

# The Textiles and Dress of the Peoples of French Indochina

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This chapter will focus on the textiles and dress of the peoples encountered by Despujols during his travels in Indochina and depicted in his paintings and drawings from that period.

The early Mon-Khmer speaking inhabitants of Indochina wore clothing made of leaves and beaten bark-cloth, while weaving and clothing made of woven cloth was introduced to the region some two and a half thousand years ago by Tai-speaking peoples.<sup>1</sup> Gradually most of the people of Indochina came to wear clothing made of woven cloth, although in the 1930s some peoples in the highlands of central Vietnam, southern Laos, and northeastern Cambodia continued to make and wear bark-cloth.

The style of dress in Indochina prior to the advent of French colonialism often varied from one socio-cultural group to another, commonly serving as an ethnic marker. Within particular groups dress sometimes varied in accordance with social status, reflecting social hierarchies and specialization (e.g., religious specialists). This was mostly a feature of societies with feudal social structures rather than more egalitarian tribal groups, but people of a particular religious or political status even in relatively egalitarian groups sometimes wore special styles of clothing to indicate their status.

In the 1930s it was possible to discern roughly two broad categories of dress: that of the national majority and the various styles of ethnic minorities. There tended to be a geographical dimension to this since most members of the majority group lived in the lowlands, while most minority groups lived in the more isolated interior highlands.

It is also important to note that by the 1930s a small, but significant number of people in Indochina had also adopted Western styles of dress. This was especially true of more affluent people living in urban areas who saw such dress as a symbol of modernity.

## **Cambodia**

We will begin our survey of Indochinese dress in Cambodia, where Despujols first came into contact with the people of Indochina. Cambodian society in the 1930s was largely rural. Most people were farmers, but there was also a large percentage of the male population that lived as Buddhist monks for at least part of their lives. There was a small upper stratum of government officials and nobles, many of them living in Phnom Penh.

Other Southeast Asian peoples, such as the Tai and Cham,<sup>2</sup> had influenced dress styles in the various pre-colonial Khmer empires, as did India, and there was also a long history of trade in textiles from Champa, China, and elsewhere. During the reign of King Ramathibodey I, who converted to Islam and changed his name to Ibrahim (r. 1642-59), the court employed Muslim Cham weavers and neighboring Muslim societies influenced courtly dress during his reign.<sup>3</sup>

Political instability and adverse economic conditions in southern China in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in a large number of silk merchants, silk spinners, and silk weavers migrating to Vietnam, Cambodia, and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Cantonese silk merchants came to play a dominant role in the Cambodian silk industry and Cantonese weavers produced much of the cloth.<sup>4</sup> In addition to weaving textiles such as weft ikat patterned silk cloth (*sampot hol*), sometimes with Chinese-inspired motifs, the newly arrived Chinese also introduced Chinese-style trousers and shirts.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the advent of French colonial rule and under the French, Cambodia was a major regional producer of both cotton and silk cloth.<sup>6</sup> While Cotton was grown in the vicinity of Phnom Penh and to the north along the Mekong, while silk was produced largely from the area around Phnom Penh to the south towards the border with Vietnam along the Mekong.<sup>7</sup> Cambodia was largely self-sufficient in cloth production during the French colonial period, inexpensive commercial cloth and clothing were imported, as were particular styles of cloth and clothing. Thus, Stoeckel mentions batik patterned cotton cloth was imported from Java and Malaya, sometimes with Cambodian motifs.<sup>8</sup> The French colonial administration was keen to support the Cambodian cotton and silk industries for economic reasons and the weaving of silk cloth in particular as part of a mission to support what the French perceived as an important part of Khmer culture.<sup>9</sup> Promotion of Khmer silk weaving was reflected in creation of a silk weaving faculty

in the *École des Arts Cambodgiens* that was established by George Grosler in 1918.

While Chinese style cotton trousers (*kho kansaen*) had become more popular as everyday wear in Cambodia by the 1930s, many people continued to wear more traditional hip-wrappers (*sampot*) or Malay-style sarongs (*sarung*) and Siamese-style tubeskirts. *Sampot* are worn by the Khmer women drawn and painted by Despujols and he mentions them on several occasions in his dairy.<sup>10</sup> Also, while some people, especially in rural areas, might still go topless, Chinese, European and other styles of shirts and blouses had become increasingly popular. A piece of cotton cloth called a *krama* with red, blue or black checks worn as a head-cloth or sash was a popular accessory. There was also more expensive clothing worn for festive occasions or by government officials and elites. These included a variety of silk (or sometimes mixed silk and cotton) hip-wrappers called *sampot chawng kbun* (a piece of cloth tied in a knot/bundle and passed between the legs). These came in various styles including relatively plain *sampot pha muang*, weft ikat patterned *sampot hol* (*hol* referring to weft ikat) and supplementary weft patterned *sampot rbauk* (*rbauk* refers to supplementary weft) and *sampot sarabap* (using silk thread wrapped with metal for the patterning).

***Cham and Cham-Malay.*** The separation of the Cham into the Eastern Cham and Western Cham resulted in the development of a number of differences in the styles of dress of the two groups.<sup>11</sup> The Eastern Cham are those who remained in their homeland along the coast of southern Vietnam, while the Western Cham were refugees who fled to Cambodia in the face of the Kinh invasion of their homeland. Many of the Eastern Cham retained their Hindu religion, continued to weave on backstrap looms and a distinctive narrow frame loom, produced at least some their traditional textiles, and to wear their distinctive styles of dress. In contrast, the lives of the Cham refugees to Cambodia were drastically changed and as they adapted to their new home their style of weaving and dress began to change.

The Cham who fled to Cambodia in 1693 "did not own land and so the men worked as sailors and fishermen and the women as weavers."<sup>12</sup> They also came into contact with Muslim Malays (often referred to as Javanese in Cambodia) and converted to Islam. The blending of the cultures of these two peoples resulted in it becoming common in Cambodia to refer to them collectively as Cham-Malay. This contact and

conversion on the part of the Cham resulted in their adopting the Malay style of frame loom for weaving and to their weaving a variety of Malay-style textiles. Cham women also began to produce textiles for the general Cambodian market, including silk *sampot*.

During the French period, the Cham continued to produce silk and cotton thread and cloth for domestic and commercial purposes. Distinctive Cham-Malay textiles included check and warp ikat patterned sarong cloth as well as tie-dyed (plangi) patterned cloth (*kiet*) worn as headcloths and a variety of "weft-patterned silk weavings (following the Malay and Sumatran tradition) to make turbans and men's wedding trousers."<sup>13</sup> They also wove silk textiles, especially for the Phnom Penh market. In the case of *sampot hol*, while it is not always possible to distinguish those pieces woven by Cham from ones woven by Chinese or Khmer, in general the Cham tended to favor "smaller discreet motifs (including depictions of flowers and other plants and various geometric patterns" while textiles with "images of people, animals, and various Buddhist themes" were made by Chinese and Khmer weavers.<sup>14</sup>

## **Central Highlands of Vietnam**

French colonial rule in the Central Highlands was still relatively new in the 1930s when Despujols visited the administrative center of Buôn Ma Thuột and the surrounding countryside in Đắk Lắk Province. Most of the peoples living in the Central Highlands in the 1930s produced their own cloth for domestic use and trade in cloth and clothing was quite limited.

The Central Highlands is home to a couple of dozen distinct ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup> Broadly these can be divided into those groups that speak Mon-Khmer languages such as the Mnong and Hre and those that speak Malayo-Polynesian languages such as the Ede (aka Rade) and Jarai. This distinction is significant in relation to textiles and dress in that those that speak Mon-Khmer languages usually weave on a foot-braced backstrap loom and what in Vietnam is commonly referred to as an Indonesian style of backstrap loom, with a warp beam that is attached to an independent object such as a post or part of a house.<sup>16</sup> The Ede and Mnong are the main groups inhabiting Đắk Lắk Province, with Buôn Ma Thuột itself being located in territory of the Ede Kpa sub-group.

**Ede.** Ede dress is similar to that of the Jarai, who live to their north, and the dress of both is quite distinct from that of other groups in the Central Highlands. There are about half a dozen Ede sub-groups and the dress of all of these is roughly the same, with the exception of the Bih, who will be discussed below. The Ede trace descent matrilineally and property is owned by females and passed on from mother to daughter. This relates to clothing, in that even a man's clothing is owned by his mother or wife. Thus, "When a man is to be married his mother will make a loincloth for him; after the marriage this loincloth becomes his wife's property."<sup>17</sup>

Ede cloth is usually made of cotton, although bast fibers were used in the past.<sup>18</sup> Dark blue or black is the dominant color, with rust red being of secondary importance. Yellow may also be used as a highlight. Everyday clothing tends to have little or no decoration. Clothing with more decorative features tends to be reserved for wear on special occasions or is worn only by people of high or special status.

The loincloth (*kpin*) is a main traditional item of Ede male attire and in the 1930s it was still common for many men to wear only a loincloth, except in cool weather when they might drape a blanket (*aban* or *apvan*) over their shoulders. There are both relatively plain loincloths as well as those with more decorative features. The plain loincloths are narrower and shorter than the fancier ones and were everyday wear for most men. Many men only possessed such loincloths. Fancier loincloths were wider and longer and generally were worn only by men of relatively high status. The main distinguishing decorative feature of the fancy loincloth is a band at each end called a *kteh* featuring supplementary weft patterning in rust and white bordered by very thin yellow and green horizontal lines. Below this there is a row of white Job's tears referred to as the *kturdu*, followed by long strands of loose twined thread as fringe.

Most Ede men who wore a shirt wore a relatively plain short-sleeved pullover (*ao kok*). As with loincloths, there are also fancy pullover shirts that usually were only worn by men of high or special status. Such shirts are called *ao kteh* or *ao dech* (also spelled *ao dek*). They are longer than the common version, have long sleeves, and more decorative features. All of them have narrow bands with alternating warp float patterning down the sides of the body and at the end of the sleeves.<sup>19</sup> They also often have a decorative band along the bottom of the back of the shirt with

supplementary weft patterning that is similar to the band found on loincloths along with a row of Job's tears and fringe. In addition, they are decorated with rows of small lead disks (*ktiam*) along their sides. The *ao dek kwuk gru*, which features several rows of thick red yarn in the chest representing spread eagle (*gru*) wings, is most dramatic of these shirts. Only important men wore such shirts.

Male priests also wore distinctive clothing. Such attire included a red long-sleeved pullover shirt (*nga yang*), a red shoulder-cloth (*kulplak*), and a red shoulder-bag.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that in the Central Highlands shoulder-bags were not commonly worn and were only used by priests and other high status men.

Ede women wear a relatively long wrap-around cotton skirt (*eyeing*, *myeng*, or *yeng*) and sometimes a pullover cotton blouse (*ao*). As with male attire, there are simple versions of female clothing as well as fancier ones, with the fancier versions being generally worn by women of higher status. There are undecorated skirts called *yeng bong* and a variety of fancier ones (*yeng dech*, *yeng drai*, and *yieng piek*) with decorative bands featuring alternating warp float patterning towards the hem.<sup>21</sup> There are relatively plain short-sleeved pullover blouses called *ao bal* and fancier long-sleeved ones called *ao dech*.

Like men, women may also drape blankets (*aban* or *apvan*) over their shoulders in colder weather. These blankets feature sections with plain black and rust red warp-directional bands. The area with wide rust red colored bands also has narrower bands with alternating warp float patterning.<sup>22</sup>

The Bih are the southernmost Ede sub-group in Krông Ana district and are almost completely surrounded by Mnong. Their culture is strongly influenced by the neighboring Mnong. While Bih men dress much the same as their Kpa neighbors, the women's dress is distinctive. Particularly noteworthy are the short women's wrap-around skirts. The distinctiveness of their skirts is commented upon in Ede legends. Neighboring Mnong women also wear short warp-around skirts, but the coloring and decorative patterning of the Bih skirts is different. There are two types of Bih skirt. One is called *yêng sut* and features a rust red lower portion and black upper portion and the other style is called *yêng pal* and is largely black, but with the black area being covered with twill patterning. Both types of skirt also have narrow warp ikat patterned stripes, possibly reflecting Cham influence. Bih women's blouses are quite plain, except for a narrow strip of red cloth with

small lead disks along the top and pairs of distinctive simple red stitched lines coming down from each end of the red strip on the shoulders that are said to represent duck's feet.<sup>23</sup>

**Mnong.** The Mnong live to the south of the Ede. They speak Mon Khmer languages and are divided into numerous sub-groups. Those living in and around the regions visited by Despujols in Đắk Lắk Province include the Gar and Rolom (also spelled Rlam), who live near Lắk Lake. While the Mnong Rlam still occasionally make clothing from beaten bark-cloth (such as sleeveless blouses called *sui djar* or *krah djar* and bark-cloth shirts called *ao knut* or *ao knung*),<sup>24</sup> in general Mnong clothing is made from woven cloth that is produced on a foot-braced back-strap loom. During the 1930s the Mnong wove cloth with either bark or liana fiber or cotton thread (Howard and Howard 2002a: 68).

The French authors Huard and Maurice provide a description of Mnong dress around the time the Despujols was in Indochina.<sup>25</sup> They describe Mnong men as wearing loincloths and sometimes shirts, head-cloths, and blankets. They describe the loincloths, which they refer to as *troy* (the spelling *toroi* is used by some later authors), as being about 3 meters in length and being decorated with red pompoms and small metal tubes.<sup>26</sup> Mnong loincloths generally are narrower than those worn by the Rade. They describe two types of sleeveless pullover shirts and state that these appear to have been recently adopted.<sup>27</sup> The head-cloths worn by Mnong men at the time were made of plain black or blue (and rarely red) commercial cotton cloth. They mention that both men and women sometimes wore blankets draped over the shoulders.<sup>28</sup> The blankets are described as having an indigo blue background, with red, white, and lighter blue bands of patterning. Huard and Maurice also say that high-ranking men sometimes wore items of clothing obtained from the Kinh or Cambodia, but note that such clothing was quite rare. Among these items were red felt shirts from Cambodia that were worn by high-ranking chiefs.<sup>29</sup>

Huard and Maurice describe Mnong women as wearing wrap-around skirts woven out of either bark or liana fiber or cotton thread.<sup>30</sup> These skirts are considerably shorter than those worn by Ede women. They note that those made of cotton tend to have more decoration than those made of bast fiber. In addition to wearing blankets to ward off the cold, Mnong women also used them as baby-carriers. The Mnong call skirts *oi mbon*.

More recent Vietnamese accounts of Mnong dress by Chu and Ngo have given greater attention to differences in dress styles related to the status of the wearer.<sup>31</sup> As with the Ede, the clothing of higher status Mnong tended to have more decorative features. Thus, there is a common everyday variety of loincloth (*toroi brung*) that is undecorated, a variety with only some decoration (*toroi ning*), and one with numerous decorative features (*toroi nhong*) that is worn by high status men on special occasions. Likewise, there is a relatively plain style of sleeveless pullover shirt made of bast fiber (*lien toi* or *kroh*) and a fancier style of long-sleeved pullover shirt (*nuh kier*, *palto*, or *kronu*) that is worn by high status men that is similar to those worn by high status Ede men.

The shirts mentioned above point to the influence of Ede dress on the Mnong. Generally such influence is found mainly among Mnong sub-groups, such as the Gar, living closest to the Ede. Thus, wealthy or high ranking Gar men might wear a pullover long-sleeved shirt with the red eagle pattern on the chest (called a *bu klao*)<sup>32</sup> and a loincloth with a band of supplementary weft patterning at the ends in Ede fashion, although such clothing has certain decorative features that serve to distinguish it from that of the Ede.

**Hre.** The French commonly referred to the Hre as Davak (sometimes spelled Da Vach) and this is the term that Despujols uses in his portraits of a young Hre man and woman. Champa ruled over the Hre for a time and the neighboring Cham influenced their culture. Thus, they are sometimes called Cham Re. The Hre speak a Mon-Khmer language and weave cotton and bast fiber cloth on a foot-braced backstrap loom.

Hre men still commonly wore loincloths (*ha pen*)<sup>33</sup> in the 1930s. If they wore an upper garment it would be either a pullover shirt (*ieu klô*) made of cotton cloth that was decorated with bands with warp float patterning in a fashion similar to Hre women's skirts or a shirt made of commercial cloth and tailored in Vietnamese fashion. They also would drape blankets over their shoulders in cold weather.

Unlike most people in the Central Highlands, Hre women follow Tai fashion and wore a tubeskirt (*ka tu nhu*, *ka tu k'ri*). The skirt is relatively long. The ground is mostly a dark color, black or dark blue. Decoration includes bands with warp float patterning.<sup>34</sup> Women sometimes would wear a piece of cloth as a bodice or they might wear a variation of a Vietnamese style blouse. Such blouses are relatively

simple. They are sleeveless and fasten on the side. It was also common to wear a head-cloth.

## **Laos**

The route taken by Despujols to Laos, crossing into Laos at Lao Bào, overland to Savannakhet, up the Mekong River to the French administrative capital of Vientiane, and then up the Mekong again to the Lao royal capital of Luang Prabang took him first through territory occupied by Phuthai.<sup>35</sup> and then into the lowland areas along the Mekong occupied by the Lao.

The Lao share a common textile heritage with other Tai-speaking groups living in Laos such as the Phuthai and Lue. This includes producing silk and cotton and weaving both silk and cotton cloth, weaving cloth on roughly similar styles of frame looms, employing a similar repertoire of weaving techniques and decorative motifs, male dress including Chinese-style shirts and trousers, and female attire including a tubeskirt. That said, the textiles and dress of each of the major groups have distinctive features.

**Lao.** The Lao in Laos during the 1930s mostly lived in small villages, but some also resided in small cities or towns such as Luang Prabang and Vientiane. This was important in relation to their styles of dress since the dress of those living in smaller villages were less influenced by courtly fashion and European and other external influences than those in larger settlements like Luang Prabang, where Despujols spent most of his time in Laos.

For everyday wear most Lao women in the Vientiane area in the 1930s wore cotton tubeskirts (*pha sin*). The bodies of these were dyed indigo blue with weft ikat patterning. Such Wealthier women in Vientiane and other women on special occasions would wear silk tubeskirts with patterning employing supplementary weft or weft ikat techniques or a combination of the two. Such skirts have a decorative hem-piece or "foot" (*tin*). Lao women would also commonly add a shoulder-cloth (*pha biang*) to their attire when dressing for special occasions such as for going to temple. Everyday male attire included blue and white checked cotton hip-wrappers (*pa kama*) and plain dark blue cotton short-sleeved or long-sleeved shirts that are fastened with ties in the front. Wealthy and high status

men would wear Chinese-style shirts and trousers or, sometimes, European-style clothing.

Luang Prabang in the 1930s had distinctive styles of dress associated with the royal court. Especially noteworthy is the silk skirt-cloth decorated using gold and silver metallic thread. Initially this thread was locally made using the gimping process (twisting narrow strands of metal around silk thread), but commercial metallic thread began to be imported during the early colonial period. The patterns found on this cloth reflects influences from elsewhere in Laos reflecting how the royal court received textiles as tribute from throughout the country and employed weavers from elsewhere as well.<sup>36</sup> Khmer influence in traditional elite male attire was also still present in the weft ikat patterned silk hip-wrappers (*pha nung*) that were still worn on occasion by elite males, although wearing such attire had largely gone out of fashion in favor of European-style trousers.

Despujols left Luang Prabang over Colonial Routes 13 and 7 through Xieng Khuang Province, crossing the border at Nam Khan, and then heading towards the coast through Nghệ An Province towards the town of Vinh. This took Despujols through territory occupied by a number of different ethnic groups and he mentions several of them in his journal, such as the Phuan ("Thai-phuong"), Iu Mien ("Man"), Phong ("Kha-phong"), and Khamu ("Kha-mu") of Xieng Khuang Province.<sup>37</sup> He mentions that in Nghệ An Province after leaving Muồng Xén ("Muong Sen"), the capital of Kỳ Sơn District, they entered the territory of the Muong ["Muong Phu-thai"].<sup>38</sup>

While he did not produce drawing or portraits of any of these people he did write about the distinctive "tribal costumes" of the peoples in Xieng Khuang Province and remarked on how colorful they were.<sup>39</sup> He also mentions that Muong women in Nghệ An Province wore a blue tubeskirt or *sin* ("sinh") and an elegant blue or green "petit bolero".<sup>40</sup> Despujols meets the Muong and Iu Mien later in his travels in the highlands of northern Vietnam and does produce images of them. We will discuss their dress in the next section.

## **The Highlands of Northern Vietnam**

From Hà Nội, Despujols travelled north to the border town of Lạng Sơn and then travelled on to Cao Bằng. These towns are located within territory occupied by the Tay and Nung. While in Cao Bằng he visited the border outpost at Trà Lĩnh

("Trah-linh") where he encountered the Hmong ("Méo") and two sub-groups of Mien, the Dao Tien ("Man-tien") and Dao Coc ("Man-coc"). A short time later he went to the northwest, along the Black River to Hòa Bình, Sơn La, and Lai Châu, areas occupied respectively by the Muong, Black Tai, and White Tai. He travelled as far north as Sìn Hồ ("Tsinh-ho"), taking him to territory occupied mainly by Mien ("Yao") and Hmong ("Méo"). He also encountered small groups of "Lolo", Lu, and Hani ("Wouni") who were visiting the administrative center.

**Tay.** The French commonly referred to the Tay as Tho, and this is the term used by Despujols. Despujols describes Tho men and women wearing blue shirts/blouses and trousers.<sup>41</sup>

There are numerous photographs of Tay people from the French period and a few descriptions. Abadie describes the men as wearing Kinh ("Annamese") style clothing (i.e., Chinese-style), comprised of a tunic reaching almost to the knees, trousers, and a turban. The head-cloth/tunic fastens on the right side.<sup>42</sup> The clothing is made of cotton that is dyed dark blue and it is undecorated. He notes that wealthy men and those holding government positions wear clothes made of black silk like Kinh of similar status and notes that such local officials were required to wear such clothing under the Vietnamese imperial system.<sup>43</sup>

Abadie describes Tay women as wearing a long tunic that fastens on the right side, sometimes a white bodice similar to that worn by Kinh women, a pair of long trousers, a skirt that is shorter than the trousers, a sash around the waist, a turban, and leggings.<sup>44</sup> This clothing is also made of plain dark blue cotton cloth. The long-coat/tunic worn by women differs from a man's in some features: the collar is round and not standing and the sleeves and body are narrower. The skirt is a tubeskirt comprised of a waistband, body, and hem-piece sewn inside the body.

**Thai.** There are two major sub-groups of Thai in Vietnam, the Black Tai and White Tai. Despujols encountered the Black Tai in and around Sơn La and Thuận Châu and the White Tai in and around Mường Lay (Muong Lai), Lai Châu, and Chêng Neua ("Chin-neua"). The description of dress style below refers to the Black Tai and White Tai from this area. The dress of Black Tai and White Tai women living further to the south in Hòa Bình, Thanh Hóa, and Nghệ An is somewhat different. The basic style of Black Tai and White

Tai dress has not changed since the 1930s, beyond sometimes using different fabrics that are more readily available to day than they were in the past.

Black Tai and White Tai men's attire is a variant of common highlands Chinese-influenced dress, consisting of a long-sleeve shirt (*sua*) with ties in the front, long trousers (*suong*), and sometimes a head-cloth.<sup>45</sup> On occasion, men also wear a long-coat/tunic (*sua chai hi*) that fastens on the right side. All of these garments are usually made of cotton and dyed black. As with the Tay, Wealthy Thai men and government officials in the 1930s often wore Chinese/Kinh style long-coats or tunics and trousers made of silk. As Despujols mentions, the White Tai ruler Đèo Văn Tri (his Thai name was Cam Oum, d. 1908) dressed in a Chinese Mandarin's robe.<sup>46</sup>

Black Tai and White Tai women dress in a generally similar style, but with some distinctive features.<sup>47</sup> Thai women wear a blouse, tubeskirt, sash, head-cloth, and sometimes a long-coat/tunic. The blouse is tight fitting, has long sleeves, and opens down the front.

It is easy to distinguish blouses worn by White Tai and Black Tai women during the French period. Black Tai blouses were black and usually closed at the neck, while White Tai blouses were white (sometimes they were edged with strips of different colored cloth) and had a V-neck cut in the front. While the two styles of blouses remains essentially the same today, it has become increasingly common to make blouses from pink, light blue, green, or another bright colored cloth.

There are three styles of fastening blouses. Poor women use small round metal buttons or knotted cloth ties, while wealthier women use clasps made of silver called *mak pem*. These are sometimes referred to as butterfly buttons, but literally *mak* refers to fruit, a flower, or a branch, while *pem* means to attach. The clasp or knotted tie on the left side is referred to as male and the one on the right side as female—a designation that some associate with female fertility. Also, there should always be an odd number of clasps, button, or ties since odd numbers are associated with living things and are a symbol of imperfection and the need to develop, while even numbers are associated with the dead.

Both White Tai and Black Tai women wear a tubeskirt (*sin*) with a plain black or dark blue body that reaches to the ankles and a waistband (*kop hua sin*) that is usually made from a piece of cloth that is predominantly red. A strip of plain red cloth is also attached inside the hem.

The body of the tubeskirt was usually made of cotton, but wealthy women sometimes would wear skirts made of silk. A sash (*sai eo*) is tied around the top of the skirt. It is normally plain green and made of silk. The ends of the sash may be decorated with pieces of red cloth or embroidery. Wealthy women in particular always wear three silver chains (*sai ngan*) around their waist. A variety of small silver objects usually are attached to these chains as further decoration.

Thai women also often wear a head-cloth (*pieu* or *khan pieu*). White Tai women wear one made of plain white cotton, while Black Tai women wear one made of black or dark blue cotton. White Tai women also sometimes wear a large hat instead of a head-cloth.<sup>48</sup> Black Tai women often wear plain dark colored head-cloths when working in the field and ones that have a number of decorative features on special occasions. While until recently there were distinctive regional styles of the decorated Black Tai head-cloths, all of them have certain features in common. The middle part is left plain. Strips of plain red cloth are used as edging at the ends (*kop pieu*). Pieces of twisted red cloth are placed at the corners to form the head-cloth's "ears" (*hu pieu*). What they call the head-cloth's "fingerprints" (*kut pieu*) are attached in the center of the ends and on each side near the end of the cloth. These are small round pieces with a hole in the center made of various colors of thread (usually silk). The number of *kut* varies, but it is customary for to be an odd number. The central parts of the ends of *khan pieu* are decorated with embroidery or woven supplementary patterning that includes various geometric or representational motifs and groups of three parallel lines in a variety of colors. In addition to a head-cloth, married Thai women often wear their hair up in a bun and stick a *may mau cau* (aka *mau khat kau*) into the front of the bun. This is a silver coin (in the past usually a large French Indochinese coin) with a stickpin attached to the back.

During the French period Thai women also often wore long-coast/tunics (*sua ninh hi*) on special occasions or at home during cold weather. The basic difference between men and women's long-coats is that a man's opens on the right side whereas a woman's normally is a pullover that opens almost to the waist. Women's long-coats are mostly plain black and either made of cotton or of silk in the case of wealthy people. Additional pieces of cloth often are attached inside the collar and along the inside of the hem. While the long-coats of Black Tai women tend to be plain,

those worn by White Tai women are decorated with embroidery and appliqué along the collar and upper part of the front opening, long triangular pieces of decorative cloth reaching from the upper part of mid-shoulder downward, and sometimes with embroidery at the ends of the sleeves.

In the past White Tai women also often wore a decorative hip-cloth over their tubeskirt on special occasions. It is about one-quarter to one-third the length of the skirt and is made of a variety of colored pieces of cloth. These were worn during the French period, but they ceased to be worn after 1954.

The Thai produce textiles for a variety of other purposes as well. These include blankets (*pha lai* and *pha khuit*), cotton checked sheets (*pha*), mosquito nets (the decorative tops are called *cha poi*), curtains (*man*), bed covers (*phai lot sua*), face towels/handkerchiefs (*khan suoi na*), bath towels (*khan ap*), decorated pillow covers (*nah mawn*), and decorative baby carriers (*nah da*). Blankets are made by sewing two pieces of decorative cloth together and using pieces of plain cloth as edging and backing. In the case of *pha lai* (this type is also sometimes called *pha Tai*), the decorative cloth has a plain white cotton ground and supplementary weft decorative patterning woven with indigo cotton thread. The decorative cloth of a *pha khuit* (sometimes called *pha Lao*) has red silk (or sometimes cotton) warp threads and supplementary weft patterning using a variety of colors of silk thread.

**Lu.** There are relatively large numbers of Lu living in southern Yunnan and adjacent areas of northern Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos, but there are only a very small number of them living in northwestern Vietnam. Most of these Lu live to the north of Sìn Hồ in the Bình Lu area and they belong to the Black Lu sub-group.<sup>49</sup> This is the group of Lu that Despujols encountered.<sup>50</sup>

Durand gives a description of the dress of the Lu of Bình Lu during the French period a few years after Despujols visited the area.<sup>51</sup> Howard and Howard provide a more comprehensive contemporary description of Lu dress.<sup>52</sup>

Lu male attire includes variations of Chinese-inspired male dress and includes a dark blue or black cotton shirt (*soe*) and trousers and sometimes a dark blue or black cotton head-cloth. What distinguishes the clothing of these Lu men from that of men from other Tai-speaking groups is that Lu men's shirts and trousers have some decoration, whereas other Tai men's clothing is left plain. The shirts of these Lu men have thin strips of the embroidery around

the collar, down part of the sides, and across the pockets. The trousers have narrow bands of embroidery at the bottom of the trouser legs.

Lu women wear a head-cloth, blouse, and tubeskirt. The blouse (*soe*) has narrow long sleeves and fastens on the right. Normally it is made of black cotton cloth, but on festive occasions some women wear blouses made of silk. The blouses commonly are decorated in a variety of ways with appliqué, strips of colorful cloth, embroidery, and round (these are sometimes French Indochinese coins) and triangular shaped pieces of silver (or silver-colored metal) along the collar and down the front flap, down, around the waist, on the upper and lower parts of the sleeves, and sometimes elsewhere as well. The head-cloth is much longer than those worn by other Tai women, over twice as long as Black Tai head-cloths. It is made of black cotton cloth that is largely left plain except for several thin stripes at the ends. The head-cloth (*khat ho*) is folded and then sewn together at the end. There is fringe at each end and it is common to attach tassels of colorful thread and beads at one end.

There are two styles of tubeskirt: a simple one that is worn while working and as an underskirt and a fancier one that is worn on special occasions over a simple skirt. The simple everyday skirt (*sin khang*) is comprised of three parts. The waistband is made of a single piece of plain brown or rust colored cotton cloth. The body of the skirt is made of two pieces of cloth that are stitched together down the sides of the skirt. The body is usually woven with cotton thread, but silk thread is used as well sometimes. The Lao in Vietnam also employ this means of assembling the tube, while the Thai make the tube from a single piece of cloth that is sewn together on one side only. The top half of the body is divided into an upper part with plain wide brown or rust colored horizontal stripes that are divided by thin white and brown or rust colored stripes and a lower part with plain wide black horizontal stripes that are divided by thin white and rust colored stripes. The hem-piece is roughly the same length as the body and is made of plain black cotton cloth. There is a decorative panel attached to the hem-piece made of an odd number (often seven) of vertical stripes that are made from strips of patterned cotton cloth. In addition, a narrow strip of patterned cloth is attached along the bottom of the hem. The fancier skirt (*sin ko*) is basically the same as the simple skirt except that the lower section of the body features three bands with colorful supplementary weft

patterning woven using silk thread. There is a wide central band and narrower bands above and below it.

Other Lu textiles include towels/handkerchiefs similar to those made by the Thai and cotton blankets. The blankets are made by sewing two pieces of cloth together. They have a white ground and indigo or rust colored supplementary weft patterning. Unlike the Thai, the Lu do not add pieces of plain white cloth as edging and backing.

**Muong.** Despujols passed through the southern portion of Muong territory in Nghệ An Province and then spent time in the center of Muong territory in Chợ Bờ (Đà Bắc) and Hòa Bình.<sup>53</sup>

Tai-speaking peoples influenced Muong textiles and style of dress along with much of their culture. Cuisinier provides a detailed description of Muong textile production and dress roughly around the time when Despujols visited the area.<sup>54</sup> The Muong weave on frame looms similar to Thai looms. Although home-based weaving was still important at this time, the Muong made greater use of commercial cloth for their clothing than many of the other highlands peoples. Most of this commercial cloth was produced in the Vietnamese lowlands, but the Muong also purchased Chinese silk and Japanese cotton cloth. Male clothing in particular usually was made from commercial cloth.

Muong males wore clothing like that worn by Thai and Kinh males. This included Thai/Kinh versions of Chinese-style trousers and shirts and sometimes a Kinh-style long-coat. They also often would wear a head-cloth. These were undecorated and usually were white or brown although where Thai influence was especially noticeable they often were dark blue.

Muong female attire included a tubeskirt (*kai wal*), bodice, jacket/blouse or tunic/long coat, a sash/belt, and a head-cloth. The body of the skirt is made of plain dark blue or black cotton or silk (sometimes a combination of the two). A thin strip of red, green, or sometimes blue or yellow cloth is added inside the hem. Two or three pieces of cloth (*klok wal* or *kluuk wal*) are attached to the top of the skirt as waistbands. This is also the practice with neighboring Thai women. Each of these waistbands has a different name: *raang kluung*, *raang cho*, and *kao*. The first two of these are woven on a special loom and decorated with supplementary warp patterning. There are over three dozen of such patterns representing animals and plants.<sup>55</sup> Everyday skirt worn by most women would have only two bands, while skirts with three bands were reserved for special

occasions, except for high status women who would wear skirts with three bands as everyday wear. The upper band (*raang kluung*) is the most important of the bands. This band may feature a variety of motifs, but only noble women could wear those featuring a dragon (*kon roong*) motif.

The bodice (*kai yam*) worn by Muong women is similar to bodices worn by Kinh women, but shorter, reaching only to just below the breasts rather than down to the navel. The jacket/blouse is made of plain white or brown cloth. The sash (*kai tunh*) is usually made of plain green silk. The head-cloth is relatively short and is made of plain white, dark-blue, or black cloth. The tunic/long-coat (*kai ao chung*) opens in the front. Women may wear from one to three long-coats. There is a plain white one that is worn under a black one. Noble women might wear a third coat on special occasions. A plain white sash (*kai khan det ao*) is worn around the long-coat.

The Muong had a feudal system similar to that of the Thai and a person's feudal status influenced dress. Thus, high status Muong men those holding government positions sometimes dressed in Chinese/Kinh style like Thai men of similar status. Also, like their Thai counterparts, high status Muong women commonly wore fancy clothing on special occasions that was made of satins and brocades.

**Hmong.** The Hmong were commonly called Mèo during the French period. Despujols first encountered the Hmong during his trip to Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng<sup>56</sup> and then again during his trip to northwestern Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> There are Hmong from a variety of sub-groups living in the highlands of northern Vietnam: Flowery Hmong, White Hmong, Blue Hmong, Black Hmong, Red Hmong, and Na Hmong. Most Hmong in Vietnam belong to the Flowery Hmong and White Hmong sub-groups. The Striped Hmong are a sub-group of the White Hmong.

There are several descriptions of Hmong dress and many photographs of the Hmong from the French period. Thus, Diguet<sup>58</sup> and Abadie<sup>59</sup> give descriptions and photographs of White Hmong and Abadie provides a description of Flowery Hmong dress from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup>

The Hmong weave on a type of combination frame and backstrap loom. Usually living at high altitudes they grow little or no cotton and often must trade for cotton thread or cloth. They do, however, grow hemp to make thread and in the past this was especially common for making women's skirts.

Hmong male attire consists of trousers, a shirt, and a head-cloth. There is no specific difference between the

dress of men from the White Hmong and Flowery Hmong sub-groups. The trousers have a wide waist and are folded when worn. In the past it was common to hold the trousers in place with a belt made of woven cloth. Men often wear both a plain white under-shirt and a dark blue or black outer-shirt. The outer-shirt has long sleeves and fastens to the side. The outer-shirt does not fully cover the stomach and is shorter than shirts worn by highlands men from other ethnic groups. It is shorter than the under-shirt. Male head-cloths are made of plain dark blue or black cloth. They are not worn everyday, but only on special occasions.

Hmong women wear a long-sleeved blouse, short wrap-around pleated skirt, sash, apron, head-cloth, and leggings. The attire of females from each Hmong sub-group differs in some features and most of the names commonly used by others to identify the Hmong sub-groups are related to the predominant color of female dress.

White Hmong women wear a long-sleeved blouse that opens in the front and sometimes a bodice underneath the blouse. The bodice is usually made of plain white cloth. The blouse is made of plain dark blue or black cloth and decorated with strips of different colored cloth around the collar, front opening, across the bottom, around the upper part of the sleeves, and at the end of the sleeves. Blouses also sometimes have what French authors commonly refer to as a "marine" collar (i.e., a collar resembling a sailor's) In the case of the common blouses this decorative cloth consists of narrow pieces of plain cloth that is a different color than the body. With fancier blouses wider pieces of colorful cloth with embroidery and other decorative features is used. The blouses of the Striped Hmong sub-group differ in the manner of decorating the sleeves with a series of stripes that are a contrasting color with the body of the blouse.

The pleated skirts of White Hmong women are made of plain white cloth. The common version of the apron is made of plain dark blue or black cloth, while fancier versions are made of several pieces of differently colored cloth forming a series of rectangles. Photographs from the French period indicate that, like today, White Hmong women employ a variety of types of cloth for their sashes. The leggings are usually made of dark blue or black cloth. The head-cloth is made from a long piece of dark blue or black cloth that is folded and wrapped around the head a number of times. Most of the head-cloth is plain with small decorative pieces of differently colored cloth attached along the end.

Flowery Hmong female is easy to distinguish from that of the White Hmong. The Flowery Hmong blouse (*yao lenh*) fastens on the right side and never has a "marine" collar. The blouse is made of dark blue or black cloth and may be lined with plain white cloth. Strips of decorative cloth are attached around the collar, along the front flap, on the ends of the sleeves, and sometimes around the upper part of the sleeves as well. As with White Hmong blouses, the decorative cloth used on common Flowery Hmong blouses is narrower and has fewer decorative features than that used for fancier versions. In general, however, Flowery Hmong women's blouses are more extensively decorated than those of White Hmong women. Also, the Flowery Hmong sometimes use cloth decorated with batik patterning on their blouses, a technique that the White Hmong do not employ. When the weather is cold Flowery Hmong sometimes also wear a sleeveless jacket (*yao khou* or *yao khouv* using Hmong orthography) over their blouse that is made of plain dark blue or black cloth.

The Flowery Hmong pleated wrap-around skirt (*ta, taz*) is made of four pieces of cloth and it is quite different looking than White Hmong skirts. The waistband is made from plain dark blue or black cloth. The upper part of the skirt body is made from a piece of cloth that is decorated with blue and white batik patterning. The lower part of the skirt body is made from a piece of cloth that is decorated with multi-colored embroidery and appliqué and sometimes also with blue and white batik. The hem is made from a narrow piece of black or dark blue cloth.

Flowery Hmong aprons (*pao tu, paor tuv*) may be made solely of rectangular pieces of plain cloth or may include two decorated pieces of cloth over the plain cloth. Whereas White Hmong aprons layer single rectangular pieces of cloth, Flowery Hmong aprons feature two parallel pieces of cloth.

There are two types of Flowery Hmong sash (*hlang tru, hangz trus*). One is made from an undecorated piece of dark blue cloth. The other type is made from a shorter piece of cloth and features a section at each end that is decorated with embroidery and long fringe. Flowery Hmong leggings (*nrong, nrongz*) are made of white, blue or black cloth. The Flowery Hmong head-cloth (*phua, phuaz*) is made from a long piece of plain dark blue or black cloth.

**Iu Mien.** The French usually referred to the Iu Mien as Man, today the Vietnamese refer to them as Dao, and they are also sometimes called Yao. There are a large number of

Mien sub-groups in northern Vietnam.<sup>61</sup> Despujols encountered members of sub-groups he refers to as "Man Tien" and "Man Coc" during his two trips the highlands of northern Vietnam.<sup>62</sup>

"Man Coc" was used in the past for the Dao Ta Pan. The name Dao Ta Pan means the Dao with large planks and refers to brides wearing a headdress comprised of a rectangular piece of cloth (*dom paa*) mounted on a frame made of wood and bamboo.<sup>63</sup> The Dao Ta Pan may be divided into the Black Dao or Black Man and Red Dao sub-groups. This distinction reflects the color of the headdresses worn by women of the respective sub-groups. The Black Dao Ta Pan can be further divided into the Western Black Dao that lives to the west of the Red River (including those living in the Sìn HỒ-Bình Lu area), the Central Black Dao Ta Pan that lives east from the Red River from Mường Khuong in Lào Cai Province to the western part of Cao Bằng Province, and the Eastern Black Dao Ta Pan that lives in Bắc Giang and Quảng Ninh provinces. The Western and Central Black Dao Ta Pan dress more or less alike and their dress differs from that of the Eastern Black Dao Ta Pan who dress like the nearby Dao La Gang and Dao Quan Chet sub-groups (Howard and Howard 2002c: 58).

Abadie describes the Black Dao Ta Pan ("Man Ta Pan") in the Phong Thổ region (i.e., the Sìn HỒ-Bình Lu area).<sup>64</sup> In this description he mentions that wealthy women wearing clothing made of silk satin obtained from Chinese merchants rather than from locally made cotton.

Black and Red Dao Ta Pan men dress in the same fashion and their clothing includes trousers, a long-sleeved shirt, a sash, and a head-cloth or French-style beret. The clothing is made of dark blue cotton cloth. The trousers (*hou, houx*) have a wide waist and are folded and tucked. Men sometimes wear a sash around their waist that is made from a folded piece of cloth and decorated with embroidery at the ends. The shirt (*lui*) has long-sleeves and opens down the front. It is fastened on the right side with ties or small metal balls that are attached to a narrow flap. The outer edges of the front flap are decorated with narrow strips of colored cloth. The ends of the sleeves are decorated with several rows of embroidery. At the center of the back of the shirt there is usually a rectangle with embroidered patterning that represents the seal of the Mien's ancestral king, Ban Vuong. Head-cloths (*beu*) are made from long pieces of cloth that are plain except for some embroidery at the ends. Abadie mentions that silk,

which would have been obtained through trade, rather than cotton is sometimes used for the head-cloths.<sup>65</sup>

Dao Ta Pan women's dress includes trousers, a long-coat, bodice, head-cloth, sash, leggings, and sometimes an apron. Women's trousers (*hou, houx*) are made of dark blue cotton and are extensively decorated with embroidered patterns. Leggings for everyday wear are made of dark blue cloth that may be decorated with some embroidered patterning, while special leggings worn by brides are made of white cloth with extensive embroidered patterning. The long-coat (*lui*) opens down the front and is decorated with appliqué and embroidery around the collar and along the upper part of the front opening and sometimes at the ends of the sleeves as well. The front opening may also be decorated with a row of red pompoms on each side. The center of the back of the long-coat usually has the embroidered rectangle representing Ban Vuong and the bottom flap is extensively decorated with embroidered patterning. The bodice may be made of plain cloth or from cloth that is decorated around the neck and down the front with embroidery. Women may also attach a row of rectangular silver plates (the number of these reflecting the individual's wealth). Sashes are made from a piece of plain cotton cloth that is folded and decorated at the ends with fringe, beads, and sometimes with embroidery. Women sometimes wear aprons. The everyday version is relatively plain, while the special occasion version is larger and features extensive embroidered patterning. On special occasions, such as weddings, women commonly will wear two aprons, one in front and another in back.

As was mentioned above, Red Dao and Black Dao Ta Pan women wear different head-cloths. The Black Dao Ta Pan head-cloth is made from dark blue cotton cloth. Abadie describes it as "a huge turban of indigo cloth rolled some ten times around the head."<sup>66</sup> Red Dao women wear a head-cloth made of a rectangular piece of plain red cotton cloth with tassels made of red thread and decorated with beads and small silver coins attached to two of the corners (the head-cloth is folded so that these hang down the back of the head). On special occasions both men and women may wear a head-cloth made of folded plain dark blue cotton cloth that is then covered with a separate wrapper that is decorated with embroidery and sometime appliqué.

Dao Tien ("Man Tien") means Dao with coins. There are two sub-groups of Dao Tien, the Southwestern Dao Tien who live in Sơn La and Hòa Bình provinces and the Northern Dao Tien who live in Cao Bằng and adjacent provinces. Despujols

painted a Northern Dao Tien woman from Nguyễn Bình district in the eastern part of Cao Bằng Province (see p. 833, 887).

There are several written descriptions of Dao Tien dress and photographs of them from the French period.<sup>67</sup> Abadie mentions that a name that they use for themselves relates to their style of headdress rather than to coins: "They also call themselves Dzot Ton Mien (men with small turbans) better to distinguish themselves from the Man Ta Pan whom they call Dzot Toum Mien (men with great turbans)."<sup>68</sup>

Abadie describes Dao Tien men as wearing dark blue cotton trousers that are decorated with embroidery at the bottom of each leg.<sup>69</sup> They wear a dark blue cotton long-sleeved jacket that reaches to the knees and opens in the front.<sup>70</sup> It is decorated with small discreet embroidered patterns near the edges of the bottom of the front and at the ends of the sleeves. Three or more large silver disks (*lui cap*) that are split to function as fasteners are attached to the upper part of the front opening of the jacket. The embroidery often includes a dog with a human head motif. This is the mythical dog Phan Hu that is a founding ancestor of the Mien. A small rectangular piece of cloth hangs down the back of the jacket. It is embroidered at the top and copper coins (*sapèques*) are suspended from the cloth. The coins represent the vital spirits and there are seven of them on men's jackets and nine on women's. Men wear a sash around their waist that is usually made from a piece of cloth that is of a lighter color than the jacket. They also wear a dark blue head-cloth and, sometimes, dark blue leggings.

Dao Tien women wear a jacket that is similar to that worn by men except that, as mentioned above, it has nine rather than seven coins attached to the back and usually it has more embroidered patterning. It is common for everyday jackets worn by both men and women to have less embroidery than those worn for weddings. In addition, brides and grooms wear two jackets, the outer one being slightly shorter than the inner one.<sup>71</sup> Women wear a white bodice under the jacket. Unlike other Mien women who wear trousers, Dao Tien women wear a short wrap-around skirt. The skirt is dark blue and features rows of blue and white batik patterns across the lower half of the skirt. This batik patterning includes a wide band with zigzags and above this, two narrow lines of small disk-shaped patterns. Dao Tien women may wear a head-cloth made of plain dark blue cloth or, primarily on special occasions, one that is made of plain white cotton cloth with an embroidered

decorative square in the center near each end. Over this they may place a second piece of plain red cloth that often has small silver coins attached along with other items for decoration.

**Hani.** Despujols refers to the Hani as "Wouni" and mentions that the Hani he encountered in Sìn HỒ came from the north near the Chinese border.<sup>72</sup> This would seem to indicate that they were Black Hani, who live in Bình Lu and Bát Xát districts rather than Co Cho (Cồ Chồ) or La Mi (Là Mi) Hani who live to the west of Sìn HỒ in Mường Tè District.

During the French period both Diguet and Abadie mention the Black Hani, referring to them as "Ho Nhi", and briefly describe their dress.<sup>73</sup> Nguyễn Văn Huy notes that since the Black Hani live at such high elevations that they cannot grow cotton and trade with Giay and Mien for white cotton cloth, which they then dye dark blue with indigo (which they can grow).<sup>74</sup> The Co Cho and La Mi Hani, however, live at lower elevations and are able to grow cotton.

Diguet and Abadie describe Hani men as wearing typical dark colored highland men's attire (Abadie says it is like that worn by Hmong).<sup>75</sup> Hani women's clothing, however, is distinctive.<sup>76</sup> It includes a long-sleeved long-coat/tunic that reaches to the knees and fastens on the right side. The body of the long-coat is made of dark blue cotton cloth. The long-coat worn by Black Hani is relatively plain. If decorated, it will have a few rows of small silver disks along the collar and front flap and around the sleeves. In contrast, those of the Co Cho and La Mi Hani commonly have sleeves that are extensively decorated with appliqué. They also wear a bodice, trousers, sash, and leggings. Most of these items are undecorated. The head-cloth or hat worn by Hani women is undoubtedly their most distinctive item of clothing. It consists of a rigid frame that is covered with a piece of dark blue cloth and decorated with round silver disks, colorful fringe, and other decorative items.

**Lolo.** The Lolo that Despujols encountered in Sìn HỒ were members of the Black Lolo sub-group.<sup>77</sup> Despujols met four of them along with two Lu and decided to paint one of the Lu and none of the Lolo. While most Lolo live east of the Red River, mainly in Hà Giang and Cao Bằng provinces, a small number of Black Lolo live closer to Sìn HỒ in northern Lào Cai Province's Mường Khuong District. These would have been the Lolo that he met.

There are several photographs of Lolo and descriptions of their dress in early 20<sup>th</sup> century French accounts of the region,<sup>78</sup> but these tend to relate to the more colorfully dressed Flowery Lolo of Hà Giang Province rather than the somberly dressed Black Lolo of Mường Khuong. I have no doubt that had Despuojls met Flowery Lolo from Hà Giang we would have a portrait of one of them.

Bonifacy provides a photograph depicting two Black Lolo women from Cao Bằng Province that are dressed in the same manner as the Black Lolo of Mường Khuong.<sup>79</sup> They are dressed in a long skirt, apron, sash, blouse, leggings, and head-cloth.<sup>80</sup> The clothing is made of cotton and dyed black or dark blue. Most of the clothing is undecorated, except for the sleeves, which are decorated with narrow strips of multicolored cloth, and the head-cloth, which has colorful fringe and embroidery along the edges. Black Lolo men from Mường Khuong dress in Chinese-style black cotton shirts and trousers like those worn by the Tay.

## **Lowland Vietnam**

The Kinh (commonly called Annamites by the French) people comprise the majority population of lowland Vietnam. Styles of Kinh dress have changed over the years. Upper class Kinh generally wore colorful Chinese-style robes made of silk and featuring decorative patterns, whereas common people wore plain clothing made of cotton. Nguyễn Văn Huyền describes early styles of clothing of common people in southern Vietnam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as consisting of a loincloth (*kho*) for men and women a skirt (*man*).<sup>81</sup> In the north Chinese-influenced clothing, including long robes and trousers was increasingly popular, although women continued generally to wear skirts. As for the color of their clothing, common people "preferred the dark black colour or the dirty yellow colour of buffalo horns" and on ceremonial occasions they wore "sky blue" colored clothes. This 'dirty yellow' color was in fact a shade of brown produced by dye made from *cú nâu* (*Dioscorea cirrhosa* Lour. Dioscoreaceae) root. This color was especially popular in northern Vietnam.

The emergence of modern 'traditional' Kinh dress is linked to the fashion preferences of the Nguyễn lords. As part of wide-ranging reforms, in 1744 Nguyễn Phúc Khoát (aka Vo Vương, r. 1714-1765) proclaimed that within the territories in central and southern Vietnam under the control of the Nguyễn lords the "squalid garment of the Tonkinese" was to be replaced with "a new one stemming from

the Chinese" that included "trousers and buttoned dresses, instead of the skirt and dress with ties of the Tonkinese."<sup>82</sup> The new attire promoted by the Nguyễn lords included a long outer garment that the contemporary writer Lê Quý Đôn (l. 1726-84) described as an *áo dài* (long garment), but it was more commonly referred to as *áo tứ thân* (four-panel garment). After the Nguyễn lords gained control over all of lowland Vietnam and established the Nguyễn dynasty, Emperor Minh Mạng (r.1829-40) passed a similar ordinance for the north as well. Courtly inspired fashion included creation of the *áo ngũ thân* (five-paneled garment), which was loose fitting and featured wide sleeves.

Although as Nguyễn Văn Huyền (1995: 204) notes the "order was only obeyed by the rich classes", the edicts did set in motion a move to replace the older style of dress with Chinese-inspired fashion that gradually spread to the population in general.<sup>83</sup> Kinh male attire during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century included Chinese-inspired trousers and a shirt with wide sleeves and two pockets in the lower part. Wealthier and higher status men also often wore a long outer garment that had long tight sleeves and fastened on the right side. Such outer garments usually reached to the knees in the south and to mid-calf in the north. Men sometimes also wore a head-cloth (*khăn đóng*). Females commonly wore Chinese-style trousers and a blouse. In the south this combination was called *áo bà ba*, while in the north it was referred to as *áo càn*. The trousers were always made of plain black cloth (usually cotton). In the south the blouse was almost always made of plain black cloth in rural areas, while in the north it was common for them to be made of brown cotton cloth (using *củ nâu* root dye), although blouses might be made of other colored cloth as well (blue, green, etc.). In urban areas women sometimes wore blouses made of white cotton cloth or if wealthier made of silk or some imported fabric. On special occasions, especially in the north, women still wore *áo tứ thân*, comprised of a long robe, skirt, and a bodice (*yếm*) made of a square piece of cloth with ties at the neck and waist.

By the time Despujols arrived in Vietnam, while rural women still tended to wear either *áo tứ thân* (especially in the north) or dark colored blouses and trousers, new styles of *áo dài* had become popular in urban areas. These were modern tight-fitting long garments made of lightweight fabric. Artist Nguyễn Cát Tường (aka Le Mur, the wall) and his associates in Hà Nội created a modern version of the *áo dài* showing Western influence in the 1920s. A few years

later painter Lê Phô created another version of áo dài that more closely resembled the traditional áo tứ thân, but with trousers rather than a skirt. He and members of the Tự Lực văn đoàn (Self-Strengthening literary group) avidly promoted this new style of áo dài in the mid-1930s.

## Notes

1. Michael C. Howard, *Bark-cloth in Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2006), p. 9.
2. See Michael C. Howard, *From Dashes to Dragons The Ikat-patterned Textiles of Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2010), p. 128-30.
3. See John Ter Horst, *Ikat Weaving and Ethnic Chinese Influences in Cambodia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2011), p. 15; K. Uemera, *The Textiles of Cambodia: Cambodian Textile Culture* (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Art Museum, 2003).
4. Ter Horst, *Ikat Weaving*, p. 29.
5. Y. Henry, *Économique Agricole de l'Indochine* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1932), p. 432.
6. See Jean Delvert, *Le Paysan Cambodgien* (Paris/The Hague: Mouton, 1961), p. 277-9, 282-4.
7. See Jean Stoeckel, "Étude sur le Tissage au Cambodge," *Arts et Archeologie Khmers*, vol. 1, 1921-22, p. 396.
8. Stoeckel, "Étude sur le Tissage au Cambodge," p. 400.
9. Ter Horst, *Ikat Weaving*, p. 37.
10. Jean Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine et Autour du Monde* (Unpublished manuscript), p. 209-10, 215, 246, 286-7, 328.
11. See Michael C. Howard, "The Cham of Vietnam."
12. Howard, "The Cham of Vietnam," p. 128.
13. Dupaigne, "Weaving in Cambodia," p. 27.
14. Howard, "The Cham of Vietnam and Their Textiles," *Arts of Asia*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2005, p. 130.
15. See Michael C. Howard and Kim B. Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands of Vietnam* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2002).
16. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 10-11.
17. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 25.
18. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 100, 158.
19. See Howard, *A World Between the Warps: Southeast Asia's Supplementary Warp Textiles* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2008), p. 123.

20. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 100-1, 159.
21. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 29, 157, 161; Howard, *A World Between the Warps*, p. 122-3.
22. See Howard, *A World Between the Warps*, p. 126-8.
23. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 166-7; the Bih live adjacent to the marshes of Lắk Lake.
24. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 200; Howard, *Bark-cloth in Southeast Asia*, p. 237.
25. Paul Huard and A. Maurice, "Les Mnong du plateau central Indochinois," *Institut Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme, Bulletins et Travaux*, vol. 2, 1939, p. 91-113.
26. Huard and Maurice, "Les Mnong" p. 98-100.
27. Huard and Maurice, "Les Mnong," p. 102.
28. Huard and Maurice, "Les Mnong," p. 101.
29. Huard and Maurice, "Les Mnong," p. 106-7.
30. Huard and Maurice, "Les Mnong," p. 99-100.
31. Chu Thai Son. "Dân tộc M'Nông," in Ma Khanh Bang (ed.), *Các dân tộc ít người ở Việt Nam (Các Tỉnh Phía Nam)* (Hà Nội: Nha Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1984) p. 134; Ngo Duc Tinh, "Kien trúc vật rang tri dân gian," in Ngo Duc Thinh (ed.), *Văn Hóa Dân Gian M'Nông* (Buôn Ma Thuột: Sở Văn Hóa-Thông Tin Đắk Lắk, 1995), 128-9.
32. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 201.
33. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Central Highlands*, p. 187.
34. Howard, *A World Between the Warps*, p. 31-2, 141.
35. For a description of Phuthai textiles and dress see Linda S. McIntosh, "Weaving Symmetries: Phuthai Textile Production in Savannakhet Province, Laos," in Michael C. Howard (ed.), *Textile Traditions in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2012), p. 63-72.
36. Patricia Cheesman, *Lao Textiles: Ancient Symbols - Living Art*. (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1988), p. 124.
37. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 864.
38. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 867.
39. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 864.
40. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 864.

41. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 881, 884.
42. Maurice Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin de Phong-Tho à Lang-Son* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1924), p. 35; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland, with Special Reference to Thai Tribes* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001), p. 63. Also see Michael C. Howard and Kim B. Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples of Vietnam* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2002), p. 49.
43. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 35; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 63.
44. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 36; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 64. Also see Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 49-50.
45. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 80.
46. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 1071.
47. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 80-1, 94.
48. See the photograph in Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 90, fig. 5.8; Karl Gustav Izikowitz, *Over the Misty Mountains: A Journey from Tonkin to the Lamet in Laos* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004), fig. 136.
49. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 133.
50. See Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 997-8.
51. Maurice Durand, "Notes sur les Pays Tai de Phong-thô," *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, vol. 27 (n.s.), no. 2, 1952, p. 222.
52. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Daic Peoples*, p. 133-7.
53. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 1131-9; see Jeanne Cuisinier, *Les Mùòng: Géographie humaine et sociologie* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1946), map 4, facing p. 22, and map 5, facing page 28; also see Michael C. Howard and Km B. Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples of Northern Vietnam: Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien, and Tibeto-Burman* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2002), p. 19-21.
54. Cuisinier, *Les Mùòng*, p. 215-40.
55. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 24-6; Bui Thien, "Det trang tri cap vay người Mùòng," *Nghe Dep Que Huong* (Hòa Bình: Ty Văn Hóa Thông Tin Hà Sơn Bình, 1977).

56. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 1006.
57. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 995-6, 1005-6.
58. E. Diguët, *Les Montagnards du Tonkin* (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1908), p. 135.
59. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 153-4; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 199-200, 217-9.
60. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 155.
61. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 49-50.
62. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 883, 887, 995.
63. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 59.
64. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 128-9; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 176-8.
65. Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 128; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 176.
66. Abadie, *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 178; see Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 185, figs. 107 and 108.
67. Henry Girard, *Les Tribus Sauvages du Haut-Tonkin, Mans et Méos: Notes Anthropométriques et Ethnographiques* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1904), p. 62; Diguët, *Les Montagnards du Tonkin*, p. 118-9, Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 134-5; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 182-3; and see Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 61-6.
68. Abadie, *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 181-2.
69. Abadie, *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 182.
70. See Girard, *Les Tribus Sauvages*, plate 3.
71. Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 64.
72. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 1001, 1004.
73. Diguët, *Les Montagnards du Tonkin*, p. 149; Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 187; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 250.
74. Nguyễn Văn Huy, "Dân tộc Hà Nhì," in Bui Van Can (ed.), *Các dân tộc ít người ở Việt Nam (Các Tỉnh Phía Bắc)* (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1978), p. 345.
75. Diguët, *Les Montagnards du Tonkin*, p. 149; Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 187; *Minorities of the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland*, p. 250.

76. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 90-1.
77. Despujols, *Voyage d'un Refractaire en Indochine*, p. 997.
78. Diguët, *Les Montagnards du Tonkin*, p. 147-8, Abadie, *Les Races du Haut-Tonkin*, p. 176-8.
79. Auguste Bonifacy, *Les Groupes Ethniques du Bassin de la Rivère Claire (Haut Tonkin & Chine Méridionale)* (Paris: *Extrait des Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 1906), plate 20, fig. 1.
80. See Howard and Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples*, p. 77-8.
81. Nguyễn Văn Huyền, *The Ancient Civilization of Vietnam* (Hà Nội: Thế Giới Publishers, 1995), p. 203.
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