

= Ao dai =

The áo dài is a Vietnamese national costume , now most commonly worn by women . In its current form , it is a tight @-@ fitting silk tunic worn over pants . The word is pronounced [???w zâ?j] in the North and [???w jâ?j] in the South . Áo classifies the item as a piece of clothing on the upper part of the body . Dài means " long " .

The word " ao dai " was originally applied to the outfit worn at the court of the Nguy?n Lords at Hu? in the 18th century . This outfit evolved into the áo ng? thân , a five @-@ paneled aristocratic gown worn in the 19th and early 20th centuries . Inspired by Paris fashions , Nguy?n Cát T??ng and other artists associated with Hanoi University redesigned the ng? thân as a modern dress in the 1920s and 1930s . The updated look was promoted by the artists and magazines of T? L?c v?n ?oàn (Self @-@ Reliant Literary Group) as a national costume for the modern era . In the 1950s , Saigon designers tightened the fit to produce the version worn by Vietnamese women today . The dress was extremely popular in South Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s . On T?t and other occasions , Vietnamese men may wear an áo g?m (brocade robe) , a version of the ao dai made of thicker fabric .

Academic commentary on the ao dai emphasizes the way the dress ties feminine beauty to Vietnamese nationalism , especially in the form of " Miss Ao Dai " pageants , popular both among overseas Vietnamese and in Vietnam itself . " Ao dai " is one of the few Vietnamese words that appear in English @-@ language dictionaries .

= = Parts of dress = =

Tà sau : back flap

Nút b?m thân áo : hooks used as fasteners and holes

?ng tay : sleeve

???ng bên : inside seam

Nút móc k?t thúc : main hook and hole

Tà tr??c : front flap

Khuy c? : collar button

C? áo : collar

???ng may : seam

Kích (eo) : waist

The ao dai can be worn with a nón lá (conical leaf hat) , a style associated with Hu? . On weddings and other formal occasions , a circular headgear called a kh?n ?óng is worn .

= = History = =

= = Before the Nguyen Dynasty = =

For centuries , peasant women typically wore a halter top (y?m) underneath a blouse or overcoat , alongside a skirt (váy) . Aristocrats , on the other hand , favored a cross @-@ collared robe called áo giao l?nh , which bore resemblance to the Chinese Hanfu , Korean Hanbok , and the Japanese Kimono . In 1744 , Lord Nguy?n Phúc Khoát of Hu? decreed that both men and women at his court wear trousers and a gown with buttons down the front . Writer Lê Quý ?ôn described the newfangled outfit as an áo dài (long garment) . The members of the southern court were thus distinguished from the courtiers of the Tr?nh Lords in Hanoi , who wore áo giao l?nh with long skirts .

Chinese style clothing was forced on Vietnamese people by the Nguy?n dynasty . Trousers have been adopted by White H 'mong . The trousers replaced the traditional skirts of the females of the White Hmong . The tunics and trouser clothing of the Han Chinese on the Ming tradition was worn by the Vietnamese . The Ao Dai was created when tucks which were close fitting and compact were added in the 1920s to this Chinese style . Trousers and tunics on the Chinese pattern in 1774 were

ordered by the Vo Vuong Emperor to replace the sarong type Vietnamese clothing . The Chinese clothing in the form of trousers and tunic were mandated by the Vietnamese Nguyen government . It was up to the 1920s in Vietnam 's north area in isolated hamlets wear skirts were worn . The Chinese Ming dynasty , Tang dynasty , and Han dynasty clothing was ordered to be adopted by Vietnamese military and bureaucrats by the Nguyen Lord Nguy?n Phúc Khoát (Nguyen The Tong) . Chinese clothing started having an impact on Vietnamese dress in the Ly dynasty . The current Ao Dai was introduced b the Nguyen Lords .

= = = 19th century = = =

The áo t? thân , a traditional four @-@ paneled gown , evolved into the five @-@ paneled áo ng? thân in the early 19th century . Ng? is Sino @-@ Vietnamese for " five . " It refers not only to the number of panels , but also to the five elements in oriental cosmology . The áo ng? thân had a loose fit and sometimes had wide sleeves . Wearers could display their prosperity by putting on multiple layers of fabric , which at that time was costly . Despite Vietnam 's tropical climate , northern aristocrats were known to wear three to five layers .

The áo ng? thân had two flaps sewn together in the back , two flaps sewn together in the front , and a " baby flap " hidden underneath the main front flap . The gown appeared to have two @-@ flaps with slits on both sides , features preserved in the later ao dai . Compared to a modern ao dai , the front and back flaps were much broader and the fit looser . It had a high collar and was buttoned in the same fashion as a modern ao dai . Women could wear the dress with the top few buttons undone , revealing a glimpse of their y?m underneath .

Vietnamese garments throughout the centuries :

= = = 20th century = = =

= = = = Modernization of style = = = =

Hu? 's ??ng Khánh Girl 's High School , which opened in 1917 , was widely praised for the ao dai uniform worn by its students . The first modernized ao dai appeared at a Paris fashion show in 1921 . In 1930 , Hanoi artist Cát T??ng , also known as Le Mur , designed a dress inspired by the áo ng? thân and by Paris fashions . It reached to the floor and fit the curves of the body by using darts and a nipped @-@ in waist . When fabric became inexpensive , the rationale for multiple layers and thick flaps disappeared . Modern textile manufacture allows for wider panels , eliminating the need to sew narrow panels together . The áo dài Le Mur , or " trendy " ao dai , created a sensation when model Nguy?n Th? H?u wore it for a feature published by the newspaper Today in January 1935 . The style was promoted by the artists of T? L?c v?n ?oàn (" Self @-@ Reliant Literary Group ") as a national costume for the modern era . The painter Lê Ph? introduced several popular styles of ao dai beginning in 1934 . Such Westernized garments temporarily disappeared during World War II (1939 ? 45) .

In the 1950s , Saigon designers tightened the fit of the ao dai to create the version commonly seen today . Tr?n Kim of Thi?t L?p Tailors and D?ng of D?ng Tailors created a dress with raglan sleeves and a diagonal seam that runs from the collar to the underarm . Madame Nhu , first lady of South Vietnam , popularized a collarless version beginning in 1958 . The ao dai was most popular from 1960 to 1975 . A brightly colored áo dài hippy was introduced in 1968 . The áo dài mini , a version designed for practical use and convenience , had slits that extended above the waist and panels that reached only to the knee .

= = = = Communist period = = = =

The ao dai has always been more common in the South than in the North . The communists , who gained power in the North in 1954 and in the South in the 1975 , had conflicted feelings about the ao

dai . They praised it as a national costume and one was worn to the Paris Peace Conference (1968 ? 73) by Vietcong negotiator Nguy?n Th? Binh . Yet Westernized versions of the dress and those associated with " decadent " Saigon of the 1960s and early 1970s were condemned . Economic crisis , famine , and war with Cambodia combined to make the 1980s a fashion low point . The ao dai was rarely worn except at weddings and other formal occasions , with the older , looser @-@ fitting style preferred . Overseas Vietnamese , meanwhile , kept tradition alive with " Miss Ao Dai " pageants (Hoa H?u Áo Dài) , the most notable one held annually in Long Beach , California .

The ao dai experienced a revival beginning in late 1980s , when state enterprise and schools began adopting the dress as a uniform again . In 1989 , 16 @, @ 000 Vietnamese attended a Miss Ao Dai Beauty Contest held in Ho Chi Minh City . When the Miss International Pageant in Tokyo gave its " Best National Costume " award to an ao dai @-@ clad Tr??ng Qu?nh Mai in 1995 , Th?i Trang Tr? (New Fashion Magazine) claimed that Vietnam 's " national soul " was " once again honored . " An " ao dai craze " followed that lasted for several years and led to wider use of the dress as a school uniform .

= = Present day = =

No longer deemed politically controversial , ao dai fashion design is supported by the Vietnamese government . It is often called áo dài Vi?t Nam to link it to patriotic feelings . Designer Le Si Hoang is a celebrity in Vietnam and his shop in Saigon is the place to visit for those who admire the dress . In Hanoi , tourists get fitted with ao dai on Luong Van Can Street . The elegant city of Hu? in the central region is known for its ao dai , nón lá (leaf hats) , and well @-@ dressed women .

The ao dai is now standard for weddings , for celebrating T?t and for other formal occasions . It 's required uniform for female teacher (mostly from high school to below) and female student in common high school in the South ; no require about color or pattern for teacher when student use plain white for school uniform . Companies often require their female staff to wear uniforms that include the ao dai , so flight attendants , receptionists , bank female staff , restaurant staff , and hotel workers in Vietnam may be seen wearing it .

The most popular style of ao dai fits tightly around the wearer 's upper torso , emphasizing her bust and curves . Although the dress covers the entire body , it is thought to be provocative , especially when it is made of thin fabric . " The ao dai covers everything , but hides nothing " , according to one saying . The dress must be individually fitted and usually requires several weeks for a tailor to complete . An ao dai costs about \$ 200 in the United States and about \$ 40 in Vietnam .

" Symbolically , the ao dai invokes nostalgia and timelessness associated with a gendered image of the homeland for which many Vietnamese people throughout the diaspora yearn " , wrote Nhi T. Lieu , an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin . The difficulties of working while wearing an ao dai link the dress to frailty and innocence , she wrote . Vietnamese writers who favor the use of the ao dai as a school uniform cite the inconvenience of wearing it as an advantage , a way of teaching students feminine behavior such as modesty , caution , and a refined manner .

The ao dai is featured in an array of Vietnam @-@ themed or related movies . In Good Morning , Vietnam (1987) , Robin Williams 's character is wowed by ao dai @-@ clad women when he first arrives in Saigon . The 1992 films Indochine and The Lover inspired several international fashion houses to design ao dai collections , including Prada 's SS08 collection and a Giorgio Armani collection . In the Vietnamese film The White Silk Dress (2007) , an ao dai is the sole legacy that the mother of a poverty @-@ stricken family has to pass on to her daughters . The Hanoi City Complex , a 65 @-@ story building now under construction , will have an ao dai @-@ inspired design . Vietnamese designers created ao dai for the contestants in the Miss Universe beauty contest , which was held July 2008 in Nha Trang , Vietnam .

The most prominent annual Ao Dai Festival outside of Vietnam is held each year in San Jose , California , a city that is home to a large Vietnamese American community . This event features an international array of designer ao dia under the direction of festival founder , Jenny Do .

= = Gallery = =

Ao dai