

Overview of Textiles from Tenth century Ireland

By Mistress Caera Wyther

Textile Creation Process

- The process of creating textiles took many hours.
- The process started with preparing the fiber materials for spinning.
- Then they were spun.
- The textile might be dyed before or after either spinning or weaving.
- The textile was woven.

Spinning

- To turn a fiber into string, a drop spindle was used.
- A distaff might also be used to hold the fibers before they were spun.
- String could potentially be as fine as in modern times or as thick.

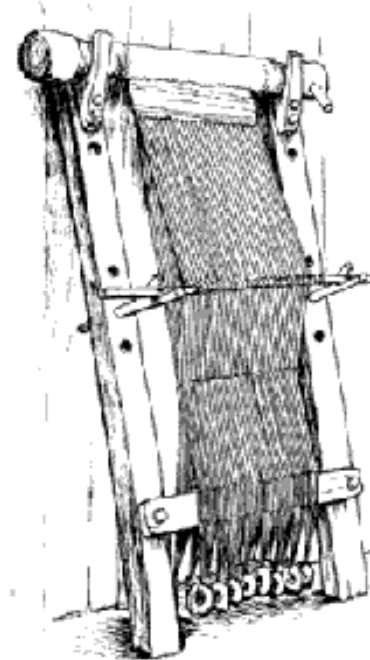


Spinning Fibers

- Wool was available locally in Ireland.
- Bast fibers including flax and nettles were also available locally. (Bast fibers are fibers that run the length of the plant.)

Weaving

- A warp weighted loom or two beam vertical loom was used to weave cloth.
- Additional equipment included:
 - Shuttle
 - Sword Beater
 - Pin Beater



Types of Weaves

- Plain Weave (also known as tabby)
- Twills
- Herringbone Twills
- Broken Lozenge Twills

Color patterns in Weaving

- Solid
- Stripes
- Plaids
- Tartan not appropriate for this period

Thread Counts

- Thread counts from fairly low
 - Wool 8 by 8 end per inch
 - Linen 12 by 12 ends per inch
- To fairly high
 - Wool 36 by 22 ends per inch
 - Linen 44 by 44 ends per inch
- The fabric I'm wearing today
 - Pink linen from Fabric-store.com 32 by 32 ends per inch.

Contributions from Silk Road

- While wool and linen are available locally, additionally, the following would be available by trade.
 - Silk, already spun or reeled.
 - While Cotton was being used in India and other parts of Southern Europe, I know of no evidence of it being available in tenth century Ireland.

Cloth Widths

- Rows of loom weights have been found as much as two meters long.
- Cloth widths were variable depending on the purpose of the cloth.
- Modern 60 inch wide fabric is well within the weaving capabilities of the technology of that time
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Narrow Wares

- Trim was often woven using tablets
- Tablet woven bands would be made of wool or silk string
- Such bands might also include metal threads made of wrapping gold around a fiber thread.

Dyeing

- There were many local dyestuffs available to the tenth century Irish.
 - Woad (*Isatis tinctoria* L.)
 - Madder (*Rubia tinctorium* L.)
 - Weld (*Reseda luteola*)
 - Bedstraw (*Galium boreale*)
 - English walnut (*Juglans regia*)
 - Lichens

Contributions from the Silk Road

- Kermes (a bug)
- Indigo

Dye Mordants

- Alum (possibly form a clubmoss with high aluminum content)
- Copper (from bronze dyepots)
- Iron
- Tannin

Dye differences per Fiber type

- What works to dye wool and silk won't necessarily work on linen and visa versa.
- Wool and silk dyes well with alum, copper and iron mordant.
- Linens dye well with a tannin mordant.
- Different fiber types take up the color differently.

Beyond Weaving

- There were other types of textiles beyond just weaving.
 - Naalbinding
 - Sprang
 - Embroidery