reversed to state that the Lambdas, to protect their cattle from drought moved in search of feed and subsequently took to trade which was initially a subsidiary means of livelihood. The development of cheap modern means of road and rail destroyed their occupation.
Lifestyle and society

Social infrastructure

Banjaras live in small settlements referred to as Tandas. Their homes have characteristic features and usually consist of only one small room, with no opening except the door way. The cattle, if any are usually tied up outside. The doors to some of the Lambadi homes are very striking with simple designs and typical motifs, usually found in vibrant shades of the primary colours. Floral or diamond shapes are made in blue, yellow, red or green to create a simple yet vivid and eye-catching patterns.

A tanda usually has less than 500 houses. Schools in a tanda offer education upto class VII. If a child wishes to study beyond, he/she will have to go to a town near by. Medical care is available at a nearest town at least 5 km away. The basic amenities are minimal. Cooking gas and stove are non existent instead women use wood and clay stoves. The women carry and store water for household needs from a pipe once a day or whenever the water supply is available. The staple diet is ‘dalia’ made of wheat or jowar.

Daily routine

The men work in the fields and contribute to agriculture. The women finish the household chores and sit with the banjara craft in their free time.
Source of income

Its only the men that earn in the society. Most of them earn their livelihood through agriculture.

Religion, culture and beliefs

The lambani-banjara tribe of southern states of India is a hinduised Tribe. They worship goddess Shakti in all forms like “Durga” “kankaali” “TuljaBhavani” “seetala”. Practice of worshiping of ancestors is prevalent among them. Banjara work with their own priests, bhagats and miracle men, and believe in omens, dreams, miraculous stories and magic.

Regional dialects are divided between banjara of Maharashtra ( written in Devanagari ) , Karnataka ( written in kannada script) and Andhra Pradesh ( written in telgu script ).

Festivals are celebrated with great zest, the major ones being Ramnavmi, Devi yatra and Navratra.

An important belief in the attire of this tribe is, that only the married ladies wear the ghungto with mirrors and coins, the widows are devoid of this.
Marriage

A Banjara wedding is complete showcase of the culture and customs of this tribe. It happens in a very traditional way, the day of the marriage is fixed consulting the village priest. The Banjara Tribe follow the monogamy system of marriage.

A pandal is setup in an appropriate place between the tandas of the two families. It sometimes happen to be 9-10 kilometers away from their tanda. Often multiple marriages are held in the same mandap popularly known as “samuhik vivah”, where the bride and bridegrooms perform their rituals one after the other.

All the people are dressed in their traditional attire, being the colorful vibrant choli and ghaghra with beautiful mirror work and bead accessories for the ladies and white kurtapayjama with a bright colored turban, or white topi for the men. People sit down and meal is served in steel buckets.

Mehndi is an important part of their wedding rituals, bride as well as the bridegroom, both put the similar intricate mehndi designs.

Dowry practice is prevalent among the banjaras. The bride is given each and every amenities, as she leaves her father’s house. Utensils, cupboards, bed, bedsheets, wall hangings, toys, tubs, buckets to even food grains!
Bride and bride groom apply mehendi

All the ladies attending the wedding dress up in their typical traditional attire.

Items given for dowri

Bride and bride groom apply mehendi

Typical banjara wedding food
Gala- An unmarried girl wears this on her head and receives the groom, for the wedding.

Kaththar or karchi- Groom holds this in his hand during marriage after putting haldi. This ornament is kept to stay away from bad spirits.
Costumes

Banjara men
They wear turban as a form of head gear. Men of the Lambani tribe are mostly seen dressed up in white dhotis and kurtas.

Banjara women
Women of the Lambani tribe wear decorated clothing (mirror and patch work). Jewelry is also an essential part of their costume, they wear finger rings, bangles, bracelets, earrings, etc. In addition to that for hair accessories they use hairpins (bobby pins).
Women are known to wear colourful and bright costumes like phetiyas (ghagra) and kanchali (top), the top is usually backless so they wear a thin cotton blouse inside. They also have tattoos on their hand. They use mirrors, coins and shells to decorate their outfit.

Their ornaments are made up of silver rings, coins, chain, shells, beads, etc. The garments are embroidered using bright and warm colour threads and covered with a mosaic of mirror work.
Garment-

**Kanchali (the blouse)**

Blouse worn by these lambani women is very intriguing and aesthetically appealing. The blouse is made up of 4 parts (3 mirror patches and 1 base cloth). The base cloth is heavily embroidered with mirrors. Two of the patches are attached/stitched right onto the breast are whereas the third mirror is placed at the bottom of the Kanchali, the panels hasghungroos and 25 paise coins attached to it.

Mostly round or square mirrors are used. The mirror work done by them is beautifully finished by buttonhole stitch and then bordered by chain stitch. The Kanchali is totally backless with just two strings used to tie the blouse.

**Ghaghro (the skirt)**

The skirt is called “Ghagro”. The length/falls of the skirt are just slightly above the ankle level in order to show the foot ornamentation and also for the free movement. The skirt is pleated and required approx. 3-3.5 meters of fabric.
Raw material

Fabric

Usually loosely woven dark blue or red handloom base fabric is used. The base cloth used is either cotton khadi or power loom fabric, thus working in harmony with the local small scale industry.

Dyes

Although most of the fabric is dyed using chemical colours, vegetable dyes made from kattha, ratanjot, chawalkudi, pomegranate peel etc. are gaining popularity.

Thread

Embroidery is worked with different coloured threads such as yellow, orange, white, maroon, blue, and green that make work stand out on the base fabrics well as create a colourful textile. Woollen and linen threads are used to create Banjara embroidery motifs on cloths.
Techniques used

Appliques

Added to the embroidery are colourful pieces of appliqué, colourful tassels of different colours, shells, beads, coins and other embellishments that enhance the vibrant appearance.

Embroidery

The Lambani embroidery is an amalgam of pattern darning, mirror work, cross stitch, and overlaid and quilting stitches with borders of “Kangura” patchwork appliqué, done on loosely woven dark blue or red handloom base fabric.

Lambani embroidery is commonly mistaken as Kutchi (Kachhi) embroidery because of mirror work, but shells and coins are unique to this type of embroidery. Also, the stitches used are different.
Designs/patterns used in embroidery

The lambani embroidery is an amalgam of pattern darning, mirror work, cross stitch, and overlaid and quilting stitches with the borders of “Kangura” patchwork appliqué, done on loosely woven dark blue or red handloom base fabric.

Using the regular needle they create decorative embroidered patterns on their attire,

The distinctiveness of the lambani embroidery is the random designs and bright colours that is so traditional to this tribe.

Usually all over patterns are created, which covers the base of the fabric.

Sometimes, geometrical patterns like circles, rectangles and squares are made which are heavily embroidered with colourful threads and decorated with embellishments like shells, coins, mirrors and beads etc.

Patchwork or appliqué technique is other form of technique used by them to create patterns. In these small pieces of cloth are cut into triangles and stitched onto the base cloth, with sides being nearly turned in. These appliqué triangles specially feature as borders and create a charming pattern.

Lambani embroidery also to a large extent comprises of the quilting technique which is done on the edge of the garment and is called "katta".

Lambani embroidery is usually combined with mirror work to produce glitter and colour that are integral parts of the Lambadi costume. The clothes of the Lambanis reflect their love of life and evolved across the centuries to suit local climatic and social conditions.

Use of mirrors, coins, tassles and colourful thread
Stitches

Lambanis use a variety of stitches to embroider. The 14 types of stitches used in lambani embroidery are-

- Running
- Herringbone
- Buttonhole
- Blanket
- Feather stitch

These include the running stitch, which often appears as small dashes, the running stitch lends itself to creating a variety of patterns on cloth. It is worked in parallel lines and a thread of a contrasting colour is intertwined between the stitches in a line to create a neat horizontal pattern. Similarly a thread may be intertwined between lines to form a criss-cross pattern.

Other than that there is chain stitch that is sometimes tightly and densely worked, almost covering the ground fabric; small loops that look like grains; satin stitch; herringbone stitch, and buttonhole stitch. The chain stitch may be worked in different directions such as zigzag to create patterns.
Colours

There are 13 colours that are mostly used in Lambani embroidery, out of which; red and blue are most common. The base cloth used is either cotton khadi or power loom fabric and is also dyed locally, thus working in harmony with the local small scale industry. Although most of the fabric is dyed using chemical colours, vegetable dyes made from Kattha, Rathanjot, ChawalKudi, Pomegranate peel etc are gaining popularity.
Ornamentation

Hair Ornamentation

The Banjara women’s hair ornamentation is very unique from that of other tribes. Instead of using the more famous mathapatti and tikka, these tribes use beads and ghungru’s as their jewellery.

**Topri** - This ornament is in the shape of a bell. Attached to the base of this bell are number of ghungroos. They are worn on both sides of the hair parting. All the elements of a topri are made of silver metal.

**Ghughri** - Ghughri is a round shaped ornament with is usually placed in front of the topri. Motifs of a six petal flower are embossed inside the round shape. In the centre of is a stud or sometimes a small stone. Around the diameter of the round shape are silver beads. Ghungrus suspend from the round shape through a number of small silver chains.

Ghughri’s are considered to be a symbol of marriage for the banjara women. The ghughri is made of silver metal.

**Pinni** - Pinnis are beaded hair pins that are fixed on the plaits formed on each side. A variety of coloured beads are used to make each piece of pin. Various motifs are often created on the pins. Some pinnis also have layers of beads suspended from the pin. There a specific sequence that the banjara women follow while putting on the hair ornaments. First the hair in the crown part is divided into two sections.
Nose Ornamentation

The banjara tribe women have three categories of nose ornaments, studs and rings. As these ornaments are considered sacred, they are made from gold, even though all of their other jewellery is made of silver.

It is worn by a woman at the time of her wedding and is the symbol of her marital status. It is associated with a woman’s honour.

Buli- It is a nose pin that is in the form of a stud. It can either be a small plain stud piece or some motif can also be on it.

Nath - Nath is a commonly used nose ornament used among women of all castes and tribes of India. It is a ring of a diameter of 3-4cm. The nath can be a simple ring or embellished with gold beads.

Neck Ornamentation

The neck is often the most heavily ornamented area of a woman’s body. These women layer up a number of neck ornaments ranging from two to six or seven. Their neck ornaments are mostly made up beads, gold and silver.

A necklace in the form of a choker is made up of beads in different colours. Geometric motifs are made on these necklaces by using different colour of beads. The colours of the beads used to form the choker are usually bright.
Long necklaces that lay below the bust are made with a combination of colourful beads and silver or gold beads. They have 2-3 layers within one neckpiece. These necklaces come in a wide variety with some made completely of small gold beads with a motif allover or just beads used throughout the necklace. The banjara folks wear a number of these neckpieces with varying lengths.

**Mangalstra** – All the married tribes’ women wear a mangalsutra. A mangala sutra is a necklace that a Hindu groom ties around the bride's neck in a ceremony called MangalyaDharanam which is the main ritual of Hindu marriage ceremony. The woman continues to wear the mangala sutra as a sign of her marital status.

**Arm Ornamentation**

**Bajuband** - It is a bangle made of wood or metal and is worn above the elbow. Big beads or buttons are stitched on to the bangle. Small beads are stitched on the lower part of the bangle. Some folks wear two bajubands, one with buttons stitched on to them and the other made of silver with motifs engraved on them.

**Bangles** - A huge stack of bangles are worn on both arms. The bangles are traditional glass bangles.

**Rings** - The rings are made of coins or silver. It has a small round shape with four to five ghungrus attached to them. Some rings have a floral pattern.
Ankle and Feet Ornamentation

The feet of these folks are fairly less decorated as compared to the rest of their ornaments.

**Anklet**- The women wear an anklet made from silver metal.

**Toe rings**- Around 2-3 toe rings are worn by these women. The rings are of different designs ranging from having designer motifs to a simple silver band.

Accessories

**Purse** - All the banjaran women carry a similar type of purse with varying designs. The most commonly used motifs are that of a geometric heart and an all-over chevron print. Beads are the materials used to decorate front panel of the purse. The purse is worn on around the waist by tucking the upper portion into their petticoat.
Products made by lambani women

Women of the family pick up this craft at a very early age from their mothers. All the products are made for the daily use purpose or for their daughter's marriage, in-laws.

All the colours chosen, motifs used, fabrics are inherited from their mother, as it is made traditionally.

borders

These borders are covered with embroidery and mirror work.

They are mostly used in 'ghunghato' that is the head cover or 'dupatta'.
**Kantli**

These two square patches are used stitched on 'Kanchali' or the blouse. These panels have heavy mirror work just like the borders. At time 25 paisa coins are also attached to them along 'ghungroo'.

**Batwa**

These batwas are made using the fabric of old pants of men. The front is worked with beads and beautiful designs are made by the women. Women tuck these batwas in their Ghaghras.
**Hair pins**

Women also make these creative hair pins using beads. They tie it to the front part of the hair. It's also called pinni.

**Rings**

The rings are made of coins or silver. It has a small round shape with four to five ghungrus attached to them. Some rings have a floral pattern.
Time span

Banjara women are mostly into household chores. They utilize their free time fruitfully by making these beautiful Banjara products. The usual time taken to make these products worked with embroidery, mirror work and bead work could be a month or more along their other chores. When they work continuously they can finish it in a few weeks time. The hair pins they make could be done in abundance in one day.
Tandas

A tanda is a small group of houses set apart from a gram panchayat where a banjara or lambani families dwell.

According to a sarpanch of grampanchayat there are 78 tandas in tuljapur, 100 in umarga and 6-7 tandas all in osmanabad.

The tandas we visited are-

**Maulinagar Tanda**

This tanda is a part of aliyabad grampanchayat.

Jyoti Chavan is the sarpanch. She has done her graduation in fashion designing from Amravati, Maharashtra.

She promotes the Banjara craft and comes up with different designs.

This tanda was the cleanest tanda with air conditioned sarpanch office.

People who live here mostly have surnames such as Rathod, Chavan, Pawar, Jadhav.

Awards received by this tanda-

- Paryavaranvikas, 2011.
- Rajyapal award from president.

**Deepaknagar Tanda**

This small village is situated 700 feet above sea level.

Sanjay Rathod is the sarpanch of this tanda. He has a masters degree in sociology and also handles the responsibility of taluka head.
This tanda consists of 227 homes with a population of approximately 777 people including 430 males.

Main occupation of villagers is agriculture and labour.

Deepaknagar has high literacy rates. Citizens from this like K.G Rathod is ex.serviceman and ex.sarpanch.

Major festivals they celebrate is dushera,ramnavmi,pohradeviyatra and navratri.

There are around 50 college going people from this tanda and the facility of library is also available, whereas the tanda has zillaparishad school from 1-4th standard.

Women from this town source the raw materials from Lakshmi market (Solapur). This tanda runs an NGO GorsikwadI in Nanded so that the costume and authentic jewellery never gets extinct.

**Jahangirdar Tanda**

With population of around 2000 people this tanda has 200 homes within, with female population of 900 and 1100 male population.

Main occupation of the villagers is agriculture and labour. People from this village have migrated to cities and have professions like collector and commissioner, doctor and speaker in kalian.

Sarpanch of this village is Malanbai Chavan.

Who is also the head of Mahatma Gandhi Tantamukti.
.Vasantnagar Tanda

Vasantnagartanda is situated 30 km away from tuljapur. The only tanda which comes under a nagarparishad. Suman Ashok Jadhavis the sarpanch of this tanda.

This village consists of 190 homes with population of 1200 individuals, male population is around 657 approximately and female population around 600.

Gandhura Tanda

The Sarpanchs name is Ravanjeti Thor

A very small tanda which we encountered situated in between the infertile lands of osmanabad. Far away from basic amenities. This village has 50 homes with population of 250 individuals. With just 25 banjara women who actually wear this costume.

This village has school from 1st to 4th.
Design intervention

Sarthak Singh
Halter neck dress  
Belt with banjara stripe

Lamp

Sleeve border mirror work
White cotton kurti with tie and dye
Coins at base of the border

Jute used with banjara work

Lamp

Sun umbrella

Mirrored on the edges top and bottom

Sleeve bordered with jute yarns

Banjar traditional lace
Gargi Bhusari

FRENCH BUSTIER

Choli Top

Banjara Denim Shorts

Banjara Boots

Hand Knitted Banjara Purse
Banjara Shoes

Tie Inspired from Banjara Work and Bead Work

Tie Inspired from Mirror Work and Banjara Embroidery

Banjara Embroidery

20 piece lace-up styling of booties

Bead work on booties front
Conclusion

- After visiting different tandas and learning about their dying craft, we have come up with products that the women can make sell
- In this way India doesn’t lose a beautiful craft and the banjara women can earn their livelihood.
- For us Niftians, we got a good exposure and could come up with various design interventions

**Strengths**-
Rich in tradition: The banjaras have never added a personal style, detail, or colours for further improvisation. Consistent colour palette, combination of stitches, placements and choice of materials makes the craft traditionally strong.
Aesthetic appeal: The aesthetic appeal is very symbolic to the tribe and their customs and traditions. Although, the use of stitches, colours, motifs, patterns and their placements is diverse, the end appeal of the product of the tribe. It is aesthetically inspiring and has immense scope for design intervention.
Design element: Their motifs, stitches, patterns and techniques used give us large scope while trying to contemporize and commercialize the product.
Adaptive nature of the tribe: They may adapt by changing the group name and adopting appropriate mannerism to reflect their change. A simple detail just as a meandering chain stitch around a bold coloured embroidery inside is an aspect that sets the banjaras from northern Karnataka apart from a banjara of Maharashtra.

**Weakness**-
The banjara staunchly retain cultural integrity by tending to confuse interrogators. They like it when people notice them and their dress but they are not to prone to answer direct questions related to their tribe.
Lack of documentation: They entertain the attention for the beauty of their costume but they don’t entertain any questions related to their tribe or costume.
Redundancy- No improvisions have been done by the banjaras in their craft but it is a very lucrative industry.