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## Homebased Embroidery Workers

Key information: extremely time consuming, detailed work comprising from 168-350 pleats, depending on whether its an insert or a whole garment; each worker is given between 6-10 pieces, depending on capacity; payment is made on the basis of finished work with no stains.

The worker works from home, in conditions of extreme poverty; the work is undertaken during daytime, in areas of good lighting, such as a passageway (corridor) and the worker is constantly interrupted by family demands; work undertaken at night requires lighting and the majority use a white spotlight (flour?) however, some use yellow light or candles; the worker sits in a plastic or wooden chair, with or without arm rests, almost always with back support and some workers use cushions on the chair. Task number 1 - preparing the material - is often undertaken on a hammock.

The table describes all the processes:

1. Cleaning the fabric - with hands/scissors, removing fluff or stray threads; 10 mins
2. Establishing the number and location of the pleats - requires extreme concentration - 10 mins
3. Establishing the securing stitches or the beginning of the pattern - requires as many stitches as there are pleats - 10-20 mins
4. Cabling: 5-9 horizontal stitching lines which hold the pleats securely - 90 to 130 mins
5. Stitching/embroidering the main pattern/design feature; requiring use of up to 7 different coloured threads; highly concentrated work, requiring lots of needle-threading; rococo knots (where the thread is wound 25 times around the needle before securing the knot, to make a bauble) – 180 minutes for the first garment and a bit less for subsequent ones
6. Stitching the surrounding patterns - similar work to step 5, but requires even distribution of the remaining pattern - 4 to 8 hours
7. Final embellishments - such as stitching a zig-zag around the main pattern, or other features - 45-75 mins
8. Final cleaning - removal of all stray threads; ensuring the garment is stain free - may require some spot-cleaning - 5-10 mins

Some workers are given the work according to main steps, but this is not the most common:

1. Cabling - sometimes the workers give this work out to other family members, paid or unpaid
2. Embroidering - this involves all the stitching except the cabling and final embellishments
3. Final embellishments, includes the provision of minor details, e.g. Eyes; tails; mouths - this work may be done by the worker or given by the worker a family member to complete

Working time

Daily: workers work about 10 hours, divided into morning 9-11:30; afternoon 1-5pm and night work 7:30-11pm periods; the work is interrupted by personal needs, e.g. Drinking; toilet; meals and by family demands; breast-feeding mothers work while breast-feeding. All the household chores are completed before the start of the working day and during the breaks; this includes cooking, washing clothes, cleaning; child and elderly care. On the day that the finished work is returned to the employer, the worker may need to work 16 or 17 hours to catch up and complete

Weekly: most workers work the 7 days; a few take a break on Sunday morning. The weekly working hours are between 70 and 76. A weekly task is to go to a house in the neighbourhood where all the work is given out; checked and returned. Payment is made here, providing all conditions are met. This takes 3-5 hours since there are some 20 embroiderers gathering here on the day.

Posture for working: while the women start the day sitting as upright as their chair permits, they end up leaning over due to the ergonomic limitations of the chairs. Their necks, shoulders and backs bend over progressively through the day. Hands are constantly clasping due to the requirements of holding the fabrics and the right hand (sewing hand) is constantly in a pincer like position. Movements: many small, repetitive movements pushing and pulling the needle, and the index finger pads are constantly pushing the needle through the fabric.

Common injuries or complaints: inflammation of the hands; deviated bent fingers; permanent perforations of the finger pads that sometimes impede work - workers use isolating tape to protect fingers; back pain along the various parts of the back; burning pains in the back; inflamed eyes; throbbing of the eyes; eye blisters; headaches; pain in the arms and shoulders; exhaustion and stress induced by the pressure to produce more in order to improve earnings.