

TRAVELOGUE

EDITORIAL WRITTEN & STYLED BY KATHARINA KOPPENWALLNER /STYLING
PHOTOGRAPHER ALBRECHT FUCHS (ALL IMAGES OF MR. YU-CHIA HSU)

In addition to her styling work for advertising productions and editorial contributions, Katharina Koppenwallner is devoted to her International Wardrobe project, which takes her on travels around the globe to explore ethnic fabric and clothing traditions.

BALKANS/SOUTH CHINA/YUNNAN



Bulgaria was under Ottoman rule for centuries. Despite the country's national resurgence in the 19th century, it is still influenced by its neighbours. The quilted gilet is highly reminiscent of an Anatolian kaftan or Central Asian chapan.



INDOCHINA/VIETNAM

Endless rice terraces stretch out before your eyes, the north-west of Vietnam is one of the coldest, most mountainous regions in the country and is home to over 20 different ethnic minorities. "Moi" is the name given to the people of the hill tribes by the Vietnamese, meaning "the wild ones", or "savages".

The province of Lao Chai is home to the Lao Chai and Hmong peoples. Both peoples belong to the Austro-Asiatic language group and are animists, which means they believe in the spiritual force of nature.



Dresses worn by the Hmong and Yao generally use simple sewing techniques. Their richness comes from the decorations, embroidery, batik designs and use of appliqué.

The Yao people are expert embroiderers. The embroidery takes the form of a range of motifs symbolising plants, trees and children, while the red appliqué stripes represent the Red River. The Yao say that a man can determine the character



of a woman by the type of stitches in the embroidery on her trousers, along with her enthusiasm, her resolve and her tastes.



BOLIVIA/PERU

The Aymara and Quechua people eke out a living in the breathtakingly beautiful Altiplano. At the start of the colonial period, only the tribal leaders wore European-style clothing. Later, the Spanish forbade the wearing of indigenous clothing and the European style became mandatory. This ban became the basis for South American national dress. It was primarily the cuts of the cloth that changed – not the materials or decorations.

The Spanish also brought the technique of knitting with them to South America.

The knitted hats worn by the men, known as chullos, are so finely knitted that it takes about a month working on such a masterpiece. At Lake Titicaca, it is a question of pride for the men to be able to knit their own hat. Just by looking at the colour and pattern, it is possible to tell where someone is from, whether or not he is married, and what his status is.



SOUTH CHINA/GUIZHOU

The Dong people are an ethnic group from southern China. They live in the province of Guizhou in the Landian region, which means "indigo".

When you enter a Dong village, you are sure to spot traces of indigo very quickly. There are pots filled with deep-blue, thick liquid sitting outside the doors, or raffia barrels filled



with blue powder. The stones bear traces of indigo, the stream is slightly purple in colour and the dyed bolts of cloth hang outside the houses as if Christo had forgotten to finish packing.

Each woman has her own system for dyeing cloth with indigo and then treating the textiles with herbs, egg white or even blood. It's rather like having a secret recipe for apple tart from your grandmother – always fiercely protected.

The dyeworkers have the most to do during the winter, when people have to spend less time on agricultural work. Every day, the women work hard, stirring the pots and dipping the fabric, dyeing it over and over again, washing it, drying it and beating it, beating it, beating it until the clean bolts of cloth are tied up and stacked in wooden chests ready to be used later.

The dyeworkers have the most to do during the winter. Every day, the women work hard, stirring the pots and dipping the fabric, dyeing it over and over again, washing it, drying it and beating it, beating it, beating it until the clean bolts of cloth are tied up and stacked in wooden chests ready to be used later.





ROMANIA/KALOTASZEG

People say that Romanian national dress features an “ordered sense of imagination”. This refers to its many contrasts, its marked appreciation of decoration and sumptuousness, along with a strict symmetry and sense of order.

To this day, Romania is a multi-ethnic country. This has always been good for national dress, which helps people express their desire for identity and a sense of belonging.

The ethnic Hungarian national dress from the Transylvanian region is particularly beautiful. The first thing you notice is its incredible volume, which results from the construction of the individual items of clothing. This represents health and fertility.

The embroidery featured on the women’s dress are the only embellishments that can be found in the churches of Kalotaszeg in north-western Transylvania. Women wear the red embroidered designs, while blue is for men and black is used for the list of the names of the dead.

The most famous person to appreciate the textiles of Kalotaszeg was the Hungarian composer, Béla Bartók. His collection of national dress and ethnic art from Kalotaszeg can be found in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest to this day.

UZBEKISTAN

The key piece of clothing for the Uzbeks is a long coat known as a chapan. Since it was historically seen as impolite in Central Asia to show one’s hands, the sleeves on the chapan used to be extremely long. This is no longer the case for purely practical reasons. Traditionally, they were also lined with lots of different types of fabric because, distracted by all the colours and patterns, any evil spirits would no longer be able to find the wearer of the coat. There was a good idea behind it.



In Central Asia, there is therefore an aesthetic tradition of combining all kinds of fabrics, patterns and other elements: animal prints, ikat fabrics, panne velvet with diamanté patterns, lace, stripes, checks, gold teeth – all this can be found in one woman’s outfit. Perhaps this is due to the influence of the old trading routes.

The Fergana Valley in north-eastern Uzbekistan is known for its ikat manufacturing. Ikat is made by binding and dyeing the yarn before a fabric is woven. This is where Gucci and Dries van Noten, for example, also have their ikat fabrics made if they want to include them in their collections.



Under the Soviets, the landscape of Uzbekistan was transformed into a cotton monoculture.



This had devastating consequences, because the water required for growing the cotton was taken from the Aral Sea. One of the biggest environmental disasters in the world, which is now practically impossible to reverse, was triggered here as a result.