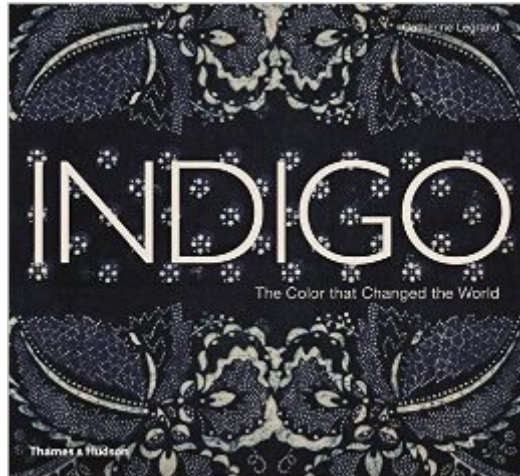


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# Indigo: The Color That Changed The World



## Synopsis

The ultimate reference on indigo dyeing techniques across the world, and a compendium of the most beautiful samples of indigo textiles. Gloriously pieced together, much like the fine garments it portrays, this colorful book takes the reader on an international tour of indigo-colored textiles, presenting a huge swathe of remarkable clothing, people, and fabric. Catherine Legrand has spent more than twenty years traveling and researching the subject, and she has a deep knowledge of the ancient techniques, patterns, and clothing traditions that characterize ethnic textile design. The book explores the production of indigo textiles throughout America, China, India, Africa, Central Asia, Japan, Laos, and Vietnam. It features more than 500 color photographs and is completed by specially commissioned drawings that provide close-ups of patterns and cloths. 500+ color illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It is both astonishing and extremely misleading to see this book advertised by Thames and Hudson as 'the ultimate reference work on indigo dyeing techniques across the world', since the author herself admits that her approach is 'modest', that her book 'does not claim to be exhaustive', and that it relied for its reference information on my classic *Indigo: Egyptian Mummies to Blue Jeans* (this is obvious in its text, images and geographical coverage, and has been pointed out by independent reviewers). Indeed, how can a book claim to be an 'ultimate reference work' when it has no notes and no index? It is a nice collection of photos, though most of them resemble images already published elsewhere.

This book is pretty, with lots of pictures. Nice on the coffee table. Could be visual inspiration for textile design students. The information - and much of the field research locations - seems very familiar (the author says Jenny Balfour Paul's book on indigo is her main source). It's a nicer production than Legrand's previous book on textiles from around the world (which I once skimmed through in the library, but didn't buy as the text was superficial and boring). But I was disappointed that her experience of putting ethnic clothing collections together didn't come through - that would have been interesting to know more about (by the way, I tried to find Legrand's boutique in Paris recently, but her business closed last summer, and it's now a certain sheepskin boot store). Instead we just get a watered down version of Balfour Paul, who really knows her stuff and did years of original research. In an ideal world, I would recommend buying Balfour Paul for the fantastic primary information, photography and quality of writing (and her talks if you get a chance), including myths and techniques of dyeing with indigo, and Legrand for the additional textile patterns pictured.

I was surprised to come across this book on Indigo by Legrand that has almost the same book description as the well known acclaimed classic on the subject by Dr Jenny Balfour-Paul. It covers much of the same ground (literally, in the same places and dye workshops) yet claims to be 'the ultimate work of reference' on indigo - though there isn't even an index! It does, however, have lots of pretty pictures for those who like coffee table books. As a textile enthusiast I treasure Jenny Balfour-Paul's 'Indigo: Egyptian Mummies to Blue Jeans' (British Museum Press, 2011) - I cannot better this description of it in an internet review: 'The book is beautifully illustrated to show how the dye has featured in different cultures and communities throughout the world. Jenny's experience as a batik artist and teacher is evident in her exploration of how indigo has been portrayed in folklore and through art, exemplified by some stunning photographs of textiles.... Nothing is left out that anyone with an interest in the development of indigo could possibly want to know, from the agricultural and botanical origins to the commerce and economics of the dye.' I have given Legrand's book one star for its pretty pictures, even though many of them don't seem very original. However, if you want a beautiful book that covers all aspects of Indigo and is a genuine work of reference, then there is only one book to buy, and that is Balfour-Paul's popular work, based on over twenty years of deep original research and a love for her subject that shines out from its pages.

This is rather a good book. But then again it should be, as it is virtually a carbon copy of leading textile authority Jenny Balfour Paul's Indigo: Egyptian Mummies to Blue Jeans I'm not quite sure how the author or publisher can justify bringing out a book whose only material difference from

Balfour Paul's work is that it is substantially worse, but it seems to me that the kindest thing that can be said about this is that in the music business they'd call it a 'cover version' or a 'tribute'. The fact that the author acknowledges her substantial debt to the original author hardly gets her off the hook, because this isn't an academic thesis, rather a commercial publishing venture designed to extract cash from the lucrative indigo market that Balfour Paul did so much to single-handedly create. Despite its widespread appeal, the topic of indigo is highly specialised and exists within a knowledgeable community, and within that community no one is going to be fooled by the misleading publicity material that is currently being used to market this book. To be honest I am mystified by how little background research the publishing staff at Thames & Hudson did. If they knew about Balfour Paul's book, they must have known how dangerously close to plagiarism this book is: and if they didn't, then they no longer deserve to be considered as serious publishers in the field of textiles. Either way T&H have not come out of this covered with glory and the very least they should do, if they have any manners at all, is apologise to Jenny Balfour Paul and withdraw this title from sale.

First I will say that the photos are absolutely fabulous, and I appreciate that. That said, there are two conditions that I take issue with. (1) The binding of the book is of poor quality. In my book between pg. 144-145, the threads separating the folios are pulling apart, and the folios are detaching from the binding. (2) There are errors in the text. I was in Japan at Nii san's sukumo production facility. See page 45: "A rake and a shovel...." this is not a shovel - rather this tool smooths the earth floor in the nedoko; "....used for preparing sakumo." correct spelling is sukumo; "....nedoko, meaning 'room of the ai' " is incorrect. Nedoko means 'sleeping room'. These problems cause me to doubt or distrust the accuracy of the text throughout, and prevent me from recommending this book wholeheartedly to students and to other indigo dyers.

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