

Medieval Textiles

Coordinator: Nancy M McKenna 507 Singer Ave. Lemont, Illinois 60439 e-mail:nancy.mckenna@attbi.com

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News from the Coordinator

by Nancy M McKenna

Convergence year... there is a special ring to that phrase. It is the year when weavers from all over converge upon one city for stimulating and enriching activities that expand their fiber horizons. Even if one does not attend Convergence (& Complex Weavers Seminars) that spark is felt in all the fiber events everywhere that year. It is the regenerative year. It is the year for field trips near and far.

One such trip for me was a lecture by Dr. John Woods of the University of Chicago. As you may recall from Medieval Textiles issue 29, Dr. Woods is a member of a team searching for Genghis Kahn (Mongolian spelling: Ghinggis Khon; d. Aug 1227 AD) in Mongolia.

Maury Kravitz envisioned this search many years ago and he has spent much of his life collecting information about Khan. In 1995, Kravitz decided he was not getting any younger and the time was now to fulfill his dream. He came to Woods for help setting up the expedition. They wrote 57 letters asking for sponsorship. They received 57 rejections. Just as Woods was about to suggest throwing in the towel, Kravitz called him. Using the phrase "vast quantities of limitless wealth" in describing what could be found in such a tomb, Kravitz had found investors who gave them \$1.2 million. This was to cover three years of work and includes contracts with Curtis Productions and MGM as well. This summer will be the third season and they plan on opening several of the promising tomb structures in the area they have designated the

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Block Printing

by: Mr. Mohamedhusain Khatri

Indigo (Neel) dyeing and the use of block-printing to produce patterns on cloth have been known for centuries. The transforming properties of the Indigo plant (ASURI) find a mention in the Atharva Veda and the varied tones of Indigo Blue appear in clothes worn by men and women in the Rock Paintings of Ajanta, Bagh and in the Wall Paintings of Alchi and Tanjore. Indian cloth, with their fast dyes and varied designs was famous throughout the ancient world. The earliest specimen of Indian dyed and block-printed cloth, apart from the fragment found at Harappa, dates back to the 8th Century. Innumerable fragments of block-printed, dyed cloth have been discovered in the tombs at Fostat in Egypt. An analysis of the Indigo Dye in these Fostat fabrics has led to the belief that the origin of these resist cloth was Gujarat in India.

Printing has been traditionally carried on by the residents of Kutch - Gujarat and these printers called themselves "KHATRIS". The "Khatris" of Kutch - Gujarat were originally from Sind and from there they migrated to different printing centers of western and Northern India.

"Vegetable Dyes" or "Natural Dyes" are organic dyes extracted from Indigo - plant, Saffron, Indian Madder Root, Henna, Bark, Fruit Peel and Leaves and Flowers of various plants. Vegetable Dyes have been existence for several centuries.

Block printing using Vegetable Dyes can be traced to the early 15th Century. This Art of Block-printing using Vegetable Dyes has been passed within the family from generation to generation. This ART FORM has been practiced in our family for the last Five generations.

We are pioneers in using Vegetable dyes to print on Silk and Woollen fabrics after having done extensive research and experimentation.

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Block Printing Cont'd from page 1

The workmanship of Block-Printing is an example of the laborious and intricate process practised in India. It consists of a technique employing a combination of two different methods: that of printing with a finely cut wood-block and hand painting or Kalamkari work. The result, as you can see, is extraordinarily attractive.

The Master craftsman, who evolved the theme and design and printing the first outline, was usually, as is today also, the head of the family. The rich detail of colouring was then produced by the family assistants, each of whom had their individual skills. Each knew the entire process but carried on the task assigned to them. It is this intricate skill passed personally from members of the family over the generations, which is the secret of India's superb tradition of Block printing.

The Process:



Stage 1 of Natural Dyes. Madder - Shrub Flowers - Rinds

Stage 2 - Extracted Powder from various Natural Dyes Sources



Stage 3 - Colour Master weighing colour powder for Dyeing and Printing

Stage 4 - Colour Master boiling weighted colour with other indigenous ingredients for preparing colour paste for printing.



Stage 5 - Fine Outline blocks made of copper wire

Stage 6 - A highly skilled printer making the first outlines with blocks for printing.



Stage 7 - Washing process in 5 various baths

Stage 8 - The washed material is hung up in open spaces for quick drying



Mr. Mohamedhusain Khatri is the fifth generation of his family producing textiles in this (historic) method. His company carries on the business of Block-printing & Dyeing on Cotton, Silk and Woollen Fabrics. They have thousands of Hand-Block designs in different categories like traditional Kutch, Sangneries, Kalamkari, Jamevar, Kashmiri, etc. They do Block-Printing & Dyeing on Silk, Tussars, Crepe, Chiffon, satin, Georgette, Twill, Dupion & wool in the heart of the city of Mumbai in India. They extract their own Natural Dyes from substances like roots, shrubs, Flowers, Rinds, Leaves and Bark and have highly skilled manpower versed in the Art of Block Printing working for the company.

Mr. Khatri's company can be reached at:
Indigo
Hill-Queen, Ground Floor,
Pali-Mala Road, Bandra (West)
Mumbai 400 050
India.
E-mail: mhkhatri@indigo-india.com

Adventures in Research

by Alexis Abarria

This tale starts with a loom and a desire to exhibit my weaving. After getting miserable results in bean count A&S competitions displaying hand-woven trim and cloth, I asked for advice.

I was told that the problem was not with my work but with my venue and display. Bean counts were not my best form of competition because my work is not flashy. Bean counts are ranked by the general populace. "Try formal A&S competitions," I was told. "And find a way to display your work that is pleasing to the eye."

The improved display was easy. I got a quilt rack. It keeps my cloth and trim organized and off tables. I even have a mini-rack to use if all I am displaying is trim. The rack puts the cloth at eye level and is designed for displaying work. Problem solved.

The Need to Research

Research was another issue. I just wanted to weave. Why did I need to read about other people weaving? I had my hands full with designing trim, looking at four-harness patterns, and responding to four looms with projects begging for my attention. I had not figured out that research would be a great way to spend hot summer days when I did not want yards of cloth wound around by my legs.

I found the criteria for the "Weaving-Loom" category in the SCA's A&S Handbook and off I went. Since the loom was warped and I had already started weaving, I did my research backwards from what I had started. Never again! Bad move! I was fortunate that I was able to document what I had already woven. The criteria proved to be a valuable starting point.

My first foray into documentation at the Regional level netted encouragement and useful pointers. I repaired the documentation in time for the Kingdom level A&S competition. The useful pointers included questions about where I would have gotten my raw materials and what I planned to do with the finished article.

The Kingdom level A&S competition was different. I

have since formed the opinion that judges should be warranted and pass a written comprehension test after I read a comment wondering what I was going to do with what I had woven. Was I going to use it for trim or a belt? (NOTE: The title on the documentation was "Inkle Woven Trim"). To be charitable, if I had spent all day staring at cloth and documentation, I would probably be lucky to remember my own name.

More Research

With the first attempt out of the way, I started to really hit the books. In an Internet weaving group, I innocently asked for further reading material. That is when I first heard the term 'archaeological textile.' Get thee to a library.

I found that the inter-library loan system is my best resource. Librarians are very helpful people. Let's just say the file of books they ordered for me is a thick one. Not all of the books were helpful, but when I found a good one, it more than made up for all the books I merely skimmed.

I suggest that you take any recommended reading list with caution. The writer has his/her own area of focus and it may not match yours.

I spent months alternating between weaving and reading for the next Regional competition. I severely revamped my documentation. I added many pictures of woven goods and drafts. I kept finding many good bibliographies on the Internet, and reading my way through them. By the next Regional competition, I had good documentation and a better understanding of research.

Living History Research

My research has entered another phase. I call it, "living history." This operates on one principle - does it work? Consider the following:

Can one person perform the art/science or does it take two? How much help would you have really had?

When would I have found the time to do my art/science? Is it my job, hobby, or one part of my duties?

What would have been my distractions - family, children, and household chores?

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Adventures, Cont'd from page 3

How comfortable is the garb? (If this is not your best court garb, can you do daily chores in it?)

Is the garb a fire hazard? (ie, unfitted Viking aprons without a belt)

How badly will it show stains and wear?

How long should I expect it to last?

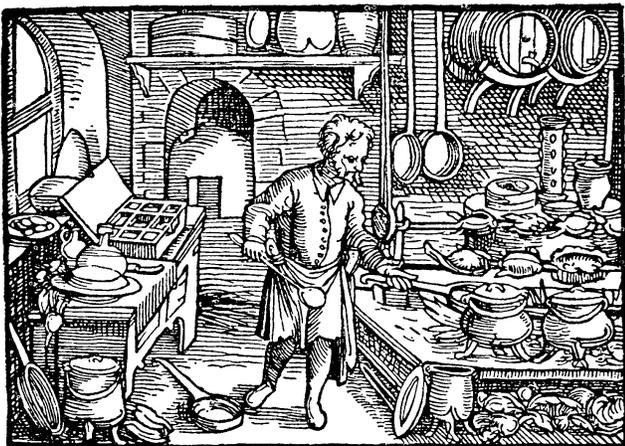
Does the garb waste a lot of material? (With the effort it takes to weave, it'd better not - consider that silk velvet went trade weight for gold.)

How stable is the weaving pattern? (Long floats snag easily. If the cloth is to be used for curtains to hang around the bed, not a problem. But this is not a desirable feature for a cloak.)

About the Author:

Alexandria Abarria is an Administrative Assistant who has been weaving for about 5 years, starting out w/ an inkle loom, then a rigid heddle loom, and finally a 4-harness floor loom. She is a member of Woodland Weavers and Spinners weaving guild and enjoys weaving, spinning, making cordials, and tending her garden.

Furthermore, she is an active member in the Society for Creative Anacronism where she is known as Lady Cassandra of Glastonbury, CW, AoA: a 10th Century English lady who was part of a Norse mass relocation program. Within the SCA she is also the Regional Chirurgeon for Pentamere, Baronial Chirurgeon for Andelcrag, and a Marshal of Fence.



News from the Coordinator, Cont'd from page 1
most likely final resting-place. I requested the Medieval Textiles be alerted as soon as possible should textile finds be located.

Another such field trip for me was Fabric Fair at the Chicago Merchandise Mart. The guest speaker was Murray Bartlett Douglas of Bruntschwig & Fils. While slides of glorious interiors built castles in the air, Mrs. Douglas regaled us with stories – stories of visits to her Aunt Zelina Bruntschwig, and having tea in rooms that took her (and through pictures, our) breath away. Accompanying images of storerooms full of fabrics – some hundreds of years old; she shared stories of the histories of the fabrics both in their vaults and those joining their current line of textiles. Mrs. Douglas said, “ Our attics are treasures ... we should get them out and look at them... good design is forever.” History becoming Tomorrow’s News was a theme heard again and again throughout all the showrooms that day.

Printed fabrics – toile (t'wäll) – were a particular case in point. Made famous by Mme. d’Pompadour’s wearing of printed chintz that mimicked the brocades of the day, these fabrics have been in style ever since. Using interior pictures of 250 year old weaving and printing mills, we were shown the difference in hand block printing (10 yards produced a day), hand screen printing (100 to 200 yards a day) and machine printing (thousands of yards per day). It is heartening and exciting that these patterns are available today to create and recreate luxurious interiors and clothing. It is also amazing (& wonderful!) that brocades, lampas and velvets originally created for Louis XIV are produced today on the same looms as the originals.

But students of history know that printed fabrics were created in similar patterns long before Mme. d’Pompadour’s day. Printed cloths dating from the 11th and 12th century are still in existence, and 14th century examples are seen hanging next to the silk brocades they copy in museums. A 15th century manuscript entitled “Directions for Manufacturing Textile Prints” is in the Monastery of St. Catherine, Nuremberg. The tree of life, (palampore \pal am por\), floral motifs and mythic creatures: seen in the medieval period, and recreated today. And although much of today’s printing is done with synthetic dyes, block printing is still done with natural dyes, especially in India. In India, the main colors used are red, the color of love, yellow the color of spring, blue as in

News from the Coordinator, Cont'd from page 4
 Krishna, and saffron of the yogi. Colors other than indigo are block printed, then those colors are coated with a mask either out of mud or another organic material, and then the cloth is dipped into an indigo vat to achieve the blue figures in cloth decoration. CIBA Review # 26 covers some Medieval printed linen chasubles, and one of the current manufacturers of natural dye printed cloth in India has offered to share their process. (See the article in this issue) The actual recipe for the dye paste is a trade secret, and is not shared. Printing with natural dyes using medieval recipes could be an interesting project! And one that is of increasing importance since industries are searching out bio-degradable and earth friendly processes to replace environmentally damaging methods currently in use.

It seems that a lack of primary source material is a reoccurring issue. While visiting the church to which a friend belongs, I discovered a wonderful cache of historic items. When churches were built a couple hundred of years ago in America, it was customary for the new parish to request materials from the home parish(s) in Europe of the order of clergy that built the new church here in America. It was not uncommon to receive articles that were hundreds of years old at that time. With the advent of the Vatican II Council in particular in the Catholic Church and the general winds of change that swept through the United States in the 1960's & 1970's, many (if not most) of these old items (statuary, vestments, relics, etc) were often consigned to the local garbage dump. But a couple parishes in each diocese seem to have seen these treasures for what they are. St. John Cantius in Chicago is one such parish. Although they have only a very small portion of their collected treasures available for viewing, this small portion includes thousands of relics, many in their original reliquaries, a goodly collection of statues, church ornaments, furniture and of course, vestments. If you think your search for first hand sight or examination of such ended with the lack of a large art or history museum in your area, perhaps look to some conservative older churches or synagogues in your locale.

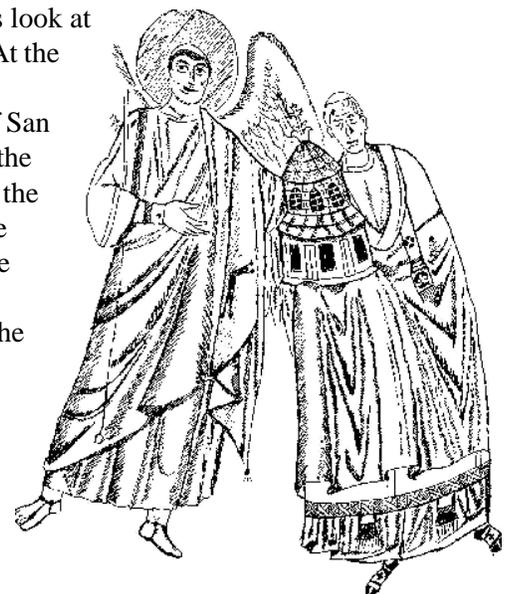


The Pallium: Or Clothing Makes the Man

by Nancy M. McKenna

This is one article of cloth that thousands of words could be written about. It is as significant politically as it is liturgically and needs to be viewed as more than textile item worn on particular occasions. In most cases of images of Bishops dispensing their duties the stole is not worn since the stole is a symbol of priesthood whereas the pallium is a symbol of the bishopric and thus takes precedence. Philip Schaff writes that the pallium is a mark of distinction and says, "Bishop Ecclesius in the mosaics of San Vitale wears both the priest's stole and the Roman Pallium. This, however, seems to be unique, and his successors have the pallium only." Although this does seem to be a fairly rare practice, it bears examination not just from a standpoint of what was customary in certain times and places, but the political positioning that such usage indicates. This practice is seen in several other places: Archbishop Stigand in the Bayeux Tapestry (chronicle of 1066); The seal of St. Thomas Beckett (1162-1172); in the Sacrementary of Autun¹ (c. 796-804), on the paliotto of St. Ambrose of Milan (constructed c. 824-859), and among the apostles and saints in a mosaic on the North presbytery wall of Monreale Cathedral (c. 1175) to name a few. Schaff also mentions later that this practice is seen among the Normans of France. It can be seen that these cases are times of political change or the images are snapshots within periods of changing politics.

First, let us look at Ravenna. At the time of the building of San Vitale and the creation of the mosaics the city was the western capitol of the Byzantine world. Justinian had just taken Ravenna from the (heretic) Arian



Ecclesius with model of San Vitale

Pallium, cont'd

Ostrogoths. In San Apollinare Nuovo, Justinian and his court are added to the frieze (replacing Theodoric and court) showing them in procession from the palace toward the East, processing to Heaven, thus stressing that they receive their power to rule from God alone. San Vitale is built and there we see Bishop Ecclesius offering the church in the form of a scale model to Christ. The Bishop is wearing a white alb, white dalmatic with dark stripes running from shoulder to hem. The dalmatic is slit on the sides to allow ease of movement while walking and the hem is embellished with gold. He is also wearing a stole which appears to have weights on the lower edge above the fringe, a purple silk chausible and a pallium that encircles the neckline with its ends falling on either side of the left shoulder.

Secondly, let us examine Ambrose. In 374 the Cappadocian, Auxentius, (an Arian) died leaving the chair of St. Barnabas empty. Although Emperor Valentinian was implored to appoint a successor, he decided to allow the seat to be filled by a popular election. At the time, Ambrose was consular governor of Liguria and Æmilia, with residence in Milan. As the story goes, almost unanomously, Ambrose was elected by the people to the Bishopric. Both East and West still agree that Ambrose was baptized at the hands of a Catholic bishop, and eight day later, 7 December 374, he took on his new position which he held for twenty-three years.



Seal of St. Thomas Beckett

Thirdly, St. Thomas Beckett's story is well known. A cleric friend of King Henry is appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, despite Beckett's warning that such an appointment would result in their no longer being friends. In this new role, Beckett defies Henry's wishes – and his

seal shows him fully clothed in his choir dress including stole, pallium, and also maniple. In a role where the Archbishop must stand up to the King, his seal must stress that the Archbishop is the head of the local church and thus holds the powers accorded to both priest and bishop. Because of this resistance, Beckett is martyred in 1172.

Lastly, let us look to the Bayeux Tapestry. King Edward has no offspring. According to Norman chroniclers, he promises the kingdom to his cousin, Duke William of Normandy. Then, the king calls Harold Godwinson (his brother-in-law and a powerful earl) and sends him to Normandy to confirm the pledge.



Archbishop Stigand from the Bayeux Tapestry

Harold and entourage travel by boat and come ashore near St. Valéry, where he falls into the hands of Count Guy, a vassal of Duke William who then holds Harold for ransom. News of the capture gets back to William thru the quick work of some eavesdroppers and armed messengers are sent back to demand the release of Harold

The Duke then invites Harold to join him in battle and they lead a company of knights to relieve Dol Castle, besieged by Count Conan of Brittany. They are victorious and William gives Harold a fine suit of armour, thus placing him further in his debt. Harold then swears on two shrines to aid William in securing the English throne. So, off he goes to Westminster Abbey where the King is dying. But rather than accepting the crown for William, he takes it for himself as such are the last wishes of the dying King. It is at this point that Archbishop Stigand comes onto the scene. He proclaims Harold King, stating that the appearance of Halley's Comet is an omen from God, thus further substantiating Harold's claim to the throne. It may be notable that Bishop Odo of Bayeux who says grace before a meal later on in the story is not wearing a pallium although it is believed that it is he who commissioned the creation of the tapestry.

It is interesting to note that in all these cases the Bishop needs to show an extraordinary level of Church support or that they are indeed part of the Catholic Church as they are conferring or accepting power which constitutes a change in the political situation. Justinian is the new ruler and is orthodox Christian whereas his predecessors followed heretical teachings. Thus, it needs to be shown to the populace that this change is not only good, but has full support

Pallium, cont'd

of the entire Catholic Church and thus God. Ecclesius' successors do not need to wear both the stole and pallium as the occasions for which they are memorialized do not call for such strong support of the Church. In Ambrose we see him replacing Auxentius, who also followed the Arian teaching. Once again, by wearing both the stole and the pallium Ambrose is stressing that he as both Priest and Bishop he is not only a better choice politically (Auxentius being known as a cruel ruler of his constituency whereas Ambrose was known for his equitable dealings) but he, too, has this position with the approval of Catholic Church and God. In the situation illustrated by the Bayeux tapestry we have yet another example of this. Stigand must show not only that Harold is the King, but also he must overcome the prior promises of King Edward and also the promises of Harold to William. To do this he dons his entire regalia including a stole and maniple along with the pallium to confer the kingship. Bishop Odo, on the other hand does not have to make any such claims. The image is not one of conferring, but of saying grace or gathering troops, and thus choir dress is not necessary. But also he has much else on his side:



Paliotto of St. Ambrose, front & back

namely the promises of Edward and of Harold (sworn on not one but two reliquaries). Since William had been twice wronged and by both sets of promises is the rightful King he does not need the

Bishop to show he is the rightful inheritor.

Sources:

Grabar, Andre. *The Golden Age of Justinian*. The Arts of Mankind. Ed. André Malraux and Georges Salles. © 1967 Odyssey Press, New York

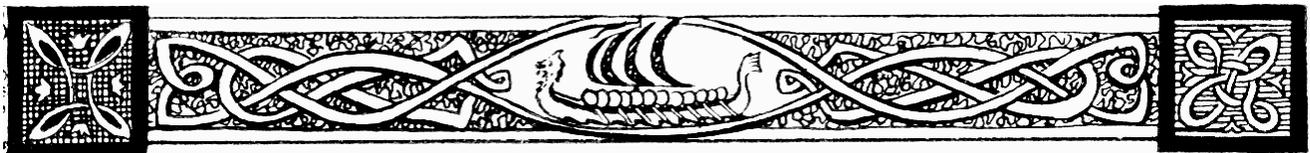
Lowden, John. *Early Christian & Byzantine Art*. ©1997 Phaidon Press Limited, London. ISBN 0714831689

Pugin, A. Welby. *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*. 1844 Henry G. Bohn, London

Schaff, Philip. *Excursus on the Vestments of the Early Church*. History of the Christian Church 1884

Notes:

¹ Reproduction by Vide M. Lelisle, *Gazette Archeologique*, 1884 pl. 20



The following notice from Complex Weavers is being posted in an upcoming CW Journal:

“When you join a study group your contributions will be kept in paper *and electronic format* in the library and available only to CW members for their own private use. Copyrights are retained by the authors. Copyright law prohibits others from using the materials in teaching, weaving for sale, and publication without express permission of the author.”

The italicized portion is the only change from previous statements. This is because it is easier to send a CD-ROM across the world than a 4” thick notebook. More news on this issue as it becomes available.

Upcoming events:

Art Institute of Chicago:

Fukusa and Furoshiki: A Gift of Splendid Japanese Gift Covers and Wrapping Cloths

July 17–November 17, 2002

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/exhibitions/fukusa.html>

Indianapolis Art Museum:

The Fabric of Moroccan Life

March 24, 2002 - June 23, 2002

<http://www.ima-art.org/>

Spertus Museum of Chicago:

A Gateway to Medieval Mediterranean Life:

Cairo's Ben Ezra Synagogue

October 21, 2001–August 18, 2002

http://www.spertus.edu/museum/exhibits/rebirth_ezra.html

The Textile Museum:

Hidden Threads of Peru: Q'ero Textiles

March 22 - August 4, 2002

<http://www.textilemuseum.org/exhib.htm>

Complex Weavers Seminars:

The Art of Our Craft

Vancouver BC, Canada

August 4 - 7, 2002

<http://www.complex-weavers.org/sem2002.htm>

Royal Ontario Museum

Toronto, Canada

Unveiling the Textile and Costume Collection

May 18, 2002 - September 8, 2002

Samuel European Gallery, Third Level

Images of Salvation - Masterpieces from the Vatican and other Italian Collections

June 8, 2002 - August 11, 2002

Garfield Weston Exhibition Hall, Street Level

<http://www.rom.on.ca/>

If your weaving is being featured somewhere, or if a museum near you has an exhibit of interest, let me know and I'll add it to this column.

Samples:

As you know, the December issue is a sample exchange. Remember, unlike most other study groups, everyone shares in the bounty of each other's weaving in *this* Study Group. Please share your weaving with the rest of the members in this annual event.

Please weave enough for 26 samples. Samples & draft are due November 15th, 2002. *This is a piece of cloth as small as 12 inches x 21 inches (30cm x 52.5 cm) This could be fabric "left over" from another project. It need not be handspun, nor of painstakingly accurate grist yarn, either. Everyone is invited to contribute since everyone receives samples.*

Sample weavers to date:

Gayle Bingham: Beiderwand from an altar cloth

Nancy McKenna: cloth unknown at this time

Abridged from The Knoxville News-Sentinel:

"Liles, Dr. James N. - age 72. Born in Akron, Ohio, died suddenly May 10, 2002, at the family farm in Monroe County. He was a retired Professor of Zoology at the University of Tennessee, a craftsman, and the author of The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing. He was a member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild and the Costume Society of America. He was a reinactor at Fort Loudoun and a teacher at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC."

Many of us know of Dr. Liles only from his expertise in Natural Dyeing. No doubt, that aspect of his life is but a small fraction of the good he has done. He will be missed by all whose lives he has touched.

For sale/swap:

Added by popular demand. Ads free to members, \$5/issue for non-members. Contact coordinator through e-mail or the US Postal Service with your advertisement information. Educational opportunities & conference announcements always listed without charge.