Welcome to Ars Scientia Orientalis

Greetings to the populace of the East Kingdom from Lord Aleksei Dmitriev! This is the inaugural issue of the new Arts and Sciences Newsletter. The Ars will be published quarterly and available online at the East Kingdom Website.

I am hoping this newsletter will be a medium to showcase the arts and sciences being performed by the many talented gentles in the East Kingdom. Articles about completed or ongoing projects, advice about competing in or running competitions, lists of sources for documentation, visits to museums are all welcome additions to these pages.

In addition, the Ars will have a regular features about the many guilds in the East Kingdom that are encouraging their specific art or science among the populace.

If there are any other articles or regular features that you would like to see in the Ars, please contact me with suggestions. I thank you for the opportunity to serve the Kingdom as editor and hope together we can make this newsletter a useful resource to everyone.

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Prayer Beads 101

By Lady Éliane de Lorraine
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Their Origin
- A common accessory carried by men and women, old and young
- Gave the small round objects we now know as “beads” their name
  - The root of the word bead is the same as for the word bid
  - It originally meant “to pray or request”
- Among the earliest official mentions of prayer beads in England is the will of Lady Godiva who died in about 1041. She left to the monastery she and her husband had founded, “a circlet of gems that she had threaded on a string, in order that by fingering them one by one as she recited her prayers, she might not fall short of the exact number.”
- St. Anthony is said to have counted his prayers with pebbles while in the desert (3rd century)
- Other religions use prayer beads as well, but we cannot be certain whether Christians, Muslims and Hindus invented the idea independently or borrowed it from each other

From Paternoster to Rosary
- The first prayer medieval Christians recited on prayer beads was the “Our Father” (in Latin, Pater noster)
- For those who could not read, reciting 150 Pater noster was regarded as equivalent to reciting the 150 Psalms
- Variations on this devotional practice such as adding an Ave Maria (Hail Mary) or Gloria Patri (Glory be to the Father) after each Pater noster, or simply saying 150 Ave Maria
- Religious communities are recorded as praying “chaplets” of various sorts from at least the 13th century onward
- The Dominican Order has claimed that their founder, St. Dominic Guzman, was miraculously given the rosary in its modern form by the Virgin Mary in the 1200s

Spiritual Jewels
- A string of simple knots on a cord, or a string of beads of wood, bone, glass, semiprecious stone such as agate or jet, amber, silver, pearls, or even gold, emeralds, or sapphires
- A kind of personal jewelry, and followed the style of other jewelry of the time
- The Our Father beads also known as gauds or marker beads are often larger or more precious
- Rosaries and religious jewelry in the Middle Ages were often exempt from taxes and laws restricting rich clothing, so wearing an extravagant rosary could be an excuse for showing off your wealth and good taste, as well as your “piety”

Construction
- A string of medieval paternoster or rosary beads can take many forms
  - familiar loop or circle form
  - straight line
  - most common number of beads is 50
  - there are also strings of 10, 15, 20, 33, 63, 72, and 150 beads
• Medieval beads may be round or oval, decorated or plain, and are usually smooth rather than faceted
• The “drop” can be almost anything: a tassel, a religious medal, a small figure of a saint, etc…
• We can also find pomanders or scent containers, heart medallions, tiny purses, flasks of holy water, relics of saints, good-luck charms, bells, and pieces of secular jewelry such as brooches and rings
• The cross only made its first appearance in the 15th or 16th century
• Worn hanging from a belt, wrapped around the wrist as a bracelet, slung like a bandolier over one shoulder, or even as a necklace around the neck

A little bit of trivia…

The word "rosary" originally meant "rose garden" or "rose wreath," and it came to be applied to a devotion involving repetitions of the "Hail, Mary" due to a legend: bystanders saw a young monk reciting "Hail, Marys" in the road when he stopped to rest. As each one dropped from the monk's lips, it turned into a rose, which was gathered up by the Virgin Mary standing nearby. The Virgin showed her pleasure at the gift of prayers by weaving the roses into a garland for her head.

Sources:
1. Adoration of the Magi, Stefan Lochner, 1440, Cathedral in Köln (Cologne, Germany)
2. Bartholomäus Bruyn, 1549
3. 14th century German woodcut
4. The Magdalen Reading, Rogier van der Weyden, circa 1445, London
5. 16th century German woodcut
6. Gundelfinger family, 1486-1490, Nördlingen, Germany
7. Paternoster maker, Hausbücher der Nürnberger

Making a Paternoster

Materials:
• 30 identical beads
• 4 marker beads
• embroidery floss
• a drop (medal, cross, etc…)
• a small piece of cardboard (about 4.5x2)
• scissors
• a floss threader or a small piece of plastic string

The Strand
• Cut a piece of embroidery floss
  o Hold one end in one hand with your arm stretched out and bring the string to your opposite shoulder
  o This should give you about two times the length of your paternoster + a little bit extra
• String your drop and position it in the middle of the strand (a knot can be tied around the drop to secure it) (Figure 1)
• With the help of your floss threader, used like a needle, string a marker bead on the two strands (Figure 2)
• String 10 beads, a marker bead, 10 beads, a marker bead, 10 beads, and another marker bead (Figure 3)
The Tassel
• Cut a forearm length of embroidery floss and put aside for later
• Fold your piece of cardboard to the desired length of your tassel
• Wrap the rest of the embroidery floss around the folded cardboard starting at the opened end (Figure 4)
• Take the strings from your bead strand and pass it between the cardboard and the floss and bring it to the folded edge of the cardboard (Figure 5)
• Tie a few knots around the wrapped floss (you can go under the floss more than once to secure it) (Figure 6)
• Slide your scissors in the groove and cut the floss free (Figure 7)
• Take your forearm length of floss and place it under your soon to be tassel, about half an inch from the top (Figure 8)
• Do a double knot to tie it in place (Figure 9)
• Wrap around one string of the leftover floss a couple of times and do the same with the other string but in the opposite direction * leave at least two inches at the end of both strings
• Fastened the two strings together (Figure 10)
• Blend the tails with the rest of the tassel
• Trim the bottom of the tassel to get it evened out
Guild Corner

Narrowwork Guild: Guildmistress Lady Rosina von Schaffhausen

The Worshipful Company of Narrowworkers of the East Kingdom, or the Narrowwork Guild for short, is a guild for those who make trim and cord. This includes a wide variety of crafts, such as tablet weaving, inkle weaving, rigid heddle weaving, kumihimo (a Japanese cordmaking method), fingerloop braiding, whipcording, lucet, and a wide variety of other methods.

As a guild we encourage our members to demonstrate and teach their crafts, and we support each other in our research and crafting. Our email list is open to anyone in the Known World, and we have gentles from a number of kingdoms who participate on our Yahoo! group and attend our meetings, especially at Pennsic. Our members have assisted in running the Narrowwork day on Artisans' Row at Pennsic the last two years. Here in the East Kingdom, we collect donations of medallion cords for the Royalty to use in giving out awards. We also buy silk in bulk and resell it in small quantities at cost to our members, since most Narrowwork only needs a small amount of string.

If you are interested in joining our email list, you can find us on Yahoo! Groups under NarrowworkGuild.
What I Learned After Entering A&S Competitions
Or how not to take yourself too seriously

By Lord Bryan Mac Dhunghaill an Boghadiar
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These are some insights from a beginner in the world of A&S competition. I started down the road of A&S competitions late in my SCA life. I have been an archer, chirurgeon, cook and a fighter. I had always looked at A&S competitions and heard people talk of documentation, but I never understood it. I was naïve and went in to my first competition blind. I had been doing cross stitch for years, but I had just started doing embroidery and really didn’t know what I was getting into. My Mistress told me the best way to improve my embroidery was to enter some competitions, to let other people see my work and point out ways to make it better.

So I made arrangements to get to my first competition. Of course the first competition I enter was the Kings and Queens A&S competition. That was my first mistake. My second mistake was entering with an unfinished piece. My third mistake was I didn’t let my Mistress help me with the documentation. I thought it would be too hard to do the documentation on a piece of embroidery.

Boy, was I wrong.

I put out my piece very proudly and carefully. I looked at the other entries and enjoyed the event. After the judging was done, I picked up my comment sheets and went home. When I read the comment sheets I felt that some of the comments were criticizing my piece rather than critiquing it. I really got dinged on the scoring for entering an unfinished piece and on my lack of documentation. I got a score of twenty-three out of fifty. I was really angry and felt that some of the comments were too harsh. My Mistress agreed that some of the comments were harsh, but they all had merit. She calmed me down and reminded me if I was going to enter competitions, I would have to get a thicker skin and look at the commentary more objectively.

The next competition I entered was a small local competition. My piece was still unfinished, but this time I had documentation to include with the piece. I asked my mistress for help, and she showed me what I needed to focus on and how to put it together in a cohesive manner. I proudly laid out my piece, looked at the all of the other entries, and read their documentation. Other people had different ways of presenting their work, but I felt that my format worked for me.

At the end of the competition, I picked up the comment sheet and felt that some of the comments were still harsh, but I dealt better with them. I scored thirty out of fifty. I still needed to be reminded by my Mistress to take the advice from the comments that I needed to improve.

The things I learned from these competitions were: always enter a completed piece, take all criticism and critiques with a grain of salt, and use the comments to make your work better. The most important thing is to learn from the experience and improve your skills.

The next competition I entered was again a small local competition, but this time I entered a completed piece. The piece was an embroidered collar on a linen tunic my Lady Wife had made for herself. I worked on my documentation with my Mistress and felt really good about how the piece and the documentation turned out. I proudly laid out my piece and documentation. Again, I looked at the other entries and documentation and found that the styles were different, but all of
them contained the same information as mine did only in a different order. I picked up the comment sheet and went home.

This time I had one comment on the piece and one comment on the documentation. The comment on the piece was that collar of the tunic could have been finished better, I should have used silk tape to finish it rather than cotton tape. I had entered the embroidery into the competition, not the tunic, as the tunic wasn’t my work. The comment on the documentation was that I should have used a real source to show that they would have worn decorated collars. I had used an artist’s rendition of what was worn during the period. After reading the comment sheet, I realize it was not the best way to show what was done. I scored thirty-one out of fifty.

The next competition was a larger Kingdom event, and I wanted to enter the embroidered collar again. I knew I couldn’t fix the finish on the tunic, so I really worked on the documentation. I found a period source, a book on the Bayeux Tapestry, that showed decorated tunics, including the collars. The book showed that people had been embroidering collars since before 1082.

I laid out my piece and my documentation. What I really wanted was the critiques on the documentation. I enjoyed the event but looked very closely at other competitors’ documentation and entries. I saw what other people were doing and how their pieces were finished.

This time when I picked up my comment sheets, I expected to get dinged for the finish on the collar. But the documentation was so much better from the previous competition that I didn’t get dinged. I scored forty-two out of fifty and won for the first time. I was able to fix the one problem I could fix and got some really good critiques on my embroidery.

In the beginning, try to remember that even the criticism has something in it that you can learn from. Use the criticism/critique to make your work and your documentation better. To get ready for competitions, sit down with other people who do similar work. In the East Kingdom, we have an embroidery guild, Athena’s Thimble. Guild members are always willing to help new embroiderers with their work and documentation. They are also some of the people who will judge the competitions. And every time you enter a piece in any type of competition, you will learn something that will help make your work better.

Through the competitions I have entered I have learned:

1. Don’t enter a large competition first, pick a smaller local competition. At a smaller competition you might be able to ask questions of the judges after the judging is complete.

2. No matter how harsh you think the criticism/critique is there will be something you can take from it that will make your piece or documentation better.

3. Don’t enter an unfinished piece. You will not know if the ding you received is on the work itself or because it is unfinished.

4. As your work and documentation improve you will get more critiques and fewer criticisms.

Whatever you do, enjoy the work and enjoy sharing it with other people. Your work will improve, and you might find that you are helping other people’s work to improve as well.
Purpose-Made Garters, Spindle and Loom

By Lady Elizabeth Elenore Lovell
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(Part 1 of a series)

A short description of the project:

I decided to take on this project after receiving a copy of The Museum of London Textiles and Clothing: Medieval Finds From Excavations in London. What caught my eye was a purpose made garter recovered from the excavation site commonly known as Baynard’s Castle. The excavation took place in 1972 and the garter that I choose to focus on dates from the 14th century. There were three purpose made garters retrieved from the site and the one I have reproduced is #388 in the catalog of finds.

After reading about how the garter may have been constructed I realized that I did not possess a loom that I could weave narrow ware on. So I made the loom as well. I decided to use the loom making process as a way of learning about period tools, woods, finishing and woodworking techniques.

Along with the loom I needed a low whorl spindle to help me produce the fine threads needed to complete the weaving. I purchased a lead spindle whorl that was excavated from a trash deposit along the Thames River in London. I was informed that the whorl was found between sites 7 and 8 on the map and dates from the 14th century; however, I have no means to verify this information. The spindle shaft is carved from a small piece of English Yew that I purchased from a lumber mill in England. The spinning and dying of the wool was something that I had done before, but was not a simple process. I started with a raw fleece and after picking and sorting it; I washed, combed and carded, spun, dyed and wove the yarn into the final piece.

I found the entire process enjoyable! I liked learning about period tools and woodworking methods as well as learning to create a finished piece of narrow ware.

The Garter

The subject of my research, a purpose-made garter, was found in an archeological excavation in London in 1972. It was recovered from a waterfront rubbish dump behind Banard’s House on Queen Victoria Street. From the style of masonry, coins and pilgrim souvenirs also unearthed in the dig, archeologists have dated the garter to the third quarter of the 14th century. (Textiles and Clothing p.9)

The garter is described in the Museum of London’s Textiles and Clothing book as follows:

- 270mm(10.63 in) in length, 22mm(.9 in)wide including scallops that measure 7mm(.3 in)
- Weave: Tabby woven
- Warp: (i) wool, red (madder), s-spun, (ii) wool, black (madder), Z-spun, 11-12 pairs per cm
- Weft: wool, red (madder), Z-spun, 20-21 picks per cm
- Pattern in warp:
  - 4 red ends
  - 7 pairs of black ends
4 single black ends
3 red ends
10 wefts picks darned in red thread to form scallop

By the mid 1400’s garters became both decorative and functional due to the shortening of tunic hemlines and lengthening of front and back slits (Newton S.M., 1980 p4-6) Several examples of men wearing garters can be found in illuminated manuscripts and there is at least one example of a woman buried in the cathedral of St Denis, in France, who was laid out with linen hose gartered below the knees with leather. I can only assume that most women wore garters to hold up their hose, though there is little physical evidence to go by.

The Wool

I choose a Cheviot sheep fleece for the garter project. Cheviot sheep originated in the Cheviot Hills on the border of England and Scotland as early as 1372. Illuminations from books of hours show sheep that look a great deal like Cheviots, having heads and lower legs free of wool, pricked ears, a long face and black feet.

Cheviots are a hearty breed and do well in harsh English weather. The wool has a good crimp and just enough bounce for it to make a strong yarn with a bit of give. The fleece is long stapled and dense.

I prepared the fleece by first picking through and sorting out the tags, britch and belly wool, second cuts and any vegetation. After years of trying to find a use for this unsuitable wool, I have decided that its only use is in my mulch pile. After a through skirting, the fleece is scoured in a large washtub using a mild detergent. I fill up the tub with very hot water, mix in the soap and gently push the fleece down into the hot water. I allow the fleece to sit until the water cools down, though not so cool that the grease begins to re-deposit onto the wool. I gently pull out the wet fleece and drain the tub, rinse down the sides to get rid of grease and re-fill the tub with more hot water and soap. I usually wash the fleece two to three times, depending on the amount of soil in the wool and follow the washes with two rinses in warm, clear water. After the fleece is as clean as I can get it I will lay it all out to dry on screens, towels or blankets. It usually takes several days for the wool to dry.

Next some of the wool is combed. Combs are pictured in a few illuminated manuscripts, my favorite being that of St Blaise. He is said to be the patron saint of wool combers.

Wool is combed by first dipping the combs into a pot of grease consisting of butter, olive oil or animal fat (Textiles and Clothing p.16-17) I choose to use olive oil as it was readily available and inexpensive. The oil helped to lubricate the wool and kept the fibers from becoming damaged. In England it was more common for one comb to be attached to a device called a combingstock (shown in the above illumination). The combingstock had a wide base where the woman could rest her feet and hold the stand steady while she prepared the fibers. First the wool was arranged or thrown on the stationary comb and the second comb was passed through the wool until all of the fibers were taken off the first comb, leaving just the short noils. The noils were removed from the stationary comb and the wool was worked back onto the stationary comb and the process was started over again. This process was repeated until there was enough wool for spinning. The combed wool is then placed on a distaff and spun using a low whorl drop spindle.
in a clockwise or z twist direction. As per the description of the excavated garter the black threads in the warp and all of the red threads in the weft are z twist spun.

I completed the preparation process by carding the other half of the wool. I load the bottom card by drawing locks of wool across the teeth. Then taking the other card and drawing it lightly across the bottom card I transfer the wool from the bottom card to the top. This is repeated until the wool is light, fluffy and free of debris. Carding creates a softer texture that is good for the weft threads in weaving.

It seems that carded wool was only used for part of the warp in the excavated garters. The Textiles and Clothing book states that the red threads in the warp were s-spun and the black z-spun. I believe that this was done to create a subtle change in the way the light is reflected off the piece. Combed and carded fibers reflect light differently and the weaver may have been trying to achieve this effect by alternating the spin of the fibers.

Also visible in several illuminated manuscripts are distaffs, each image above shows a spinner using one. Some distaffs are held in a floor stand and some are tucked in the belt. A distaff could have been anything from a forked stick cut from a tree or found on the ground to an ornately carved shaft and head given as part of a wedding dowry. It is not clear to me whether or not the distaffs shown in illuminations had supporting cages under the fibers to support them for spinning. Looking at the shape the tied fiber creates, I tend to think that the fibers were applied or dressed onto the top of the shaft and secured with a ribbon or piece of twine. If a cage like support system were under the fibers I believe that the distaff in illuminations would have more of a rounded shape, rather than the cone shape we see. However, we do need to take into account the artists perceptions when looking at illuminations.

Geis and Geis go into some detail about spinning and the use of a distaff:

"Holding in her left hand the distaff, a short forked stick around which a mass of the prepared raw fibers was wound, the spinster took some of the fibers between the finger and thumb of her right hand, twisting them together as she drew them gently downward. When the thread thus produced was long enough, she tucked the distaff under her arm or in her belt and tied the thread with a slipknot to the top of the spindle, a top like rod with a disk-shaped weight attached to the bottom to increase rotation, and gave it a turn. The suspended weight pulled the fibers slowly through the spinner’s fingers, while the rotation twisted them together into yarn. The process depended on the practiced skill of spinner in controlling the release of the fibers. Drawing out more fibers from the distaff, she repeated the operation until the spindle reached the floor, when she picked it up and wound the spun thread around it. When the spindle was full, she wound the thread into a ball." (Geis & Geis, Cathedral, Forge and Waterwheel p51)

I choose not to use a distaff while spinning the yarn for this project. This choice was based on personal preference alone, as I prefer to tuck the un-spun fibers up my right sleeve while I spin. I would like to think that spinners in period adjusted methods to suit their own personal preferences and I did the same.

Spinning on this spindle was most enjoyable! It has a total weight of 1.6 ounces, which I find to be perfect for fine spinning. I decided to use the short draw method because I wanted to precisely control the width of the yarn.
The spindle, with Cheviot wool

The Yarn:
The Museum of London’s Textiles and Clothing book states that the garter in question was composed of both s-spun (counterclockwise) and z-spun (clockwise) yarns. Unfortunately, I need to rely upon the observations of the archeologists who excavated the garter, as I do not have access to the piece for further investigations. S-spun yarns are carded and tend to be a softer texture, while z-spun yarns are combed and have a smoother feel. It is not clear to me why the weaver choose to use both s and z-spun yarns in the warp, however I can speculate. Since s and z-spun yarns reflect light differently, due to the method of preparation, the choice may have been an aesthetic one. The red warp threads are at both the top and bottom edge of the garter, creating a softer texture surrounding the black band that makes up the center portion of the piece. Another possibility is that the weaver was using up leftover yarns as not to waste resources and choose the yarns based on what was available at the time. I think that either scenario is possible. There are times when I plan a project based on a certain look I wish to achieve and times when I use what materials are on hand and see what comes out. It is impossible to tell, by looking at the excavated piece, what was in the mind of the weaver at the time.

After spinning the yarn required for the project I gathered my materials for dying. The Museum of London’s Textiles and Clothing book states that both the red and black yarns used in the garter were dyed with madder. Madder (Rubia tinctorum or Rubia peregrina) is a plant native to Europe. Rubia is a genus of about 40 species; its members are characterized by lance-shaped leaves that grow in whorls and by small yellowish flowers that grow in clusters. The difference between tinctorum and peregrina is that the latter is the name for the wild, uncultivated form of the plant. The dye that results from the ground up root of the plant is called alizarin or more commonly, madder. There is evidence of the use of madder to dye cloth as early as Egyptian times. Libyan women in the 5th century BC also dyed with the plant. In medicine Rubia tinctorum used to treat amenorrhea (the failure to menstruate) in medieval times.

The plant is an easy to grow perennial that can be harvested after 2-3 years. It grows well in deep, fertile, well-drained soil amended with plenty of ground limestone. Once growing, madder keeps going indefinitely and requires virtually no care. (A dyers garden, Rita Buchannan p 52)
did not grow the Rubia tinctorum used for my project, as I do not have the space to allow it to flourish. Instead I used dried root, which produced the good clear red I was looking for.

I used alum as a mordant for this project; soaking the yarn for a few hours in water to thoroughly wet the fibers for even dye distribution then simmered the yarn for an hour in the mordent solution. I took the dried madder root (about 2oz) and added about a tablespoon of ground limestone, to enhance the red pigment. I read about the limestone in Rita Buchannan’s book on dying and concluded that if the plant needed limestone during the growing process then it could not hurt to add it in the dye process. I put the powdered mixture in a large steel stockpot and mixed well, added the already mordented yarn to the pot, and simmered for about an hour. The result of the madder dye bath was a deep, clear red. I did not exhaust the bath, as I was only using a small amount of yarn for this project. So I saved the rest of the dye bath for future projects.

As for the black yarn, that was another story altogether. I was unable, after several attempts using different mordents such as copper, iron, tin and chrome, to achieve a deep black color. The closest I got to black with madder was a deep reddish brown. I wanted to get as close as possible to the colors the excavation book said were used. However I was not going to get black with madder. This did not daunt me! I took out a few more dye recipe books and found that it might be possible to get black with Hawthorn (berries, twigs and leaves) and alum mordant or Oak galls with iron mordant. After doing some research on English dyes I found that a manuscript existed called the Innsbruck Manuscript, which was translated by Drea Leed. For black dye, the manuscript states:

“Swer swarcz varb machen welle, der nem aychepeh vnd stozze die wol ze puluer vnd alaun dar vnder vnd siude das in perchweis mit alaun vnd in harn vnd verb da mit; wil er tunchel machen, so mische swarcz varb dar vnder.”

Drea Leed translates the passage into English and gets this:

“Whoever wants to make black dye, he takes oak galls and pulverizes them and adds alum thereto and boils it in a skillful way with alum and in urine and dyes therewith; if he wants to make it darker, add black dye thereto.”

I obtained some oak galls, surprisingly, in my own back yard. Twig and stem galls, such as the gouty oak gall and horned oak gall, are solid, woody masses. Horned oak galls can be found on pin, scrub, black, blackjack, and water oaks while gouty oak galls occur on scarlet, red, pin or black oak. I identified several oak trees in my yard and harvested the galls. I did not know if they were the correct things until I tried them in the dye pot. Since I was dying a very small amount of yarn I only took what was necessary, five small galls, and I used every bit of them.

The galls I harvested were a bit damp, so I dried them out in a low heat oven for a few hours. Then I ground them up into a medium fine powder. I had read that in medieval times dyers who were interested in saving time and resources would place both the dye and iron filings into one pot instead of using ferrous sulfate or iron liquor. This was not good for the wool, would make it feel harsh and scratchy and cause breakage. So I choose to use iron liquor as a mordent before dying with the oak gall. My choice was based upon the texture and thinness of my yarn. I would be putting stress on the thin yarns during the weaving process and did not want to tempt fate by weakening the fibers in the dye process.
Iron liquor is very easy to make, but takes a bit of time, one to two weeks, to develop. I took a large glass jar with a tight fitting lid and placed in the bottom a handful of rusty nails. To this I added two parts water to one part clear vinegar and let it steep. The liquor is the right formulation when the liquid is a medium rusty-orange color. To use the liquor I strained the liquid into a steel pot adding some water and the fibers that have been well soaked in water. I simmered the mixture for ten minutes and allowed the fibers to turn a pale orange color. The fibers then cooled and I rinsed them well with clear water.

I found that in my first test dye with iron mordent that some of the iron particles were not rinsed out and this caused the oak gall dye not to take to some parts of the test yarn. So for the second dye bath I was more careful to rinse thoroughly. After properly mordenting the yarn I prepared the dye bath. In the original recipe from the Innsbruck Manuscript, urine was listed as an ingredient for oak gall dye. I choose not to use urine because I am taking large amounts of vitamin and mineral supplements and did not want any excess that might come out in the urine to effect the results of the dye bath. To a steel pot I added the oak gall powder, two tablespoons of alum, water to cover the yarn and finally the yarn itself. I simmered this for about an hour and then turned off the heat, covered the pot and allowed the yarn to sit in the dye overnight. Then I prayed! In the morning I had a lovely black dye made from oak galls. Finally I rinsed both yarns in clear water and hung them up to dry. I hung the skeins under tension so as to create a well-balanced yarn.

The yarn being dyed both red and black it was time to re-skein, measure out my warp and weft and get ready to warp the loom. Before moving onto the loom, I wanted to touch upon the use of the niddy noddy or skein winder. I have found several examples of a niddy noddy being used in illuminated manuscripts and have heard of a song that was sung while using the niddy noddy, but I do not have any documentation for the song. A niddy noddy is a useful tool to wind the yarn into skeins. I have two, a small sampler size for small amounts and thin yarns and a larger model for chunkier and larger amounts of yarn. I choose to use the smaller model for this project.

(To Be Continued)

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The Mary Rose Trust, Image of brace used with permission from Alex Hildred
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Call for Submissions!
Having something interesting you are doing that you’d like to share with others? Do you have a poem, song, or artwork you’d like to contribute? I am seeking submissions for the next edition of Ars Scientia Orientalis, to be published in March 2012. Please send all submissions to editor_AS@eastkingdom.org by the end of February 2012 for inclusion in the next issue.