

Costumes and Ornaments of the Spitians

Head-dress:

Earlier a fur lined skull-cap called *lingzima* was popular among the men, but it is rarely worn these days. The monks go about bare-headed when they are not engaged in religious ceremonies. The women generally remain bare-headed. During winter, they wear a fur-lined cap with a high dome, known as the *shamo*.

Costumes:

The traditional dress in Spiti is very different from the neighbouring areas of Lahaul and Kinnaur. The men wear a long loose frock or coat that is called by various names depending on the material from which it is made. It is called *rigboay* if it is of wool, *thakpa* from sheep or goat skin, and *charlak* if it is of cotton lined with goat or sheep fur. It is tied at the waist with a sash called *kira*, which gives warmth to the back and abdomen and also creates a capacious space within the dress in which various essential items can be stored. A pair of tight woolen trousers called *suthan* cover the legs. A silk or cotton under-coat called *tochay* are also worn by those who can afford it. The coat is the natural colour of wool, while the other garments are red or black in colour. The trousers are tucked into almost knee-length leather-soled boots with felt tops called *lhams*. The boot-tops are tied with a string to keep the cold out. Earlier, the boots were filled with flour to keep the feet warm, but this practice has now been abandoned. Astrologers dress in red, while the monks dress in yellow or red. The women wear a loose cotton frock called *tochay*, or a woolen frock-coat called *rigboay* over loose red or black trousers. Under the frock, they wear a long, full-sleeved shirt called *hoojuk*, which is collarless and buttonless. A bright, striped, silk sash called *kira* is tied at the waist. The boots are similar to the men's and is tucked into the trousers in the same fashion. Colourful embroidered stoles called *lingches* are worn wrapped around the back, neck and shoulders during festive occasions. Earlier there used to be two distinct types of *lingches* – the *rabze lingche* of lower Spiti, and the *lal lingche* of upper Spiti. However, the techniques of weaving these have almost been lost, and only an adaptation of the *lal lingche* exists today. There are strings called *taki* attached to the two edges of the *lingche*. These are pulled across the shoulders to the front of the neck to tie the stole. A fur-lined cape called *lokpa* is also worn. Nowadays, homespun woolen shawls are slowly replacing the *lingches*, which are used only for festive occasions. The style of draping shawls in Spiti is quite unique. It is folded once and draped over the shoulders and tied at the chest with a pin called *dikra*. The women have an intricate hair-do, consisting of number of small plaits interwoven with yak's hair and gathered at the end into a very elaborate set-up, arranged with yak's hair and turquoise beads.



Pichoon



Konta



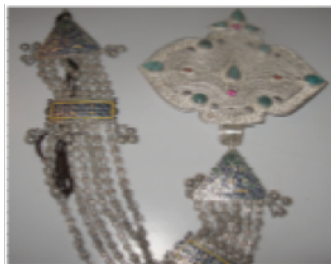
Lokpa

Ornaments:

Both the men and women of Spiti are very fond of wearing ornaments. Men and women both wear an *ultik*, a necklace made by stringing together corals, ambers, mother-of-pearls and turquoises. The men wear a short pendant of turquoise and coral called *nayu* in their ears and glass bead necklaces on the neck. *Gau* (a small copper box with finely worked gold or silver front with a glass orifice in the centre within which an amulet is kept) is worn around the neck by men as well as women, for magical protection. Both wear a silver bangle called *dugu* on the right arm. The women wear gold or silver ear-rings, studded with transparent stones, called *konta*. *Phuli* is a gold nose-pin and *nyagthag* is a silver ornament studded with precious and semi-precious stones that adorns the breast. A large hollow shell called *dhunglak* is worn as a bangle. A string of small bells and beads called *chimkut* is worn in the hair. Tassel pendants called *chabu* are worn as a necklace. A *picboon* (silver plate embedded with stones) is hooked to the dress near the abdomen. The *perak* or *berag* is a head-ornament worn only by married women, covering the entire head and hanging down the back over their elaborate hair-do. It consists of a padded cloth or felt, studded with turquoises, glass beads, and silver talismans. Small silver chains are used to attach it to the ears and forehead. Unmarried girls wear a single turquoise on the forehead, near the hair parting. This ornament is called *ghyool*.



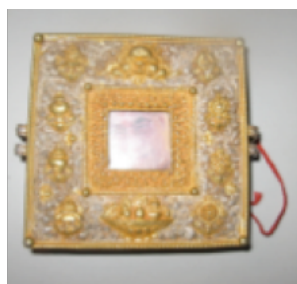
Lingche



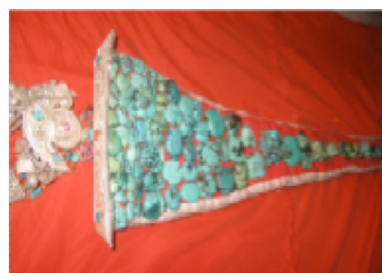
Dikra



Ultik



Gau



Perak