

Medieval Textile Study Group

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First Things First:

The biggest news is that the Medieval Textiles Study Group has a new coordinator, so it will go on.

A big Thank You goes to Desiree Koslin for her excellent work in starting and coordinating this group in the past. Without her extensive knowledge and interest in this subject this group would not exist today.

As of this writing, there are 42 people interested in this group. Some are members from last year, some are those who sent Desiree their names and enquired as to how to join. Some things change, some remain the same:

Dues: will be the same for now: \$7.50 USD per year in the US, \$17 USD overseas.

Participation: Mandatory. An article and/or a swatch and draft every year. When you send in your article, you will send in enough for all the members. Overseas members will send in one copy (except in the case of swatches) and I will make enough photocopies for the rest of the group. This is because I do not have ready access to a photocopy machine.

Time period: about 500 AD to 1500 AD, not limited to Eurasia, and the dates are not hard & fast, as technology was not as quick then as now.

Note: If you had special arrangements with Desiree, let me know as she did pass this info on, but I want to make sure no one gets forgotten in the changeover.

A Short Autobiography:

I am 32 years old, a wife, and a mother (3 sons: 6, 4, & almost 3 yrs old). I have a BS in Physics from Loyola University of Chicago, and am 2 classes (Art History & Design II) from a minor in Studio Art. I learned to weave & spin in 1983 from Bev Atseff in conjunction with becoming a demonstrator at the Old Graue Mill Museum in Hinsdale, Illinois.

I have spent most of my life in Illinois, but did spend 3 years on St. Simons Island, GA, where I taught pottery and rediscovered weaving. I

enjoy weaving much more now than I did when I first learned.

I also coordinate a scarf exchange September thru December every year, and as of this year, I also coordinate a card exchange (June). Most of this is started thru e-mail correspondance. My e-mail address is above, and my web page is at:

<http://www.angelfire.com/il/faena>

I will put up a page there for this study group, and it will include a form so that those who wish to send information via e-mail but are limited to the local library for internet connections may do so.

I hope to get to know all of you better, and am looking forward to seeing everyone's contributions. Because of the time period, one need not have a multishaft loom to participate. Please feel free to write about any weaving equipment (including how to make or weave on said equipment) as well as writing about textiles themselves. Bibliographic notes are encouraged so the readers may do further study if they are interested.

The Proto Lampas to Lampas Project

This project was outlined in Newsletter 19, and included a translation of an article by Regula Schorta, a textile researcher at the Swiss Abegg Stiftung near Bern. Everyone was to choose one of the stages of lampas or proto lampas, and weave samples. It is not important to use hand spun or vegetable dyed yarns.

As noted in this previous newsletter, Peggy Hoyt has a 30 page summery from a previous CW study project which she would be happy to photocopy & mail to you for \$2 (cost).

The types of Proto Lampas & Lampas in the article can be described (in short):

Proto-lampas: 2 types 1/2 twill & 1/3 twill

Lampas:

1." Plain weave ground, first pattern shot bound by binding warp ½ Z twill, Second pattern shot appearing on the back in ½ S twill."

2."Pattern formed by pattern weft contrasting the plain weave ground in 1/3 S twill, on the back, negative pattern in 3/1 twill"

3. "Complimentary weft & brocading shots in ½ S twill... the plain weave like fabric consisting of ground shot and main warp is not complimented by the binding warp... main warp and pattern warp work independently of each other."

4."Plain weave textiles with complementary pattern weft [which] can readily be seen... The production condition for this type of lampas should be the same as for that of the plain weave textiles with complementary weft - however with three shafts instead of two for the pattern warp."

Note: per the article, all of these are reversable fabrics, that is, the pattern appears on both sides of the fabric.

The exchange date was to be May of this year, that's next month. I understand that under the circumstances, this is too soon for most of you. So the deadline will be extended to November 1 of this year (1999).

Tablet Woven Lampas?

Sue Palterman and Peter Collingwood, in the "Impossible Tablet Weave" challenge have done what appears to be Lampas using tablet weaving and extra stick and string shafts for the pattern colors. This was done in response to a discussion on the tablet weaving list on the internet where someone said it could not be done. For more info, see:

<http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/impossiblelw.html>

So, you may not need a high tech loom to do the Lampas project!

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Celtic Color and Clothing Traditions

By Searles O'Dubhain ©1999 Summerlands

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Research on colors in Celtic dress was performed to determine what colors were worn by the various classes that existed within Celtic society. Cloaks and tunics were often different colors, with crimson and scarlet being favored colors of the upper classes. The practice of wearing multi-colored clothing in plaids, speckles, and stripes was so usual among the Irish upper classes, that exceptional mention was made in the literature of those who wore cloaks of only a single color (rather than those who wore multiple colors). If one was related to a king, a Druid or a Fili, then gold or silver jewelry and ornamentation also was used. Other people used brass and copper as jewelry and adornment. These outfits were completed with the wearing of a sort of kilt or brat that came down close to the knees. There are many references to colors used and worn by the Gael. Such references abound in Táin Bó Cuailgne and Leabar na g-Ceart. They are also to be found in Leabhar Gabála and For! as Feasa ar Eirinn. These colors were said by Irish tradition to have been assigned based upon class standing.

Tighernmas (Milesian King of Ireland, circa 900 BCE) is said to have introduced the colors purple, blue and green to Ireland from his trading with the Phoenicians. According to Keating in his History of Ireland, this king was also said to have established the numbers and types of colors that could be worn by the different classes of Irish society. This introduction of colors and dying of cloths is confirmed by the Four Masters, but they attribute the class system's implementation to his successor, Eochaidh Eudgadhach.

"As la Tigernmus bheos ro berbhadh or ar tús i n-Erinn, i Foithribh Airthir Liffe, Uchadan cerd d'Feroibh Cualainn ro dus-berbh. As lais ro cumhdaighit cuirn & brethnassa d'or & d'argat in n-Erinn ar tús. As lais tugadh ruamnadh for edoighibh, corcair, gorm, & uaine."

- ANNALA RIOGHACHTA EIREANN,
VOL. 1 -

Eochaidh Eudgadhach is considered by most authorities to have implemented the color-class hierarchy. He established the number of colors that could be worn by the

different levels of Irish society. A slave was to be dressed in clothes of one color; a peasant or farmer in two. Three colors were to be found in the dress of a soldier or young nobleman; four in that of a brughaidh; and five in the garments of a district chieftain. Any type of Ollamh could wear six colors, and at the highest levels of Irish society, a king and a queen could wear seven.

"An cead-bhliadhain d'Eochaidh Eudgadhach na rígh ós Erinn indsin. As aire at-berar Eochaidh Eudgadhach fris ar as lais tuccadh ilbhrechtradh gacha datha i n-edighibh ar tús i n-Erinn d'eidirdeliughadh onóra gach aoin as a edach, ótha íseal go h-uasal. As amhlaidh din ro deligh ettorra, aen-dath i n-edoighibh moghadh, a dó i n-edoighibh amhoss, a tri I n-édoighibh daghlaoch & oigighernadh, a ceathair i n-edoighibh brughadh, a cuig i n-edoighibh tighearnadh tuath, a se i n-edoighibh ollamhan, a secht I n-edoighibh ríogh & ríoghan."

- ANNALA RIOGHACHTA EIREANN, VOL. 1 -

Slaves wore saffron (yellow) colored long shirts and little else unless it was a woolen robe in winter. Saffron was also the color of most linen garments. The léine was said to be of this type and color. Most underclothing for men and women were also of this type.

Druids are said to have worn white robes in ceremony, grey bull hides in battle and many speckled robes on state occasions such as banquets and court appearances. In Forbhais Droma Dáimgháire (The Siege of Knocklong), the Druid Mug Roith is said to have worn a light brown (or gray) colored bull hide in his battle against the Druids of Cormac Mac Art.

The kings are said to have worn robes of crimson or red in most of the tales, though purple also seems to have been reserved for them due to the expense and rarity of purple dyes during ancient times. The foster sons of kings wore cloaks of scarlet, purple or blue.

According to the Cain Law, the dath (law of colors and classes) was proscribed as follows: satin and scarlet for the sons of kings; black yellowish, grey and blay clothes for the maic na ngrád fene. The mac in airrech, mac in airrech tuis, mac in airrech ard, mac in airrech forgill, mac in airrech rígh, also had colors assigned to their cloths as well, though no mention is made of them in the DIL. This law is sometimes called, "Il Brecht"; in the traditions: "Fo miad cha/ich e/ítid a mic o/tha fer miudbu co rígh."

"...srill 7 scarloit do mac rígh E/renn 7 dub 7 buide 7 liath 7 blaí do maic na ngra/d fe/ne 7 ...mac in airrech 7 ... mac in airrech tu/is 7 ... mac in airrech aird 7 ... mac in airrech forgill."

- ANCIENT LAWS OF IRELAND BY O'DONOVAN -

In *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* by P.W. Joyce, the Brehon Law prescribed the following colors for the fostered sons of certain classes of people:

Free class - yellow, black, white, blay.

Noble grade - red, green, brown.

Royalty - purple and blue.

Joyce assumes that these same color standards applied to their fathers and mothers. In Scotland, by tradition, only the high king could wear a purple stripe in his tartan. Scottish tartans had a hierarchy of color numbers just as did the Irish. The Scottish King could have seven colors in his tartan. All others could have only six colors. The Royal Stewart tartan contains the colors: red, yellow, white, blue, green, black and purple (very similar to the colors of the shields of the Irish provinces).

The shields of the five provinces of Ireland (Leinster, Munster, Connacht, Ulster and Meath) contain the colors: red, gold, white, blue, green, black and purple.

>From the *Tain Bo Cuailgne*: (describing the cavalcade of Bodb Derg)

“There was no person among them that was not the son of a king or a queen. They all wore green cloaks; and they wore kilts with red interweavings, and borders or fringes of gold thread upon them, and pendants of white bronze thread upon their leggings or greaves, and shoes with clasps of red bronze in them.”

>From *The Story of the Irish Race* by Seamus Mac Manus: (said of Tighernmas, Milesian King of Ireland)

“;Sometimes to him, sometimes to his successor, Eochaid, is credited the ancient ordinance which distinguished the various classes and professions by the colors of their dress. A King or Queen might wear seven colors; a poet or Ollam six; a chieftain five; an army leader four; a land-owner three; a rent-payer two; a serf one colour only.”

>From the *Tain Bo Cuailgne*: (Said of Connor Mac Nessa by the herald MacRoth)

“;A tall graceful champion of noble, polished, and proud mien, stood at the head of the party. This most beautiful of the kings of the world stood among his troops with all the signs of obedience, superiority, and command. He wore a mass of yellow, curling, drooping hair. He had a pleasing, ruddy countenance. He had a deep, blue, sparkling, piercing eye in his head and a two-branching beard, yellow, and curling upon his chin. He wore a crimson, deep-bordered tunic over his bosom; and a brilliant white shirt, interwoven with thread of red gold, next his white skin.”

>From the Book of Ballymote: (describing Cormac Mac Art at the Feis of Tara)

“His hair was slightly curled, and of golden color; he had a scarlet shield with engraved devices, and golden hooks and clasps of silver; a wide-flowing purple cloak on him, with a gem-set gold brooch over his breast; a gold torque around his neck; a white-collared shirt, embroidered with gold, upon him; a girdle with golden buckles, and studded with precious stones around him; two golden net-work sandals with golden buckles upon his feet; two spears with golden sockets, and many red bronze rivets, in his hand; while he stood in the full glow of beauty, without defect or blemish. You would think it was a shower of pearls that were set in his mouth; his lips were rubies; his symmetrical body was as white as snow; his cheek was like the mountain ash-berry; his eyes were like the sloe; his brows and eye-lashes were like the sheen of a blue-black lance.”

Here is a description of Edain from the Tale of the Bruidean Da Dearga:

“...he saw a woman on the brink of a fountain, having a comb and a casket of silver, ornamented with gold, washing her head in a silver basin with four birds of gold perched upon it, and little sparkling gems of crimson carbuncle upon the outer edges of the basin. A short crimson cloak, with a beautiful gloss, lying near her; a brooch of silver, inlaid with sparkles of gold, in that cloak. A smock, long and warm, gathered and soft, of green silk, with a border of red gold, upon her. Wonderful clasps of gold and silver at her breast, and at her shoulder-blades, and at her shoulders in that smock, on all sides. The sun shown upon it, while the men (that is the king, and his retinue) were all shaded in red, from the reflection of the gold against the sun, from the green silk. Two golden-yellow tresses upon her head, each of them plaited with four locks or strands, and a ball of gold upon the point of each tress. The color of that hair was like the flowers of the bog ! fir in the summer, or like the red gold immediately after receiving its coloring. And there she was disentangling her hair, and her two arms out through the bosom of her smock.”

>From the *Leabhar na g-Ceart* (The Book of Rights): (details of the *tuarastal* payable from the king to subordinate kings)

Seven mantles with wreaths of gold,
And seven cups for social drinking,
Seven steed not accustomed to falter,
To the king of Kerry of the combats.

The prosperous king of Rathlenn is entitled
To the stipend of a brave great man;

Ten swords, and ten drinking horns,
Ten red cloaks, ten blue cloaks.

The king of Ara of beauty is entitled
>From the king of Eire of the comely face,
To six swords, six praised shields,
And six mantles of deep crimson

In the tale of Bruidean Da Dearga, Incel reports of Conari Mor's druith (jesters):

"I saw there...three jesters at the fire. They wore three dark grey cloaks; and if all the men of Eirinn were in one place, and though the body of the father or the mother of each man was lying dead before him, not one could refrain from laughing at them"

A description of Maine, son of Ailill and Medb:

"There were seven greyhounds attending his chariot, in chains of silver; with balls of gold upon each chain, so that the tingling of the balls against the chains would be music sufficient. There was no known colour that was not to be seen upon these greyhounds. There were seven Cornaire (trumpeters), with corna (horns) of gold and silver, wearing cloths of many colours, and all having fair-yellow hair. Three druids also went in front of them, who wore minda (diadems) of silver upon their heads and speckled cloaks over their dresses, and who carried shields of bronze ornamented with red copper. Three Critire (harpers) accompanied them; each of kingly aspect, and arrayed in a crimson cloak. It was so they arrived on the green of Cruachan."

In the "Colloquy of the Two Sages" as translated by Caitlin Matthews in An Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom:

Bricriu gave a "...purple tunic, adorned with gold and silver..." to Nede an aspiring Ollamh. Then Nede went and sat in the Poet's Chair and pulled his robe of three colors about him: a covering of bright bird's feathers were in the middle, at the bottom a speckling of findruine (a white gold, white brass, silver combination), while the top was a brilliant golden color.

In "Imacallaim na Mórigna fri Coin Culaind" (The Conversation of the Morrígan with Cú Chulainn) as found in an essay on The Morrígan entitled, War Goddess: The Morrígan and her Germano-Celtic Counterparts (copyright 1998), by Angélique Gulermovich Epstein:

Co n-aca Cú in n-óben chuci co n-étuch cach datha impe 7 delb roderscaigthe furri. "Cé taí-siu?" or Cú Chulaind." Ingen Búain ind rí, "or sí. "Dodeochad chucut-su. Rot charus ar th'airscélaib, 7 tucus mo sheótu lim 7 mo indili." "Ní maith ém ind inbuid tonnánac, nachis olc ar

mbláth, amin gorti. Ní haurussa dam-sa dano comrac fri banscáil céin no mbeó isind níth so." "Bidim chobair-se dait-siu oc sudiu." "Ní ar thóin mná dano gabus-sa inso" (O'Rahilly 1976: 57).

Cú Chulainn saw coming towards him a young woman of surpassing beauty, clad in clothes of many colours. "Who are you?" asked Cú Chulainn.

"I am the daughter of Búan the king," said she "I have come to you for I fell in love with you on hearing your fame, and I have brought with me my treasures and my cattle."

"It is not a good time at which you have come to us, that is, our condition is ill, we are starving (?). So it is not easy for me to meet a woman while I am in this strife."

"I shall help you in it."

"I didn't come here for a piece of ass." (this last line is understood to be a clarification of the previous line) (O'Rahilly 1976: 176-77) -

In a cite of Cath Maighe Léna in the same essay on The Morrígan entitled, War Goddess: The Morrígan and her Germano-Celtic Counterparts (copyright 1998), by Angélique Gulermovich Epstein:

"go bfacatar ar in áth ar a gciann badb ghérbloim gharmanmór ghnúisdub gharbliath ghráinemail ghlacgharb ghruadchorr ghlenntsúilech ghruaidfliuch ghrennach...; agus sí cainntech contractach cruaidchelmáinech, agus í ag níge agus ag saothartonnach na senéided, agus na sróilbertad, agus na saorchotún snáthórda, agus na séimléinted srebnáide sídamail, agus na nerrad nálainn nallmarda, agus fadb agus édach na sluag ar na srrothaib; go nderrnad aonghlas uisce agus fola do'n abainn uaithe síos, agus gérsreba griánáilne glanuiscecha gainimréide gormglasuaine ina ngargsruth gredanmór agá rochtain anuas. Ba dian buinneda duaibsechmera dathcomascacha donruadchorra dísachluatha dásachtacha dergfola ó dornaib na drochaimide duaibsige síos, agus in sruth ina chrú agus ina chréchtful in gach áird. tuc in Clárach cona chathmarcsluag agus cona chóirigtib dá núid is dá naire abaise agus airdénam agus urobair na haimide, agus claochlód datha in degsrotha dímsaig sin" (Mac Craith 1929: I.140-41).

"At the ford before them they saw a dire, thin-beaked, broad-beamed, dark-faced, rough, grey, odious, coarse-clawed, uneven-cheeked, damp-cheeked, bristly [...] badb with deep-set eyes. She was mournful, contrary, and harshly prophetic. In the current she washed and laundered with great exertion old armour, satin clothing, noble jerkins made of gold thread, elegant shirts of fine silk and splendid imported goods, and [all the] spoils and garments of the host, so that the river below her was made a single stream of water and blood, while from above her beautiful, sunlit droplets flowed in fierce, murmuring

azure torrents of pure water over level sand.

Red blood flowed dauntlessly from the fists of the evil, ill-omened woman, as the swift, gloomy stream mixed together the colors - brown, red, purple. The river ran with gore, with furrows of blood in each direction. De Clare, along with his cavalry and his array, paid heed to the demeanor and conduct of the old hag, to her chief work, and to the change of the color of that noble, proud river.”

- Mac Craith 1929: I.140-41 -

>From the Metrical Dindshenchas by Edwin Gwynn: (referencing the cloak of Fer Berna from Brius):

“Ni find, ni liath, ni lachtna,
ni derg,ni gorm, ni corcra,
ni breccan raenach riabach,
ni hetgud srianach soccra.”

“It is not white, nor gray, nor dun;
it is not red, nor blue, nor purple;
it is no tartan, striped nor checkered;
it is no beribboned garment of ease.”

Many traditional and historical works define the number of colors for each level in Irish society, though none (to my knowledge) specifically equates all of these levels to particular colors. O’Curry in his Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish states much the same opinion about a lack of definition regarding the clothing colors of the class system. O’Curry uses the episode known as “The Pillow Talk”; in Táin Bó Cuailgne as an indicator of what these colors were, “. . . and of these clothes the colours enumerated are these: crimson, and blue, and black, and green, and yellow, and speckled, and pale, and gray, and blay, and striped.”

“Tucad dóib anba tániu da retaib co fertair cia dib dambad lia réiot, acar móine, acas momarra. Tucad cuca a n-ena, ocus a n-dabca, ocus a n-tatasnlertain, a milain, ocus a lotommain, ocus a n-onolmaca. Tucaít dana cucu, a fánne, ocus a falge, ocus a fosnasca, ocus a n-ósdúire, ocus a n-etguda, etin corcair, ocus gorm, ocus dub, ocus uáime, buide, ocus brecc ocus láctna, odor, olod, ocus piabac.”

Based on my study of the tales, text and other information. I’d like to offer these colors as being reserved for the clothing of the different levels of Irish society:

Ard Righ (also Kings and Queens)- Seven colors: Purple, white, black, blue, red, green, yellow (these are also the colors of the Royal Stewart Tartan in Scotland.)

Nemed (Druids, Ollamh, Churchmen, Lords, Poets) - Six colors: white, black, blue, red, green, yellow.

Provincial Chiefs - Five colors: black, blue, red, green, yellow.

Brughaidh or Wealthy Landowners (perhaps also the lesser Nemed?) - Four colors: blue, red, green, yellow.

Warriors (officers as well) - Three colors: red, green, yellow.

Peasants (rent-paying farmers)- Two colors: green, yellow.

Slaves (and servants) - One color: yellow

Considerations in Contributions:

First, the purely practical. If at all possible, if you have more than one page to contribute, copy it double sided. Last time I photocopied something, it cost 10 cents for the first side, and 7 cents for the second. This means its a copy cost savings, and you are also saving trees and postage by not wasting the back of the paper.

Some topics, from Newsletter number 1:

“Textile Manufacture: Economy, Trade
Technology, looms, tools
spinning, metal thread,
dyeing, other finishing

Textile vocabulary: Comparisons of terms
time lines
contemporary usage

Textile Structures: looping (knitting, netting)
one set of elements

Everybody should start their own picture file, collecting as many images as possible in their chosen category. Aim for a complete account (in photocopies) of a small, well defined area, as to technique, region, time period, design element, weave structure, etc. Announce your topic to the group, to avoid duplication, and to receive feedback & pictures. Pick a new theme when you have exhausted the sources and member input.”

Looking back through the newsletters, I see little member input. No one really listing what they are doing, and what they are looking for. E-mail me, or write in, expressing what you are doing right now, what projects you are working on, and what texts you’d like to see, either in person or in photocopy. With members all over the United States, and abroad, its likely one of our membership will be able to help you. Of all the clubs & organizations out there, I have found that the weaving community and the genealogical communities are the most willing to share their knowledge and time with each other. Learning about the historical textiles we are studying involves elements of

both weaving and the kind of study geneologists do.

We are not competing with each other here. We are the guild. It is our job to help each other be successful, wether that means commercial gains or simply praise from the weaving community. Lets all pitch in, and make this study group a continued success.

Textiles in New England II

Friday, Saturday, & Sunday
June 18th thru 20th, 1999
Eaglebrook School
Deerfield, Massachusetts

This will feature Museum tours, demonstrations and lectures as follows:

Quilts: by Lynne Z. Bassett, Old Sturbridge village "A Dull Business Alone": Cooperative Quilting in New England 1750-1850

Textile Providers, Consumers & Retailers

-Marla R. Miller, Smith College. The Accounts of Tryphena Newton Cooke of Hadley 1770-1805

Clothes, Bedhangings, Table Covers

-Dennita Sewell, Pratt Institute. A Mantua Maker's Mark
-Deborah Pulliam, University of Maine at Orono. Looking at John Peter's Clothing.
-Joyce G. Volk, Warner House Museum, Portsmouth, NH. A Rare Eighteenth-Century Bed Hangings
-Jill and Johnathan Maney, University of Rochester. Having it Both Ways: The Needlework Table Cover of Mercy Otis Warren.

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-Florence Feldman-Wook, Editor, Spinning Wheel Sleuth. The Mystery of the Connecticut Chair Wheel
-Mary Boswell, Belknap Mill Society. Shaker Textiles
-Nancy C. Britton, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Marsh and Sons Coach Lace Company, Braintree, Massachusetts.

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