

# Medieval Textile Study Group

Coordinator: Nancy M McKenna 507 Singer Ave. Lemont, Illinois 60439 e-mail: nmckenna@mediaone.net

ISSN: 1530-762X

## In this issue:

Sample Update	p.1
Medlar of Nottingham	p.1
ISSN Number	p.2
Aztec Textiles	p.2
Women In Weaving Guilds	p.3
Woolen Medieval Cloth	p.4
Errata	p.4
2/1 Twills: Rippenkoper	p.4
Upcoming Events	p.6

They specialize in heritage and ancient fruit varieties, many dating from the Medieval Period. One such fruit is the Medlar of Nottingham. I am including this non-weaving information as many of you are interested in more than Medieval clothes and I thought that the knowledge that Medieval fruits were still available would be of interest. This is reprinted with permission. If you request a catalog from them, or purchase any fruit trees from them, please let them know where you found their address.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Sample Update:

**Samples Due mid-November drafts due by October so that I'll have the calendars ready when the samples arrive. Current count: 25 samples 3" x 3". You need not use handspun singles. You may use whatever yarn you have on hand. It is preferable that the yarn be close to the grist of the original if possible, however.**

Nancy M McKenna  
twill, s,z twist interaction (Handspun singles @ 3600ypp)  
& Broken Twill (in Harrisville Shetland yarns)

Julie Hennessey:  
Warp Ikat

Gayle Bingham:  
The first sample is a 10th C. (1ply) linen sample (Alamannic)  
or 2/2 broken twill (z/z twist, 1 ply) -Bavaria,  
Merovingian period

Carolyn Priest-Dorman  
"rosettenkoper," "rippenkoper," or one of the  
"wabengewebe" weaves

Noeline Barkla:  
2/1 twill with color and weave effect

## Medlar of Nottingham

South Meadow Fruit Gardens  
The following is excerpted from the Southmeadow Fruit  
Gardens Gatalog, which can be found online at:  
<http://www.southmeadowfruitgardens.com>  
or:

P.O. Box 211  
10603 Cleveland Avenue  
Baroda, Michigan 49101

"The MEDLAR, which stands out, unique, independent of comparison to any other tree fruit. It is an ancient treasure for the 3rd millennium.

Described by the Greek botanist Theophrastus, over 2000 years ago, it was once widely cultivated in Tudor, England.

Parkinson in 1627 spoke "of the pleasant sweetness of the fruit when mellow". But today they are nowhere available in shops or markets and impossible to find except in a few private gardens. This should change.

The Medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) is a fascinating fruit. Botanically somewhere between a pear and a hawthorn, it blossoms in solitary fashion in May at the end of the shoots of the same year's growth. The spring flowers are large, white fading in pink as they age. The unique dark green brown fruit looks somewhat like a small crabapple which forms without stem at the end of the shoot and becomes the half of a sphere with the petals arranged around the edge of the flattish top.

The decorative fruit is picked after a hard frost. The flesh is then still hard, green and austere and must be kept on a dry cool shelf until the pulp softens and mellows when it turns a light brown. This process is known as "bletting". The pulp has then a distinctive pleasantly acidulous flavor.

It makes a beautiful small tree that fruits early, a 3-year-old tree producing a good crop. It has curious branches forming sharp-angled elbows. The leaves are large luxuriantly green and downy and turn beautifully red in the fall. Easy to grow, hardy, not particular as to soil or culture, it can be grown for its eye-catching ornamental

value alone. ...This “fruit de fantasie” as the Frenchman Duhamel called it, should be restored to the fruit garden. It is of intriguing interest to the eye and palate alike as it stands unique among the fruits of the world.

Whether for its amazing fruit or just its unique decorative tree, we encourage our customers to plant it. It will turn any garden or landscape into a rare fruit reserve. “

## New Method of Paying

Paypal is a new internet service. Its a free service that allows you to pay for anything by credit card to anyone who is also signed up with them. You can sign up for Pay Pal by going to:

<http://secure.paypal.com/refer/pal=nmckenna%40mediaone.net>

This service is being used by other coordinators of Complex Weavers, as it is quick and convenient. So far, it appears that this service is open to US and Canadian users of the internet and they are expanding so as to handle worldwide fund transfers. Tthe payments can be sent to the recipient via paper check as well as electronic transfer directly to a bank account. Also, when you sign up, you get \$5 USD “free” to use as you want - to pay for your subscription, to use on one of the internet auction sites, whatever you choose. And when you want, any money in your account with them may be transferred to a bank account. In the future, they plan on being able to handle international commerce as well.

## ISSN Number

by Nancy M. McKenna

I know I'd be asked some questions on this, so this short article, though not about Medieval Textiles specifically, is of importance to us as a group, and you as individuals.

You may notice on the first page, there is now an ISSN number. This is the number assigned to periodical publicaitons by the Library of Congress so that when a library or other institution wishes to order the publication, they can specifically ask for one among possably several that have the same or simular names. This number is current only from last March (1999) until whenever the masthead changes again. Unlike applying for a Copyright, however, applying for an ISSN number (or an ISBN number for that matter) is free of charge.

How does this affect you? Well, from now on, the Library of Congress will recieve a PDF copy of our newsletter, and it will be available for viewing in their reading room. Not a really big deal, but it also means that libraries can find us and request a subscription, or they may borrow a copy from the Library of Congress in the distant future when physical copies may be difficult to find elsewhere.

Does this affect the copyrights of the authors whose work is published in this space? No. When a periodical is copyrighted, what the copyright covers is the compilation. That is, it covers the article as it is laid out in the publication. It does not copyright the content. Therefore, the publication (in whole or in part) cannot be copied without written permission of the publisher, and the article may not be copied without written permisison of the author. This holds for books as well. Drafts alone cannot be copyrighted as they are considered public domain by the US Copyright Office.

If you wish to read all the documents pertaining to Copyrights and such, they are available online at the Library of Congress Website and the US Copyright Office web site as well as probably being available at larger libraries. Dover Publications has also printed a book on the subject, although I have not read it.

## Aztec Textiles

(c) Nancy M McKenna

In Issue 22 (December 1999) I wrote a quick bit about Aztec textiles. In this and future issues I plan on outlining various weaving techniques and patterns for weaving these textiles.

	4	4			0
	3	3		0	0
		2	2		0
		1	1	0	0
Background		1			4
Alternating Stripes				2	4
2 Rows Weaving		1		3	
Pattern: See notes		1	2	3	
		1	2		

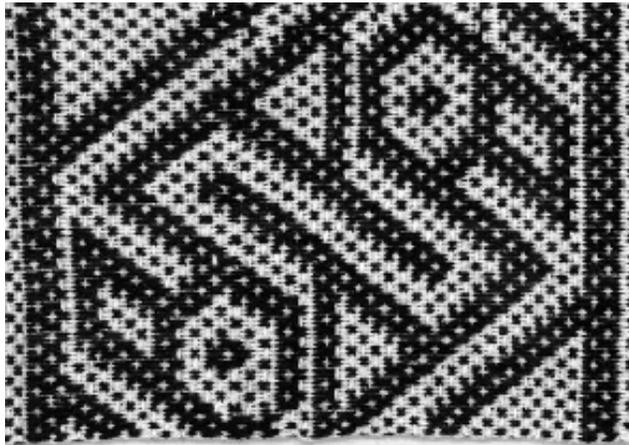
### Weaving Notes:

The warp is made of alternating threads in dark and light. The most common colors for this weave is white and indigo blue or white and brown. The brown could either be naturally colored cotton or dyed cotton. The warp on shafts one and three are dark in this example and those on two and four are light. Weft is only one color. The pattern is made using pick up technique but although I used graph paper and have reproduced patterns common in Aztec weaving this technique lends itself well to free form pattern weaving. The color raised is marked in parenthesis. My samples were woven on a countermarche loom

Depress treadle 1 (dark)  
 Pick up pattern per graph  
 Depress treadle 3 (light), lift pick up stick, throw shuttle in combined shed.  
 Depress treadle 1 (dark) pick up same pattern.  
 Depress treadle 2 (other dark shed), lift pick up stick, throw shuttle in combined shed.  
 Remove pick up stick. **DO NOT CHANGE SHEDS**, pick up next row in pattern.  
 Depress treadle 3 (light), lift pick up stick, throw shuttle in combined shed.  
 Continue process until you have woven your whole pattern.

You will notice that once you get going, when treadle 3 is depressed you are throwing the shuttle from either the left or the right. This is not going to change. You will always throw (for example) the shuttle right to left when the lighter ends are up, and left to right when going under the darker ends only.

Sources:  
 Textiles of Ancient Peru and their Techniques by Roul D'Harcourt



This is the image of the pelican, one of the Aztec sacred animals. The original of this textile is currently owned by Linda Ligon (providence unknown). I have also woven a coiled snake motif, the original of which was purchased in 1938 in Lima Peru by Nellie Sargent Johnson. If anyone wishes to weave these patterns, please contact me and I'll mail the graph paper diagrams to them. These may be from the cemetery at Chancay, in use until about 1400 AD and appear to have been sold only to tourists in the market in Lima Peru in 1938 (Illegal digging & sales by locals?)

## Things to Write Away for:

Catalog: I have a 1998 catalog from this company, and they have a lot of jewelry and "stuff" copied from the Medieval period (European). I've called and ordered a new catalog. Maybe some of you would enjoy browsing one too:

### Past Times

North American Office  
 7201 Intermodal Drive  
 Louisville, KY 40258-2857  
 1-800-621-6020

## Women In Weaving Guilds

The following is excerpted with permission of the individual authors from the SCAWeaving List. If you have e-mail access, and wish to join this discussion group, you can find it at: <http://www.egroups.com>

From: Barbara Marin

I admit that over 1,000 years of history (500-1500) in a whole continent (Europe) you are going to find exceptions to almost every rule.

The guilds developed over time. The first "Altzuenfte" "Old guilds" were (in Germany, meaning: in the major cities) the butchers, the bakers, the weavers, and the shoemakers.

In the beginning (read: 11th century), the weavers would have performed all secondary tasks as well, like dyeing and maybe even spinning. Later, the silk weavers separated from the linen weavers and the wool weavers. The dyers started an own guild and then again separated into the "black dyers" and the "color dyers". I imagine that the silk weavers would at first have had their wives and daughters throw the silk, who might have succeeded over time to form an own organization and acquire guild status.

Can you name a place and time frame?

I myself know another such counterexample: In Saxony, after the silver deposits had run out of silver, but when bobbin lace edgings came into fashion, mid-16th century, Barbara Uthmann, widow of the rich mining entrepreneur Christoph Uthmann, introduced the manufacture of bobbin lace into Saxony, teaching the wives of the out-of-work miners to make bobbin lace and lending them the materials under commission. She made a fortune, established the bobbin lace tradition in Saxony which is still alive there, and in addition to being a very successful businesswoman herself, made the women an economical and political factor in her hometown (Annaberg, Saxony). I

*continued on page 6*

## Woolen Medieval Cloth?

Per Alan S. Raistrick, Oxford, England, the *Newsletter of the Archeological Leather Group*, 1999, Issue 2 reports that leather card clothing (the backing for the metal teeth in a wool card) has been found in fourteenth and fifteenth century contexts in France. He also questions if anyone has found sources showing that teasles for other than raising a nap on wool cloth. i.e. has it been shown that they could have been used to prepare wool for spinning, or has anyone tried to use teasles to prepare wool for spinning?

### Errata:

In the last issue, the draft noted as “Halvorstn #5: Pebble Weave”, although the one noted by Davison as being that weave, is incorrect. It does not match the fabric sample shown in Davison for the draft of that name. The corrected draft is as follows:

	4		4		0	0		
	3		3		0	0		
	2		2		0	0		
1		1			0			0
1		1			1			
1		1			2			
1		1			3			
1		1			4			
1		1			1			
1		1			2			
1		1			3			
1		1			4			

## 2/1 Twills: *Rippenköper*

© Carolyn Priest-Dorman, 2000

The “*rippenköper*,” or “repp twill,” has no standard equivalent name in English. The weave was first identified, named, and explained in 1967 by Hans-Jürgen Hundt in an archaeological publication. *Rippenköper* is a catch-all term for those twills, usually 2/1, whose basic structure alternates bands of warp-faced twill with bands of weft-faced twill, “usually after every third pick” (Bender Jørgensen, p. 14). Although it is a very simple weave, I haven’t found it yet in a modern book.

	3		3		0	0	0	0
	2		2		0	0	0	0
	1		1	0		0	0	
1		1			1			
1		1			2			
1		1			3			
1		1			4			
1		1			5			
1		1			6			

Rippenköper #1:  
courtesy of  
Carolyn Priest-Dorman

Medieval European finds of *rippenköper* number 40 or more, and date to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tidow, p. 131). Almost all of them are woven in narrow bands of 1/2 and 2/1 twill. Many are flax, but wool examples also exist. All are of medium, good, or high quality, with Z-spun singles thread in both warp and weft. Setts range between 14 to 30 warps per centimeter and 14 to 22 wefts per centimeter. Many of the finds cluster in southern Germany–Baden–Württemberg in the southwest and Bavaria in the southeast (Bender Jørgensen, p. 78). Some later examples in Latvia date to the eleventh century (Zarina, p. 110, Abb. 13.3) and are thought to have been imported. They too are good quality, woven with Z-spun singles.

An unusual *rippenköper* textile from Elgg, in Switzerland, is a point twill entered with an irregular unit of six or nine threads. It alternates wide bands (nine picks) and narrow bands (three picks) of weft-faced twill between narrow bands of warp-faced twill (three picks). (Tidow, p. 131 and Abb. 2B) Another unusual textile that is almost *rippenköper* comes from an eighth century Alamannic warrior’s grave in northern Germany. It is a two-color flax weave in bands of 2/1 twill alternating with narrow bands of a very unusual extended tabby variant. The thread count is 14 Z-spun warps by 15 S-spun wefts per centimeter (Hundt, 1980, p. 152), which is unusual both for its mixed spinning and for being at the coarse end of the range for a *rippenköper*. The resulting texture looks as if the weaver was trying to weave bands of either plain tabby or louisine but couldn’t quite manage it with the tie-up.

Until recently *rippenköper* was believed to be of European origin. However, several related second-century examples from Roman sites in Egypt have recently come to light, three in 2/1 twill wool and twelve in 3/1 twill wool. At least one of the Egyptian examples occurs in a 3/1 twill following the basic *rippenköper* structure outlined above, whereas another 2/1 twill example is composed of five picks of warp-faced twill followed by four picks of weft-faced twill (Cardon, p. 21). It seems at least plausible that the originated there, since most of the Egyptian examples are S-spun in both warp and weft (Cardon, p. 19), a characteristic of Egyptian textiles at that time. Also, there are no known earlier examples of the weave.

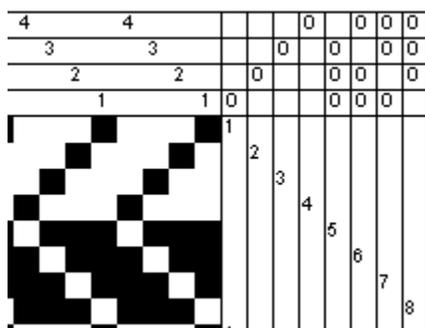
By considering the Egyptian *rippenköper* weaves along with the damask diapers (block twill damasks) that are the specific focus of her article, textile archaeologist Dominique Cardon implies that the two weave structures developed together. This seems a logical assumption to make. Since the *rippenköper* structure relies for its effect on the contrast between warp-faced and weft-faced weaves, it really is half-way to the structure of a damask diaper. The only structural difference between the two is the regular reversal of warp entering order that occurs in

a damask diaper.

There is no solid information on the color or colors of yarn that may have been used in the European finds. Hundt, who has analyzed and reported on several of them, suggests that the use of more than one color would highlight the weave structure appropriately (Hundt, 1978, p. 158). However, the Egyptian finds are monochrome, in either undyed or blue wool (Cardon, p. 19).

It's not altogether clear from their contexts what purposes may have been served by *rippenköper* textiles in Europe. The Egyptian pieces may have been garment textiles like some other twill wool textiles from that period that were executed in related weaves. If Cardon's implication about the relationship between *rippenköper* and damask twills is correct, then *rippenköper* may have been a luxury clothing textile. Similarly, Hundt speculates that *rippenköper* may have been "one of the better clothing textiles of its time" (Hundt, 1983, p. 209).

Sadly, after its brief period of popularity in the early Middle Ages, *rippenköper* seems to have fallen into an undeserved oblivion. However, having recently completed a sample of linen *rippenköper* for the MTSG twill sample exchange, I am captivated by its highly textured monochrome effect. The 2/1 *rippenköper* can be woven on a basic four-shaft loom with six treadles, either as drafted or on a skeleton tie-up. The 3/1 *rippenköper* requires either eight treadles or a skeleton tie-up. Drafts for basic 2/1 and basic 3/1 *rippenköper* are included with this article.



Rippenköper #2:  
courtesy of Carolyn Priest-Dorman

#### Sources:

Bender Jørgensen, Lise. 1991. *North European Textiles until AD 1000*. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.

A goldmine of information on weave structures and their historical occurrences, with an immense bibliography.

Cardon, Dominique. 1999. "Les Damassés de Laine de Krokodilô (100-120 apr. J.-C.)," *Bulletin du CIETA* [Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens], no. 76, pp. 6-21.

Report on several wool damask diapers from Roman outposts in eastern Egypt, dating to the early second century CE. The working hypothesis is that they are indigenous.

Hundt, Hans-Jürgen. 1978. "Die Textilreste," pp. 149-163 in Peter Paulsen and Helga Schach-Dürges, *Das alamannische Gräberfeld von Giengen an der Brenz*. Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg, Band 10. Stuttgart: Verlag Müller & Gräff.

Alamannic graves examined, including an important warrior's grave. Graves 12 and 26 held three examples of *rippenköper*. Includes a draft and drawdown.

----. 1983. "Ein Textilfund aus Grab 8 von Dörverden, Kr. Verden (Aller), Niedersachsen." *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, vol. 4, pp. 207-212.

Another Alamannic-period grave. Best explanation of *rippenköper* I've seen, by the man who identified and named it; includes a draft and drawdown.

----. 1980. "Textilereste aus den frühgeschichtlichen Kriegergrab von Sievern, Kr. Wesermünde, 1954." *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, vol. 2, pp. 151-160.

Report on the textiles from an Alamannic warrior's chamber grave in northern Saxony, including wools, linens, and an unusual weave related to *rippenköper*.

Tidow, Klaus. 1998. "Kleingemusterte Woll- und Leinengewebe aus der Eisenzeit und dem Mittelalter – Herkunft, Herstellung und Verbreitung," in Lise Bender Jørgensen and Christina Rinaldo, Christina, eds., *Textiles in European Archaeology: Report from the 6th NESAT Symposium, 7-11th May 1996 in Borås*, pp. 131-137. GOTARC Series A, Vol. 1. Göteborg: Göteborg University Department of Archaeology.

Summarizes information on the occurrence of several early pattern weaves including *rippenköper*. Best bibliography currently available.

Zarina, Anna. 1990. "Herstellungsmethoden der in Gräberfeldern des 3-13 Jh. im Gebiet Lettlands gefundenen Gewebe," in Penelope Walton and John P. Wild, eds., *Textiles in Northern Archaeology: NESAT III Textile Symposium in York 6-9 May 1987*, pp. 107-112. London: Archetype Publications.

Brief note about five finds of *rippenköper* from three locations dating to the eleventh century.

---

*Women: cont'd from page 3*

don't know whether they acquired guild status, though.

From Diachbha:

I found both references to women as guild members, and references forbidding women to work in their husband's shops, depending on the economics of the day. For example: The 1381 Oxford poll tax returns identify women as guild members, but their status is hazy. Given the surnames and bynames, it seems that women had journeymen status, which meant that they were subject to Guild regulations and discipline, and might employ people, but were not permitted to start their own work-shops.

In 1299, the Court rolls of the Manor of Hales identify women by name as being weavers who are subject to Guild discipline, or who are receiving specific prices for their cloth. No husband or father is mentioned.

The 1388 session of the Peace in Lincolnshire records: "Also that one Cecily de Malberthorpe, linen weaver took this year from William Warn of Mablethorpe for weaving 15 ells of linen cloth three farthings an ell and a gratuity worth 5d and would not take less for an ell, hence an excess of 5s." Can we interpret this to mean that women were setting their own prices, but within the framework of either guild regulations, or merely local law? (the spelling of the two names isn't a typo, it just looks that way.)

The 1379 Rolls of the collectors in West Riding list both Elizabeth de Snayth and her daughter as weavers and the taxes that they paid were commiserate with the male weavers listed. A widow taking over her husband's business? Guild member?

1419 London Borough ordinances state: And married women who follow certain crafts in the city by themselves without their husbands may take women as their apprentices to serve them and to learn their crafts, and these apprentices shall be bound by their indentures of apprenticeship to the husband and his wife to learn the wife's craft. There is a reference elsewhere in the same ordinance that specifies that women weavers may take apprentices. No mention of guild status, or regulations. The most specific examples that I found limiting women's

activities come from the Weaver's ordinances from Shrewsbury, 1448 and 1461: "Also that no woman shall occupy the craft of weaving after the death of her husband except for one quarter of the year, within which time it shall be lawful for her to work out her stuff that remains with her unworked..."

The 1461 reference forbids women to weave if there are "king's subjects, men liable to do the king service in his wars and in defense of this his land, and sufficiently skilled in the said craft..." Sound like post-WWII stuff. The boys are home from the war, make sure they have jobs.

Guild records from York in 1386 list three women as weavers along with the men. There is no distinction made. And two wills from Lincolnshire in 1432 specify that the widows are to inherit all looms and weaving equipment, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the business. This probably raises more questions than it answers, but there it is.

## Upcoming events:

### Art Institute of Chicago

Clothed to Rule the Universe: Ming and Qing Dynasty Textiles from the Permanent Collection  
September 13, 2000-January 2, 2001

Appliqued, Embroidered, and Pieced Bedcoverings  
February 28-May 28, 2001

### Colloquy 2000

October

St. Meinrad Archabbey

St. Meinrad, Indiana

Open to all who wish to attend, Colloquy is composed of a group of weavers who meet annually to discuss varied weaving interests.

***If you have any events to report for this space, please let me know the title, dates, and a description if the title is not sufficient.***

### Vision of Piers the Ploughman

(1360 AD)

"Cloth that cometh fro the weving  
Is nought comely to were  
Till it be fulled under foot  
Or in fulling stokkes  
Washen wel with water  
And with teaseles cracched  
Y-touked and y-tented  
And under taillours hands."