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Autor: [s.n.]
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FROM SWITZERLAND TO SIAM...



Photo Debraine

Not only diplomatic and economic relations exist between Switzerland and Siam, but also ties of mutual esteem and understanding. Switzerland in fact had the honour for a number of years to include among its visitors His Majesty King Pumipol, who spent his youth in Lausanne and studied at the University here. We thought it fitting to recall this at the beginning of these few pages devoted to more commercial relations between the two countries, so far apart on the map, but close in the interest they bear each other.

The photograph opposite was taken last year at Lausanne station when H. M. the King Pumipol and H. M. the Queen Sirikit, were leaving Switzerland on their way home to Siam.

Notes about Swiss Textiles in Thailand

Significant among Swiss imports into this country are textiles. It is estimated that during the first half of 1951 Siamese women purchased several times as much Swiss material as they did in the past two years.

Practically unknown a few years ago, spun rayon has now become very popular both in Bangkok and in Northern Thailand. When visiting several of the principal centers producing domestic handwoven textiles, Swiss materials could be seen next to Thai silks in many shops. In Korat and in Chiangmai, traditionally renowned for such handicraft, Swiss products are competing for popularity.

A striking feature to a newcomer to Bangkok is the fact that the majority of Siamese women wear plain

blue or black skirts of spun rayon with white blouses often made of voiles, organdies, cotton novelties or embroideries. Yellow seemed to be in favour last year, but the colours most commonly worn now are navy blue, nigger brown and black, while red apparently is the choice for Sundays or public holidays. Well-known Swiss firms are exporting mousselines, printed cottons and organdies, the choice of the better classes, to this market.

South-East Asia and in particular Thailand, lies in the tropical belt and the year may be divided into three seasons. The hot months last from March to the end of May when the rains begin to set in up to the beginning of November. There is a short period of



These photographs taken in Bangkok show young Siamese society girls, dressed in Swiss fabrics. One cannot but notice how the whiteness of fine St. Gall cottons enhances the charm of these young Siamese women.

Organdie from *Stoffel & Co., St. Gall.*

bracing climate lasting from November to February. Consequently the need for warm clothing, woollens or other heavy materials does not really exist. The demand is more for light qualities in which Swiss manufacturers specialize. Siamese women have a flair and taste for dressing which show their charm and gracefulness to advantage. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at if today there are as many shops selling Swiss materials as there are selling watches.

In Bangkok as in so many other towns in this country, Indians are leading in the textile trade, followed by Chinese. It is possible to see shop after shop in a number of streets displaying first and foremost, the « must » article, viz., the everyday blue and black material and at times fancy rayon. Organdies, embroideries and laces are to be seen more frequently these days.

It is indeed a matter of regret that the majority of the Thai populace should have discarded their traditional costume; the costume worn by women in the



Here is the usual outfit worn by Siamese women, the light blouse and dark skirt referred to in our article.



Fancy fabrics of fine Nelo cotton, equally popular in Siam and in Europe, by J.G. Nef & Co., Herisau. Model BALMAIN.

remote parts of the country or the resplendent costumes to be seen at theatrical performances, reminiscent of the splendid pageantry of old, cause the visitor to appreciate all the more the splendor of the Siamese costumes, and there can be not the slightest doubt that in the days of *Anna and the King of Siam* the sight of a crowd presented a magnificent scene. Now and again it is still possible to see some high dignitary or dignified lady wearing the traditional attire, but they belong to the past.

This feeling of regret seems to have given way to delight at seeing how westernized the young generation have become.

French fashions are adopted with good taste and the low lines on dresses taken from some famous

Parisian designer are often underlined by a magnificent Siamese jewel. Fashion magazines and periodicals are extremely popular. Paris and New York fashions, featuring slight alterations to suit the climate, may be seen at cocktail parties and social functions. In their manner of dressing, Siamese woman add a new touch — it is an inimitable touch due to the perfect blending of East and West. Without any doubt, the women of Thailand today are the best evidence that an imported fashion may be adapted to perfection. In the case of Thailand it is more than an adaptation, it is an evident success.

Let us add that what has been said here with regard to Swiss fabrics in Siam, could equally well refer to the same products on other Far Eastern markets.



Photo Matter

The fabrics sought after smart women on the markets of South East Asia are the same as those so popular with European women; as here, for example, this printed organza by **Heer & Co. Ltd., Thalwil.**
Model: Maison Gack, Zurich.