



Hilltop Cloud

Time Travellers Club

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Dear Club Member,

Back in 2013 I paid my first visit to an Association Summer School. As a new-ish member of a Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers I was inspired by the thought of being able to spend a whole week doing nothing but explore a new aspect of textile craft. The class that spoke most to me was a fascinating dyeing technique called Turkey Red.

Natural Dyes have always fascinated me from a historical aspect. So much of what is naturally dyed now seems to be pale, washed out, and lacking in punch. But we know from historical textiles that they achieved incredibly strong and bright colours from natural dyes. Personally I choose not to use them, because many of the techniques rely on toxic chemicals, and are incredibly time consuming, and would not work well on un-spun fibres. But I do appreciate the incredibly scientific approach to reproducing lost natural dyeing techniques. If you'd like to read more I shall put some links up in the Ravelry spoilers thread.

Back to Turkey Red, it's a technique that uses Madder to dye cotton (and later wool) in to an incredibly vibrant red-orange shade. The process was very time consuming, requiring up to 30 individual steps, taking up to 25 days. It also uses a lot of water, because of the repeated rinsing steps that are required. Key to the process is a treatment of the cloth with an oil mixture before dyeing. If you'd like to read more than there's a very good article in latest edition of The Journal, which is available to purchase as a download (again I'll put up a link in the Ravelry thread). The technique originated in India, and came to Europe along the silk road. At the time Turkey was considered to be "the east" and at some point this red textile dyeing technique that had come from the east, became known as Turkey Red. In the UK firms dyeing Turkey Red were set up in Scotland in the 1780's, and textiles dyed in the vibrant shade fetched a premium price. When the technique was adapted to allow printing, rather than yarn dyeing we end up with the Paisley style shawls that we've looked at in a previous month.

Happy Spinning,

Katie