OUTER GARMENTS—INNER WARMTH
POWER, PROTECTION, PRESTIGE

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Above:
An ascetic Buddhist *yamabushi* (mountain warrior) would have worn this Taisho Period, circa 1930, un-dyed ramie fiber jacket for spiritual training on Mount Ohmine in the border area between Wakayama and Nara Prefectures, Japan. Worn as the outermost garment, the jacket offered psychological and spiritual protection to the wearer. The lines of Japanese handwriting are the names of the protective deities stamped in black ink. The large characters are Japan-ized Sanskrit letters called *"bon-ji"* and represent the seed syllable, or first syllable of the mantra of the deities over which they were hand-painted. Small red or cinnabar stamps were received at various mountain temples where the practitioner might have gone for further training or to rest between periods in the wild. The coat shows some wear, stains and holes. 38" long x 50" wide including sleeves.
Courtesy Cavin-Morris Gallery

Outer garments. Inner warmth. Many outer garments keep us warm. But an outer garment also confers status, whether it's a full-length mink coat that announces, intentionally or not, that we have the money to buy such an expensive item or a clergy member's robe designed not for warmth but to command emotion that might range from respect to awe. Outer garments also signal one's identity: a Brooks Brothers suit might yell Wall Street broker or banker while a beautiful Central Asian ikat robe might tell us not only a person's country but represent the small village that he or she calls home. Of course outerwear does also keep us warm, and protects us from both weather and aggression, functionally and sometimes—it could be argued—spiritually.

We might say, therefore, that there are three main and overlapping reasons for creating and wearing an outer garment: identity, function and status, or as the sub-title of this piece suggests: power, protection and prestige.

Among tribal people, the farther back in time we go, the more true these reasons. In the old days transportation and communication were limited and life wasn't anything like today. There were no supersonic airplanes or ultra high speed trains to take us from one place to another in less than a day; no cell phones, email or text messaging for nearly instantaneous connection. Then and to some extent now, the greater distance from a major center a tribe lived—the deeper in the jungle, the higher on the mountain—the less likely it was to know about the world outside. Perhaps there was little chance to meet and talk with and thus be influenced by others beyond one's own village.

Even people living in separate villages within a certain geographic region but from the same tribal group, who thus shared the same ancestors, the same climate and topographic conditions (and therefore similar types of housing, customs and food) would have been differentiated by the materials, patterns and colors of their clothing, including their outerwear. And within each village, the outer garments often would indicate

Left:
This lively early-mid 1900s Yao priest or shaman's robe from northern Laos or Yunnan, China, is densely embroidered with silk on indigo-dyed cotton, even along the front and back borders, and has a natural cotton lining. It is a prime example of an outer garment that was used for purposes of power and prestige: only the highest level priest or shaman could wear a robe of this caliber. The robe served to distinguish him from other members of the tribe and village and conferred great status upon him. The auspicious figures and symbols are imbued with spiritual power which in turn empowered the wearer to perform major ceremonies; and qualifies this robe as a spiritually protective vestment as well. It is in excellent and original condition with two small patches on the back border. 2'8" wide x 3'11" long.
Photographs: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

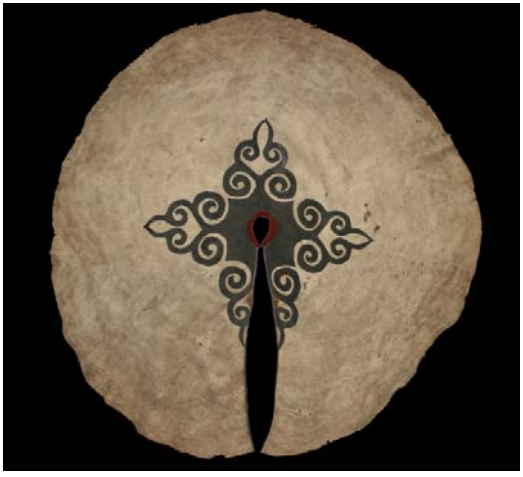
Reference: Wimolrat Jenjarassakul, Vichai Chinalai and Lee J. Chinalai, *"Yao Lan Tan Shamans' Robes"*, HALI, March-April 2000, pp. 94-99; *The Clothes and Ornaments of Yunnan Ethnic Groups,* p. 169; *Vietnam Museum of Ethnology* catalog, p. 55.

Above:
This mid-20th century man's hunting vest, *Dhu*, from the Ndora Region of Flores Island, Indonesia, is constructed of twined ramie fibers; the black color was created with animal blood and the red with natural dye from the sappan tree. The small circles with crosses are identified as "eyes": to make the vest more powerful, the number of eyes must be odd – in this example, four on the front and five on the back. 23"long including fringe x 19" wide.
Courtesy Mark Johnson

Reference:
Roy Hamilton, *GIFT OF THE COTTON MAIDEN, Textiles of Flores and the Solor Islands,* pp. 114-117.

the social and economic status of an individual as well.

Usually men and women wore very different types of outer garments with a further division between everyday and ceremonial or festival wear. For the women both types of outerwear also often reflected their age and marital status: for example, babies, young girls, adolescents, young unmarried women, married women, old women and widows could all be identified by their outer dress. In general men's outerwear varied somewhat less according to age or marriage and their daily attire was seldom as complicated—and was therefore less representative of tribal identity than the women's.



Right:
From the remote Ngari district in western Tibet, this circa 1930 rain cape is made from natural felted sheep's wool. Travelers covering vast distances on foot or by horseback wore these large garments over other clothing to protect them from the unpredictable harsh weather and the chilling temperatures of the Chang Tang Tibetan Plateau. The decorative cotton appliqué surrounding the collar at the four compass points (with one split at the opening) is in a pattern of four highly stylized bats that refer to both Central Asian and Chinese motif and meaning: bats symbolize good luck and longevity, offering spiritual protection as well. Approximately $5\frac{1}{2}$' diameter.
Courtesy Thomas Mond

We have been told that these shirts were worn by the fiercest and most honored warrior as he led his people into battle. As the shirt was intended to intimidate the enemy, we may consider that the hair used to cover the shirt was probably removed from many opponents as battle trophies. These were known to be extremely aggressive tribes who took heads in order to harvest the lower mandibles as war altar offerings. (In other cases, as in the hair-laden Karamajong hats of Uganda and Kenya, the hair used was that of family, past and present—a way of showing respect and continuation; the purpose is very different with the hair in these shirts.)
– Ignacio Villarreal

Collected through James Camp Gallery, New York City, in the 1980s, this rare early 20th century Bamileke or Bamum shirt from Cameroon is constructed of three approximately 8" strip-woven hemp panels in a basic tabby weave, hand-sewn together, with loose over-stitching at the neck. The shirt was most likely worn over another garment to provide an additional layer of protection and ease of movement. What makes it outstanding are roughly 1/4" tufts of human hair affixed in a repetitive pattern. The assorted textures and colors of the hair offer evidence of the varying ages of the people whose hair was utilized and speak to the evolution of the shirt as an outer garment that was both war trophy and spiritual and psychological charm to frighten and ward off the enemy. The condition is consistent, with wear but little damage. Approximately 37 1/2" wide x 39 1/2" long.
Courtesy Ignacio A. Villarreal

Above:
Little is known about these rare ponchos which were made for the war chiefs, *tokis,* of the Ranquel people, renowned warriors who at the height of power in the late 18th and early 19th centuries controlled a vast swathe of territory that extended from the eastern flanks of the Andes and across the vast grassland towards Buenos Aires in Argentina. Invested with profound social and cultural prestige, the *Ponchos de Sapo,* also called *Ponchos de Luna,* had shamanistic association as well: their sacred deep blue color and boldly minimalist tie-dyed circles relate to ancestral lineage and concepts of cosmic power. This circa 1900 example from La Pampa Province, Argentina, is made of indigo-dyed woven sheep's wool. 69" x 52".
Courtesy Andrés Moraga

References: Ruth Corcuera, *Ponchos de las Tierras del Plata*; A. Taullard, *Tejidos y Ponchos de Sud America.*

Right:
This early 20th century Yi woman's ceremonial robe from Malipo County, Yunnan Province, China, is spiritually and graphically powerful. Indigo-dyed cotton fabric serves as a solid contrasting background for colorful squares of mostly triangular silk appliqué on front and back: an occasional triangle may have been replaced and some show traces of paste from prior repairs. The bib area below the neck, front and back, is embroidered with silk in a rare pattern of archaic abstract dragons. The robe is in excellent, almost completely original condition.
Front: 4'4" wide x 3'4" long.
Back: 7'6" wide x 4'6" long.
Photographs: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

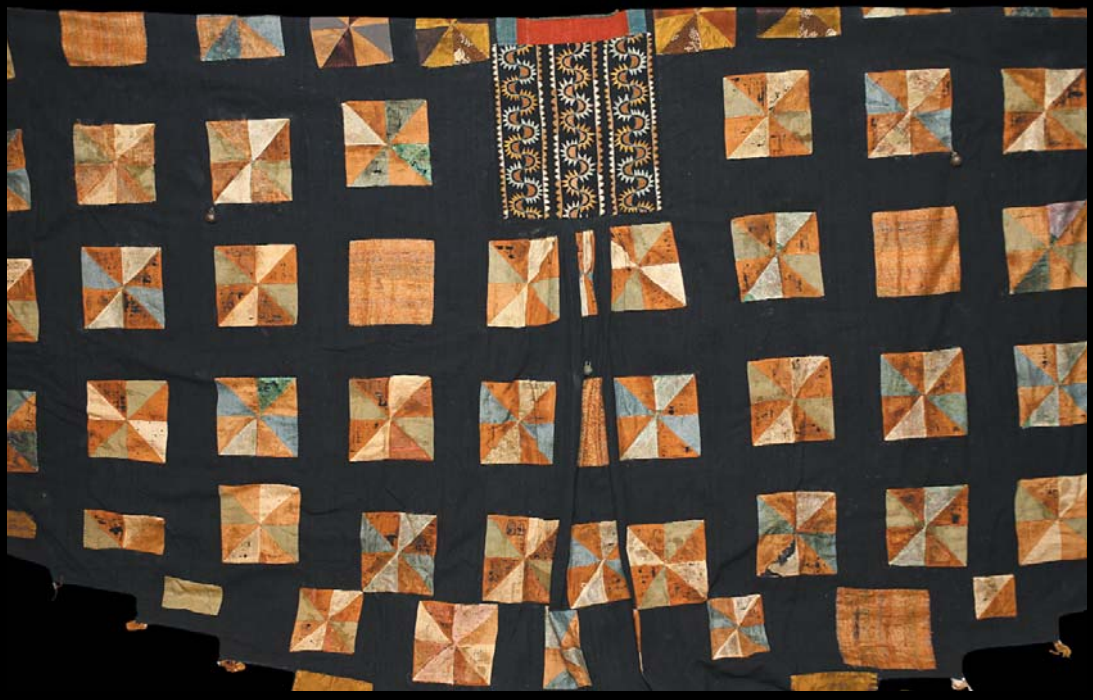
Reference: *The Clothes and Ornaments of Yunnan Ethnic Groups*, front cover and pp. 100 and 101.

Men's clothing as a reflection of status and occupation, however, particularly within militant, ceremonial, religious or spiritual realms, frequently was more diverse, elaborate and costly. This often was especially true in regard to their outerwear.

As short a time as a few decades ago, if you were to hike into the mountains or cross the desert in your Land Rover and come upon a man walking or riding his mule, horse or camel, you might be able to tell what tribe he belonged to and approximately where his village of wooden houses, thatched huts or gathering of tents was located from his outerwear. By careful observation, you might be able to calculate also what the climate was like where he came from for that time of year or at what altitude he lived. With greater knowledge, you could divine perhaps if he were married and his role and status within his community. All of this you might tell from one outfit or perhaps a single article of clothing.

Probably the first thing you would notice would be the overall shape of his outer garments. Do they cover his head and shoulders, envelope his legs, hang down to his waist or knees or all the way to his ankles? Are there buttons, clasps or hooks or does the garment hang loose, without closure? Perhaps it is for warmth; perhaps for ritual. As he grows closer you'll start to notice the patterns and colors on the clothing and this is when you will know more about this man's origin. Are there stripes, plaids, twill; what shapes or symbols catch your eye? What techniques were used to make the patterns? Appliqué? Ikat? Batik? Embroidery? Plain weave, damask weave, supplementary weft or warp? And finally, from what materials is it made? Were they found in nature, home-grown, recycled, traded? Are they rare for that part of the world? Are the buttons made from local products or did they come from a distance; are they fashioned from silver; do they include gemstones?

Now you are face-to-face and you know not only what part of the world this man is from, not only what tribe, but what sub-tribe; not only what geographic region, what village. Perhaps you can tell what class he is from and even his occupation. Perhaps you can see that he is a village elder, priest or shaman. If his status is high but his clothes are somewhat shabby, you might



Left:
The tie-dyed cross, or *tigma* (from Sanskrit meaning 'sharp' or 'pointed'), pattern on this early 20th century *chuba* from central Tibet with an unusual red ground symbolizes happiness, good luck and prosperity. Made of *nambu* cloth, the name given to the roughly 6-14" wide woolen cloth woven on a back-strap tension loom and used in a wide variety of Tibetan textiles for its warmth and durability, this soft fleecy robe was made from especially high-quality Himalayan sheep's wool, which attests to its probable use by an aristocrat or government or monastic official. 70 1/2" wide including sleeves x 58" long.
Courtesy John Ruddy

Reference: Trinley Chodrak & Kesang Tashi, *Of Wool and Loom: The Tradition of Tibetan Rugs*.

Right:
An urban woman from a wealthy upper class family was most likely the owner of this vibrant late 19th century silk ikat coat from Gazi Antep in Southeastern Turkey. Although it would have covered a dress, its purpose was more related to beauty and prestige than to any form of physical protection. 52" cuff to cuff x 54" long.
Courtesy Gail Martin Gallery

Far Left:
This most unusual early 1900s four-piece set of jacket and pants of crocheted(?) human hair, boots of hair and homespun woven hemp, and red woolen sash was worn by a Yi man from Yunnan Province, China. Whether the use of human hair signifies a ceremonial use, lack of resource for other raw material for clothes-making or was selected for its natural warmth is a matter of speculation. It does seem to indicate the garments are from a region that is both remote and at a high, cold elevation and that even if they served a psychological or spiritual function, as also implied by their minimal use, they were physically protective as well. The jacket and pants are in excellent condition; the sash has some fading; the boots have slight fraying at the top edges: since boots probably wore out faster than the articles of clothing, this well-used pair conceivably may not be original to the set, although it appears to be from the same time period. Jacket front is 48" wide including sleeves x 38 1/2" long; the back is 48" x 31". Pants have a 28" waist x 36" length. The sash is 6 1/2" x 65"; the boots have 11" wide feet and are approximately 16" high.
Photographs: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

conclude that this is a respected person from a poor village and thus you know not only about him, but also about the community in which he lives—all this from one individual's outerwear. That was then.

This is now. These days even in the most remote areas things have changed and continue to change rapidly. As tribal groups are exposed to other cultures and customs, as a global economy expands and as economics pull more women into the marketplace and away from both the passion and tediousness of producing and embellishing their families' clothing, dress as a symbol of tribal identity and status is losing its significance. The use of an outer garment to designate who one is and where he or she comes from is rapidly becoming more of a conscious choice than a traditional given. Eventually, maybe even within one or two generations, we won't see outer garments that show the location, identity or status of tribal people except in museums or private collections. This is why an exhibit of international ethnographic outerwear with its staggering range of cultural representation, functional significance and aesthetic diversity is of such importance today.

Of course there is a lot more to talk about than this: the world may be shrinking but it is still vast and the types, styles, materials, meaning and rationale for outer garments, though in many ways increasingly limited, fortunately still exist, and all outwear—whether a woolen overcoat embroidered with fine silk or metallic

Above:
Both men and women of a branch of Yi people from western Yunnan Province, China, wore goat skin vests like this handsome early-mid 20th century example. Made from two pieces of goat skin, the vests were especially suited for working in the fields and for the cold high altitudes, providing protection from both wind and rain. Among some sub-tribes the cape was also part of a woman's dowry. The skins were used in their nearly natural form with the tails intact and just a slight cut contour under the arms. Approx. 18" x 34".
Photographs: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

Reference: *The Costumes and Adornments of Chinese Yi Nationality Picture Album*, p. 143.

Right:
This circa 1900 front-opening *sua tin seo,* made with the quite rare and sumptuous gold-colored silk of some of the earlier robes, was created to be worn over a plain blouse and tube skirt by a Tai woman from northern Laos or Vietnam at the funerals of her parents-in-law. The separately added wide section of the hem in a silk and cotton supplementary weft pattern on cotton was either woven by the wearer herself or her mother-in-law, or was a gift from the woman's husband who acquired it through trade. This type of robe was also worn by female priests whose presence and prayers helped guide deceased souls to the gravesite. This robe is in excellent original condition. 24" wide x 58" long.
Photograph: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

Reference: Jane Puranandа, editor, *The Secrets of Southeast Asian Textiles, Myth, Status and the Supernatural*, pp. 210 and 211.

threads; an ikat robe; a jacket of braided human hair; a handspun cotton wrap or a cape constructed from the tails of forty horses - is important to all of us for a variety of reasons. Our outer garments provide warmth and protection, participate in rites of passage, help to secure our places at work and in society; and perform all of these roles in combination.

This observation must lead us to at least one inescapable conclusion: that no matter where we come from or whether we are members of a tribe, village, town or city, we are all the same under the fur, fiber, felt, pelt, cotton, velvet, wool, linen, leather, bark, hemp, polyester, satin, rayon, silk or... skin.

This outstanding early 1900s Yi tunic is from Malipo County, Yunnan, China. Indigo-dyed cotton fabric has squares of predominantly triangular silk appliqué on front and back. It is in original and excellent condition with exceptional batik, embroidery and the rare addition of bands of appliqué on the sleeves. The front, 47" wide including the sleeves x 46" long, has an idiosyncratic asymmetrical design peculiar to this particular type of dress. The back is 55" long.
Photograph: Chadri Chinalai
Courtesy Chinalai Tribal Antiques, Ltd.

Reference: There is some debate about this tunic being a Malipo man's version of the large and impressive women's ceremonial robe (page 19), but its overall small size and the narrow construction of the bodice may be evidence that it too was worn by a woman.