Shield and Weapon Weights

In Caid, as in some other kingdoms, there are minimum weight requirements for weapons and shields; in Caid, swords (including basket hilt and gauntlet) are to weigh at least one pound per foot and a 24" round shield is to weigh at least ten pounds. The latter requirement may, as I understand it, be waived in some circumstances.

I can see only two legitimate grounds for such weight requirements: safety and authenticity. So far as safety is concerned, minimum sword weight requirements tend if anything to make fighting more dangerous. Injuries are most likely to be inflicted by strong fighters, and in the hands of a strong fighter a heavy weapon is more dangerous than a light one. Heavy shields may protect somewhat better than light ones, provided the shield is not too heavy for the user to control. On the other hand, a heavy shield is more dangerous to the opponent, in case of accidents, than a light one. All things considered, I find it hard to see how such rules can be justified in terms of safety.

What about authenticity? One purpose of the Society is "to study the past by selective re-creation." To the extent that our rules permit, or still worse encourage, weapons whose handling characteristics are different from those of the real weapons they are intended to imitate, we fail in that purpose. If, for example, the swords which are most effective in our fighting are so light that real medieval swords of similar weight and balance would either break or fail to penetrate mail, or if our shields are so light that in real combat they would survive only a few blows, it is reasonable to forbid both light swords and light shields and require something more authentic. So far as I know, however, those who support weight limits have never provided any evidence of what the characteristics of early medieval swords and shields really were.

Swords

Table 1 shows all of the broadswords for which length and weight are given in the three sources in which I have found such figures. Most are from the catalog of the Wallace collection in London; three are from *Cut and Thrust Weapons* by Eduard Wagner and 3 are from *Treasures From the Tower of London,* a catalog compiled by A.V.B. Norman and G.M. Wilson. The final column gives the weight in pounds divided by the length in feet; a weapon for which this figure is below l is illegal in Caid unless the fighter's gauntlet adds enough weight to make up the difference.

Examining table 1, we find that a majority of the swords are too light to be legal in Caid; the average weight per foot is .89 pounds, also too light to be legal. If we add in a half pound gauntlet (many medieval gauntlets would have been lighter; remember that our fighting rules are based on medieval combat prior to the adoption of plate) we bring the average up to 1.05 lb/foot; even with this addition a third of the swords in the table fail to meet the requirement. The requirement corresponds more nearly to the average weight of period swords than to its minimum, hence it cannot be justified on grounds of authenticity.

Not only is the requirement unjustified, it also has at least two undesirable consequences. It provides an unreasonable barrier to the weaker fighters, especially (but not exclusively) women, by forcing them to use equipment that is too heavy for them. In addition, the requirement encourages weapons that are realistic in weight but unrealistic in balance. Since the weight of a basket hilt or counterweight counts towards satisfying the requirement, fighters can and do make swords which have light blades and heavy hilts; such swords handle quite differently from real medieval swords, which are typically blade heavy. Since it is the strength of the blade which determines whether a sword can cut armor without breaking, weight requirements, if any, should apply to the blade not to the whole sword. The present rule encourages unrealistic weapons

(heavy swords balancing near the hilt) while forbidding some realistic ones (lighter swords balancing farther towards the point) thus defeating the whole idea of making rules that re-create actual medieval fighting.

What should be done? Lowering the weight requirement is only a partial solution; as long as the restriction is defined in terms of the total weight of the sword it encourages swords with unrealistic balance. The simplest solution, and the one I am inclined to favor, is to eliminate the rule; fighters will be discouraged from using unreasonably light swords by the difficulty of killing anyone with them. If that is not satisfactory, we should at least state the limit in terms of weight per foot for the blade, not for the sword; I would suggest about half a pound per foot.

Shields

Table 2 shows all of the circular or almost circular shields from before 1650 that are listed in the Wallace Collection catalog. They are all from the sixteenth or seventeenth century and most are described as "pageant" or "parade" shields (presumably ornamented shields are more likely to survive in collections than plain ones). Sixteenth century shields are in period for the Society but out of period for our sort of fighting. They give us some idea of what weight shields it is possible to make but they do not tell us what shields were or could be used in early medieval combat.

Unfortunately, early shields are rare. I have discussed the question of shield weights with the curator of one of the largest arms and armor collections in the country and the assistant curator of another; neither was willing to commit himself beyond the suggestion that one could use the surviving metal fittings from early shields to design a reconstruction and weigh that. Hence while the fact that the average weight per square foot for the historical shields is less than the minimum permitted by Caidan rules suggests that the Caidan shield requirements are too high, I do not think the table justifies much more than the conclusion that, absent evidence on the other side, the burden of proof is on those who claim that a medieval shield could not weigh less than 3.2 pounds per square foot.

Fighting Style

I have so far ignored one argument for weapon limits unrelated to issues of safety or authenticity. It is sometimes said that some type of weapon (most commonly a large shield) encourages "bad" style. Sometimes the claim is that the style really does not work but novices adopt it because it is easier than learning to fight better and gives good results against other novices. In other cases the claim is that the bad style does work, but should not, that somehow it defeats and drives out better styles. It is rarely explained in what sense the losing style is better.

Both of these arguments seem to me to be attempts by some fighters to use the rules to impose their views of how to fight on others, and as such indefensible. So far as novices are concerned, it is up to whoever is training them to advise them as to what weapons and fighting style work; if they choose to ignore the advice that is their concern. They might turn out to be right. I can easily enough imagine myself or others some years back informing a new fighter by the name of Paul of Bellatrix that he was doing it all wrong ("shields are for hiding behind"); perhaps if one of us had been King or Earl Marshall we could have come up with rules capable of dealing with someone who not only insisted on fighting all wrong but had the effrontery to kill us while doing so.

What about those who concede the effectiveness of the styles they dislike and wish to ban them anyway? This attitude seems to me to be based on a misunderstanding of what fighting is about. It is true that good fighting is beautiful, but its beauty comes from the fighter pursuing a particular objective (killing his opponent) in an elegant, ingenious, and effective way. To claim

that because certain styles of fighting are elegant they should be required even when they do not work is ultimately to argue for converting fighting into a form of dance. This seems to me entirely undesirable. It is also directly contrary to the idea of the Society as a group of people discovering how things were done by trying to do them.

There is one exception. Our fighting corresponds in part to real medieval combat and in part to medieval tourney fighting done with blunt weapons under restrictive rules. To the extent that we are interested in reproducing the latter, it is appropriate to introduce restrictions based on the rules actually used in medieval tournament. Since these rules varied from time to time and from place to place, such restrictions are probably most appropriate in special tourneys held under rules based on the rules of particular historical tournaments.

Table One					
Date(aprox)	**Length**	**Weight (lb/oz)**	**Origin**	**Wt/Lgth (lb/ft)**	**Source**
9th-10th c.	30 1/8"	2/8	Scand?	1.0	Wallace
1150-1200	32 3/8"	2/10	German	.97	Wallace
13th c.	33 3/8"	1/8		.53	Wallace
1340	33 3/4"	2/9	French?	.98	Wallace
1375-1400	30"	3/0	French	1.2	Wallace
14th c.	29 3/8"	2/1		.84	Wallace
1350-1400	29 3/16"	3/3	French	1.31	Wallace
1375-1400	23 5/8" *	2/8		1.27	Wallace
1380	31 1/8"	2/1		.8	Wallace
1400	34 3/8"	2/12		.96	Wallace
1460	34 3/4"	2/15	Italian?	1.01	Wallace
early 16th c.	36 1/8"	3/2	German	1.04	Wallace
9th-10th c.	75.5 cm.	.5 Kg.	Nordic	.44	Wagner
9th-11th c?	89.5 cm.	1.42 Kg.		1.06	Wagner
11th-13th c.	92 cm.	1 Kg.	Prague?	.73	Wagner
Before 1432	41"	1/11	Italian?	.49	Tower
about 1480**	43.2"	2/12	German?	.76	Tower
about 1500	35.4"	1/15	Swiss or Swabian	.66	Tower

* Approximately 5" of tip missing

** Hand and a half?

A certain holy man saw a barge on the river Tigris, loaded with thirty great clay jars. A bystander informed him that they contained wine, for the palace of the caliph Mutadid (May Allah be content with him). So the holy man took a barge pole and smashed them, all but one.

He was brought before the Prince of the Muslims for judgement, who demanded of him who it was that had made him the inspector of the marketplace.

"He who made thee Prince of the Muslims."

And Mutadid was abashed at the reply, and ordered that the holy man be pardoned and released.

Table Two: Shields and Bucklers

Date (aprox)	Size	Weight (lb/oz)	Origin	Wt/Area (lbs/sq ft)
Leather Targets for Parade				
1560	22 1/2 "	5/2.5	Italian	1.9
1560	22 11/16"	5/8	Italian	2.0
1560	22 3/16"	5/14	Italian	2.2
Wooden Pageant Shields				
1580	22 5/8"	4/6	Italian	1.6
1590	18 27/32"	3/10.5	Italian	1.9
Wooden Bucklers				
1600	17 1/2"	3/7	German	2.1
1600	20 3/4"	3/3	Italian?	1.4
Steel Bucklers				
16th c.	15 1/2"	4/9	Italian	3.5
1600	21 1/4"	7/3.5	Italian	2.9
Steel "Shield or Bucklers"				
1560	23 3/8"	9/4	Span/Ger	3.1
1560	22 1/4"	7/14	Italian	2.9
1580	22 1/4"	12/4	Italian	4.5
Steel "Pageant Shields or Bucklers"				
16th c.	21 3/8"	7/1	Flem/Fr	2.8
16th c.	24 7/16"	9/.5	Flem/Fr	2.8
1570	24 7/8"	6/9.5	Ger/Fl	2.0
1590	22 7/32"	8/12.5	German	3.3
1560	23 1/8"	9/0	Italian	3.1
1560	23"	8/1	Italian	2.8
1570	21 3/4"	7/4.5	Italian	2.8
1570	22 1/2"	7/1.5	Italian	2.6
1570	22 1/4"	9/3.5	Italian	3.4
1580-1600	23"	7/4	Italian	2.5
Post 1556	22 3/4"	10/4.5	Italian	3.9
1580	19 1/2"	7/1	Italian	3.4
1590	22 3/16"	7/7.5	Italian	2.8
1590	23 1/2"	8/2	Italian	2.7
1620	23 3/8"	10/14	Ger/Fl	3.6

Average of Historical Shields is 2.75 lb/sq ft, which corresponds to a 24" round weighing 8lb 10 oz.

A.S. XVI	24"	10/0	Caid Minimum	3.2
A.S. XVI	24"	8/0	Illegal	2.5
A.S. XVI	24"	6/0	Illegal	1.9

Note: Some of the shields were slightly oval; the average radius is shown. The last three shields are given for purposes of comparison.

Table Three: Maces

Date (aprox)	Length	Weight (lb/oz)	Origin
1470	15.5"*	2/12	South German
1560	17 1/16"**	3/11	Milanese
1560	22 1/16"	2/14.5	North Italian
1540	25 3/4"	3/5	Italian
1540	25"	3/3.75	Italian
1550	23 4/5"	2/12.7	Italian(?
1550	25"	3/6	German
1580	17 3/4"**	4/1.5	Milanese
1560	18 15/16"**	3/6.5	Milanese
*From the guard			
**Haft			

Table Four: Rapiers

Date (aprox)	Length	Weight (lb/oz)	Origin	Wt/Lgth
1590	46 5/8"	3/4.5	Italian(?)	0.845
1600	41 1/2"	2/13	German	0.813
1585	43 5/8"	2/5.5	Italian(Milan	)0.645
1600	39.5"	2/4.5	German	0.693
1590	42 3/8"	3/5.5	North Italian	0.947
1590	43 3/8"	3/2	Italian	0.86
1570-1600	47 7/8"	3/6.5	Italian	0.854
1600	42 13/16"	3/5	Italian	0.928
1600	44 7/8"	3/1	Italian	0.819
1590	41 1/4"	2/13	Italian	0.818
1580-1600	41 1/4"	2/13.5	Spanish(Toledo)	0.827
1600	40 1/4"	2/9.5	Italian(Brescia)	0.773
1600	45 7/8"	2/9.5	Italian(?)	0.678
1600	41 3/4"	2/7	Italian (Milan)	0.701
1550-1600	44 3/8"	3/2	Italian (Milan)	0.845
1600	44 5/8"	2/15.5	Italian (Milan)	0.798
1600	41 3/16"	3/9.5	German	1.05
Average Wt/Lgth:				**0.82**

Table Five: Two-Handed Swords						
	Length			Weight	Origin	Wt/Lgth
Date (aprox)	Blade	Grip	Over all	(lb/oz)		(lb/ft)
Mid 16th c	50 1/4"	23 3/4"	74"	8/6	German	1.36
1580	58 3/4"	19 5/8"	78 3/8"	14/3	German	2.
1580	50 1/8"	13 1/2"	63 5/8"	7/4	German	1.37
1500-10	44 5/8"	14 3/4"	59 3/8"	5/6.5	Italian	1.09
1530	48"	16 1/2"	64 1/2"	6/10	Italian	1.23
16th c.	53 1/4"	16"	69 1/4"	5/14	Spanish or German	1.02
early 16th c.	46 1/8"	17 5/8"	63 3/4"	6/6	German	1.2

Table Six: Halberds etc.

Date (aprox)	Length	Weight (lb/oz)	Origin	Type	Source	
late 14th-early 15th c.	14 3/4"‡	4/8	Swiss	Halberd	Wallace	
1500	16 1/4"‡	4/7	German	Halberd	Wallace	
1593	23 1/2"‡	6/10	German	Halberd	Wallace	
1580-1620‡‡	31 5/8"‡	7/4.5	Saxon	Halberd	Wallace	
1600-1620	21 1/8"‡	5/5	Saxon	Halberd	Wallace	
about 1500	70"	6/7	European	Poleaxe	Tower	
about 1500	97"	9/1	European	Glaive	Tower	Modern Haft
1500-1550	93.5"	7/11	European	Poleaxe	Tower	Iron butt spike
early 16th c.	83.12"	4/12	Italian	Partizan	Tower	Modern Haft
early 16th c.	100.75""	4/0	Italian?	Partizan	Tower	Modern Haft
early 16th c.	91.5"	5/14	Italian	Halberd	Tower	Haft not original
16th c.	80.5"	5/1	English	Bill	Tower	Modern Haft
early 16th c.	85.5"	9/15	Italian	Bill	Tower	Modern Haft
about 1600	80.37"	4/7	Italian?	Partizan	Tower	

‡The head, in some cases including the socket. Four 17th c. halberds are listed with shafts. The overall lengths are 60 5/8, 85, 90, and 75.5 . The first is listed as an officer's halberd, and the fourth as a "Halberd or Pole-Axe."

‡‡There are 12 of these, "Carried by the Guard of the Elector of Saxony; all of one pattern but differing slightly in details."

[Published in *Crown Prints*, reprinted in *Tournaments Illuminated* no. 64. Tables 3-6 are new.]
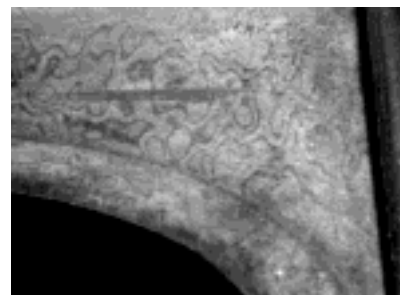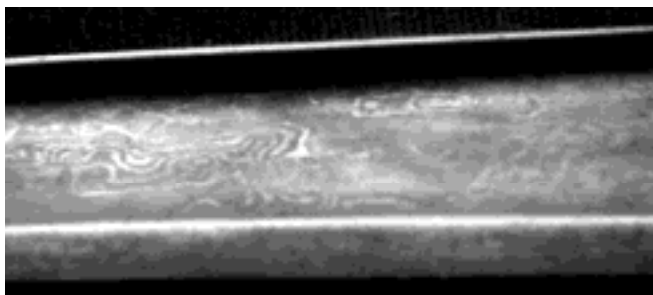
Close-ups of a peshkabz (see p. 283), illustrating the pattern of damascus steel

In Persona Storytelling

Storytelling is one of my favorite SCA activities–for at least two different reasons. The first is that it provides an opportunity not only to imagine that I am a medieval person in a medieval world, but to pull my listeners into that world as well. While I am telling a story, I am their environment–especially at night around a bardic circle, with nothing in sight that is obviously inappropriate to the twelfth century. The second is that it is an art with a real function in the SCA world, hence one that gets done, not because someone has announced that we ought to promote the arts, but because people want to do it.

By "in persona storytelling" I do not mean telling stories about your persona, an activity I regard with considerable misgiving. I mean telling stories as your persona–from his point of view, not yours. This article is about how to do so.

Consider a simple example–a short period anecdote about the bird that is the world:

> The Commander of the Faithful was sitting with his nadim, his cup companions. One of them said, "Commander of the Faithful, did you know that the world is a bird?" "No," he answered, "tell me that tale."

> "The world is a bird. Syria is its body; Iraq and Yemen are its wings. The Orient is its head–and the Maghreb, that is its tail."

> Sitting among the cup companions there was a Maghrebi, a Berber of the Maghreb like myself.

> "It is a true tale," he said. "And do you know what kind of a bird the world is?"

> "No," replied the Commander of the Faithful.

> "Ah," said the Maghrebi. "It is a peacock."

There are a number of things worth noting about that story–aside from the observation that neither ethnic prejudice nor one-upmanship is a modern invention. To begin with, note that I do not explain what "Commander of the Faithful" means–because the information is not necessary to understand the story, and because my persona would take it for granted that his hearers already knew. Nor do I explain where the Maghreb is–for the same reasons. I do, however, make it clear that I am myself a Maghrebi, and thus make myself part of the frame of the story. All of these are ways in which I try to project the illusion that both I and my hearers are medieval people. I do explain, in passing, what "nadim" means, on the theory that that my listeners are foreigners, and so, although they will of course recognize such obvious terms as "Maghreb" (the Islamic west–North Africa and Muslim Spain), they might not know what "nadim" means. And even in that case, my explanation ("cup-companions") takes for granted the social setting–a ruler surrounded by his favorites.

More subtly, I do not explain the social context of the story–that the Berbers, being neither, like the Arabs, the originators of Islam nor, like the Persians, major contributors to Islamic civilization, are viewed as second class citizens, hence natural targets for other people's denigration. That is implicit in the story–and is precisely the sort of thing that people take for granted about their own situation and are unlikely to explain to others.

In persona storytelling, like other forms of in persona activity, involves changing your normal behavior in two ways. The first is by omitting elements that positively identify you as a person born in the twentieth century–by not, for example, preceding the story with the explanation that

it is a medieval North African anecdote from the 14th c. Kitāb Mafākhir al-Barbar.[1] The second is by adding touches that identify you as a medieval person–ideally, a particular sort of medieval person from a particular time and place.

My describing myself as a Maghrebi and telling the story with the obvious pleasure of someone on the winning side of the exchange, is a simple example. Another occurs when I recite Malkin Grey's poem "The Raven Banner," based on an incident in Njalsaga. The poem contains a reference to Odin. While there is no strong reason why a medieval Muslim should not tell foreign stories–I have a period reference to one telling a story from India, and there are surviving records of Muslim visits to both east and west Norse–there are good reasons why a believing Muslim would be concerned about references to a pagan God. The beginning of the Muslim credo, after all, is "There is no God but God," and while medieval Islam was a reasonably tolerant religion, there were limits. Hence when I tell that poem, I follow it with an explanation–that "Odin" is the name of a Djinn, demon, or some such creature, that the Northmen, ignorant of the Unity of Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful), worship as a god.

As that example suggests, I also sprinkle my conversation with stock phrases that would come naturally to a medieval Muslim but not to a modern American. When I refer to God it is "God the Most Great," or "Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful)." Mohammed is "Our Lord the Prophet (blessings to Him, his Kindred, and his Companion Train)." Solomon is "Suleiman Ibn Daud, King and Prophet, God's peace and blessing upon him."

What You Must Know and Where to Find It

In order to do this sort of story telling, you need three sorts of information:

1. You need to know what modern acts and words are inappropriate to your persona–and for the most part, you already do know that. It does not require any extensive research to realize that a 12th century North African Berber would not introduce himself to people with "Hello, I am a North African Berber from the 12th century," any more than I introduce myself to people mundanely with "Hello, I am an American of Jewish descent from the 20th century." Some other examples are more subtle–I try, for instance, to avoid terms such as "O.K." that have an obviously modern ring to them. But the more subtle they are, the less it matters if you get them wrong, since if you don't recognize a term as modern, most of your listeners probably won't either.

A related point to remember is what things your persona does not know. David, for example, knows that by Cariadoc's time (c. 1100) Muslim Spain has begun its long decline. Cariadoc's view is that, while the Franks to the north of al-Andalus have been troublesome of late, they have been driven back before and will be driven back again–just as soon as the Andalusian princes stop fighting each other long enough to deal with them. And if the party kings don't, Yussuf the Almoravid will.

2. You need background information–information about how your persona would have viewed the world around him. The best way of getting that is to find readable primary sources from about the right time and place–books written by your persona's neighbors. Such books, in my experience, are both the most interesting and the most reliable source of information about past points of view. Of course, some of what they tell you may be false–Alexander the Great was not a Muslim, for instance, and did not, so far as I know, have a wise vizier named al Khidr–but the people who read the *Iskander-nama* and told stories from it thought he was and did. What matters is not what is true but what your persona thinks is true.

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[1] Quoted in H.T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*

3. You need period stories. You could make them up, but since you are not really a medieval person the stories you make up are likely to feel more like modern stories about the middle ages than like real medieval stories. That is especially likely if you start by making up stories instead of starting with stories actually told by medieval people, and learning from them what sorts of stories they told. Hence my view, at least, is that most or all of your repertoire should consist of period stories. For sources, see the next article.

Learning to tell Stories

Most of us can talk much better than we can recite. Hence my approach to storytelling is to learn stories, not to memorize them. To do so, I read over a story one or more times. Then I tell it. After I have been telling a story for a while, I like to go back and reread the original. Often it is a humbling experience–because I discover that I have misremembered some elements, or omitted details that make it a better story. The next time a tell it, I am a little closer to the original. I do not expect to ever end up with exactly the same words–nor is there any particular reason I should. But I do try to get steadily closer to the original story.

One piece of advice I always give to new storytellers is to start with short stories. One reason is that it is easier to remember all of the contents of a short story. Another is that it is easier to do a competent job of presenting. A final reason is that if you tell a short story badly, you only bore your audience for a short time. A long story, told badly, can come close to killing a bardic circle.

Start with very short stories, such as the example at the beginning of this article. Tell them to anyone who looks interested–not only around a bardic circle but waiting in line to get into Pennsic or when conversation flags around the dinner table. The function of storytelling is to entertain–especially to entertain people who would otherwise be bored. It is, along with singing, the most portable of arts; since you always have it with you, you might as well use it. If you find that people like your short stories–ask for another instead of politely holding still until you are finished and then remembering a prior appointment somewhere at the other end of the event–you are ready to learn longer ones.

Who Are You and Why Are You Telling These Stories?

There are a variety of contexts in which medieval people might tell medieval stories. Some story tellers may have been wandering mendicants, hoping to collect enough from their listeners to pay for dinner and a roof over their heads. Others may have been professional entertainers, supported by patrons. One of the most famous works of medieval Arabic literature, the *Assemblies* of Hariri, revolves around Abu Zaid, a gifted poet, storyteller and con man working his way across al-Islam.

None of those roles fits very well with either my persona or my SCA history. For an alternative, consider one of my favorite sources–al-Tanukhi's Tenth Century *Tabletalk of a Mesopotamian Judge*. The author starts his book by complaining that the anecdotes told in polite company nowadays are not nearly as good as the ones he remembers from his youth–and proceeds to recount every story he can remember, presumably in the hope of improving the situation. The context is that of upper class men entertaining each other by anecdotes, mostly about contemporaries. In a world without radio, television, or electric lighting, such casual storytelling must have played a much more important role than in our world–especially in a climate where sensible people rested during the midday heat and did much of their socializing in the cool of the evening.

Period Sources for Story Telling

One of my favorite activities at events is to wander from table to table at a feast or from campfire to campfire at a camping event, telling poems and stories. I know of no better way of pulling people out of the twentieth century, if only for a few minutes–especially if the story is presented as a medieval story told by a medieval storyteller.

Thus, for instance, a Muslim storyteller can follow a recitation of "The Raven Banner" (written by Malkin Grey and based on an incident in *Njal Saga*), which contains a reference to Odin, with the explanation that Odin is, as he understands it, a Djinn or Demon whom the Northmen worship as a god, thus confounding the unity of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. In much the same way, a Christian storyteller telling an Islamic story might make some comment concerning the false doctrines of the Paynim. In both cases, the point is not to start a religious argument but to make the teller's world-view into a medieval frame for the medieval tale. This is, incidentally, an entirely period device; both the Indian collections described below and the *Nights* are structured many layers deep, with stories inside stories inside stories.

The purpose of this article is to suggest to readers who might want to try storytelling for themselves some of the places where period stories are to be found. Some of the sources I cite are collections of stories, others are histories, memoirs, or long tales, containing incidents that can be told as separate stories. Many of the sources are available in a variety of translations. Some can be found in almost any bookstore, others may require a search through a good university library.

For the convenience of story tellers who prefer to tell stories that their personae could have known, I include information on dates and places. It is worth noting, however, that stories traveled far and lasted long. Stories from the Indian collections appear in the *Thousand Nights and a Night,* the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the *Decameron*; the *Gesta Romanorum* was, in turn, a source for both Chaucer and Shakespeare. Similarly, Apuleius plagiarized parts of his plot from an earlier Greek work–and contributed one story to the Decameron, published some twelve centuries after his death.

Sources

The Golden Ass by Apuleius. A lengthy and episodic story written in the second century A.D.

Katha Sarit Sagara (aka *The Ocean of Story*). A very old and very large Indian collection, containing many of the stories found in the *Panchatantra*.

Panchatantra (aka *Fables of Bidpai, Kalila wa-Dimna, The Tales of Kalila and Dimna*). A very old Indian collection, possibly dating to 200 B.C. It was translated into Persian in the 6th century, into Arabic (as the *Kalila wa-Dimna*) in the 8th century, from Arabic into Greek in the 11th century and, a little later, into Hebrew, and from Hebrew into Latin in the 13th century. The first English translation was in the 16th century.

The Thousand and One Nights. The story of Scheherezade, which provides the frame story for the *Nights,* is mentioned by al-Nadim in the 10th century, but the surviving texts are considerably later, possibly 15th century. The Burton translation (16 volumes!) is a delight; Payne is also supposed to be very good. Anything under eight hundred pages and calling itself the *Arabian Nights* is likely to be an abbreviated and bowdlerized version, intended for children.

The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge, by al-Muhassin ibn Ali al-Tanukhi, D. S. Margoliouth, tr. Al-Tanukhi was a tenth century judge who found that the anecdotes people were telling were no longer as good as the ones he remembered from his youth, and decided to do something about it. The book is full of retellable stories, many of them about people the author knew.

An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah ibn-Munkidh, Philip Hitti tr. Usamah was a Syrian Emir; his memoirs, dictated in his old age, describe events during the period between the first and second crusades. They are entertaining and episodic, hence can easily be mined for stories.

The Subtle Ruse: The Book of Arabic Wisdom and Guile. (*Raqa'iq al-hilal if Daqaiq al-hiyal*, author anonymous, Rene R. Hawam, tr.) This is a collection of anecdotes about tricks, organized by their perpetrator–God, Satan, angels, jinn, prophets, Caliphs, Kings, Sultans, Viziers, Governors, administrators, judges, witnesses, attorneys, jurisconsults, devout men, and ascetics.

The *Shah-nameh* of Ferdowsi, the *Khamseh* of Nizami, the *Sikander-nama*. These are all famous works of Persian literature, and should have bits that can be excerpted as stories. I do not know them well enough to recommend particular translations.

Mohammad's People, by Eric Schroeder. This is a history of the early centuries of al-Islam, made up of passages from period sources fitted together into a reasonably continuous whole. It contains one of my favorite stories (the death of Rabia, called Boy Longlocks).

The *Bible*. It was extensively used as a source of stories in the Middle Ages.

The *Koran*.

The Travels of Marco Polo.

Gesta Francorum. An anonymous first-hand account of the first Crusade, extensively plagiarized by 12th century writers.

Gesta Romanorum. A collection of stories, with morals attached, intended to be used in sermons; the Latin version dates from about 1300 and the English from about 1400. Its connection with real Roman history is tenuous at best.

The Mabinogion. A collection of Welsh stories written down in the 13th century, apparently based on much earlier verbal traditions.

Boccacio, *The Decameron.* 14th century.

Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales.* 14th century.

Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*. 15th century.

Marie de France, *The Breton Lais*. Popular 12th century poems, based on Celtic material.

Njal Saga, Egil Saga, Jomsviking Saga, Gisli Saga, Heimskringla, etc. The sagas are histories and historical novels, mostly written in Iceland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. All of those listed, and no doubt many others with which I am less familiar, contain incidents that can be excerpted as stories. My own favorites include the killing of Gunnar, from *Njal Saga*, Egil's confrontation with Eric Bloodaxe at York, from *Egil Saga*, the avenging of Vestan by his young

sons, from *Gisli Saga*, and the encounter between Harold Godwinson and his brother Tostig just before the battle of Stamford Bridge, from *Harald Saga* (part of *Heimskringla*).

The Tains: Written sources for the Irish romances go back to the eleventh century, but much of the material is clearly much older. One of the most famous is the Táin bó Cuailnge, whose hero is Cuchulain. They exist in a variety of translations.

The Life of Charlemagne by the Monk of St. Gall (aka Notker the Stammerer), included in *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (Penguin). This is a highly anecdotal "life" written in the ninth century, and covering many subjects other than Charlemagne.

The Chansons de Geste. French "songs of deeds." *The Song of Roland*, the earliest and best, dates from the late 11th century; the translation by Dorothy Sayers is readily available from Penguin and very good. Other well known Chansons de Geste include *Ogier the Dane* and *Huon of Bordeaux*. A version of the latter by Andre Norton was published as *Huon of the Horn*.

Orlando Innamorato (1495) by Boiardo and *Orlando Furioso* (1516) by Ariosto. These are actually a single story, started by one poet and completed by another. They are a Renaissance Italian reworking of the Carolingian cycle–the stories of Charlemagne and his Paladins. The story (and the characters) jump from Paris to London to Tartary, with or without intermediate stops. The tale is well supplied with magic rings, enchanted fountains, flying steeds, maidens in distress, valorous knights, both male and female, and wicked enchanters, also both male and female.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* An important source of Greek and Roman myths for Renaissance writers.

[An earlier form of this appeared in *Tournaments Illuminated*, No. 81, Winter 1986]

One day, when the Prophet (God's Peace and Blessing upon Him, His Kindred and His Companion Train) was sitting by the way, a man came running by in terror of his life.

"Save me, Prophet of God, there are men after me who desire my death."

The Prophet (God's Blessing upon Him and his family) replied:

"Run on. I will save you."

The Prophet got up, moved a few feet, and sat down again.

A little while later, the pursuers came, and they asked him:

"Muhammad, has a man passed you here?" And they described him.

"By Him Who holds my soul in his hand, since I sat down here no one has passed."

And knowing the Prophet to be a truthful man, they turned aside and sought the fugitive a different way, and so the man was saved.

Based on a tale in *The Subtle Ruse*

Concerning Heraldic Devices and Arms

Heraldic devices are the bright-colored stylized pictures you see on shields and surcoats and banners. A major part of the reason we use them is to lend color to the scene, but they also have the practical function of identifying people. Heraldic devices originally became popular when fighters started wearing closed-face helms; a knight's chance of getting killed because his own people failed to recognize him provided a powerful motive for designing distinctive devices that could be seen and identified even in bad weather or the confusion of a battle. Two things are needed for this system of identification to work: each person's device must be different from everyone else's; and a device must be clearly recognizable without close examination. These two requirements control what heraldic devices look like, and from them derive a number of rules and procedures for establishing a device of your own.

A device is defined not only by the things pictured (called "charges") and their arrangement, but also by the colors used, including the background color. In order that your device of a red lion on a white background is not confused with someone's orange lion on cream, heraldry uses a limited number of basic colors (in heraldic terms, "tinctures"). The seven basic tinctures are divided into the "colors" or dark tinctures, which are red, green, blue, purple, and black, and the "metals" or light tinctures, including white or silver (no distinction is made between them) and yellow or gold. The Rule of Tincture, a basic rule of heraldry, specifies that dark charges must be put on light backgrounds and vice versa; color on color or metal on metal is not allowed. The point of this rule is to produce devices that people can see at a distance: a black castle on a blue background will not show up nearly as well as a gold castle on blue. (A modern parallel, where instant recognition at a distance is again desired, is the signs used by gas stations: Shell, Exxon, Gulf, and most others obey the Rule of Tincture.) In addition to these seven tinctures there are patterns derived from furs such as ermine, represented by a pattern of black spots on white. A charge may also be shown in its natural colors. When devices include fur patterns, natural-colored charges, or backgrounds divided between a color and a metal, common sense rather than an explicit rule determines if contrast is adequate; for instance, a white cat on an ermine background will not show up.

Just as heraldry does not use all possible gradations of color so that devices can be distinct from each other, so not all possible positions of charges are used. A charge may be shown from the front or back or side, but not in three-quarter view; animals are generally shown in one of a dozen or so standard poses, so that it is clear whether your lion is meant to be walking or leaping. Like most specialized fields, heraldry has developed a technical jargon designed to describe briefly and precisely what would take much longer to describe in ordinary English; in this technical language, all of the standard colors and positions and so forth have names. Therefore, a good rule of thumb for deciding whether a design is suitable as a heraldic device is to see if it can be described in heraldic terms (can be "blazoned"); if not, your design may well be intermediate between two of the standard heraldic ways of showing things and therefore be hard to distinguish from them. The rule most important for ensuring visibility is: keep it simple. No one will be able to recognize a shield with seventeen different items on it, or with five layers of charges overlying each other.

In order that each heraldic device may be unique to one person, the SCA has a procedure for registering devices. In the course of this a proposed device is checked against all registered devices in the SCA, so that no two of us have identical or very similar devices, and also against mundane heraldic devices. If someone has the sole right, as head of a particular family, to display a coat of arms that his family has used for centuries, he is likely to take it seriously; it would be discourteous of us to appropriate it for use in the SCA. We also do not want anyone accidentally claiming by the device he wears to be king of England or the like. The organization in the SCA that registers heraldic devices is the College of Heralds, represented in each barony

or shire by the local herald. The procedure works thus: you go to your local herald with a design, for example a pink biplane on a blue background. He explains that (1) pink is not a heraldic tincture, and (2) biplanes are not really suitable on a device to be used in a medieval organization. So you redesign with the herald's help and come up with something which as far as he knows satisfies the rules of heraldry and is not too similar to existing devices. You then fill out quite a lot of forms, and your herald sends them off to his superior at the kingdom level. Three months later she sends you a letter explaining that the device you submitted is almost the same as the arms of the Whosit family of Scotland. You redesign so that your proposed device is sufficiently different from the Whosit arms and send it off again. If the kingdom herald approves your device it is sent on to the chief herald for the Society; if he approves it, it is registered as yours. From then on, no one else in the SCA may use it, and no one may register something very similar to it without your express permission.

Your device is your own personal symbol; only you should wear it. You will hear the heraldic devices of some people called "arms;" in the SCA, this term is used only when the person in question has received an award of arms from the Crown, or for the device of a branch of the SCA (kingdom, barony, etc.). Another kind of heraldic symbol is a badge, which follows the same rules for design and registration as a device except that a badge may have but is not required to have a specific background color. Badges are used by groups, such as households, guilds, baronies, or kingdoms, and are worn to show membership in or allegiance to the group; also, any individual may register a badge to be worn by his family or retainers, or to be used himself as a secondary device. The difference between the arms of a barony or other group and its badge is that the arms are only for the use of the official head of the group (the baron, in the case of a barony); the badge is for anyone in allegiance to the group. A device, arms, or a badge may be painted on a shield, worn on a surcoat or other clothing, displayed as a banner over your tent or in a feast hall to announce your presence, or put on your gear to mark it as yours.

[by Elizabeth, published in the newsletter of the Barony of Axemoor]

(This is an old piece; the College of Heralds no longer checks for conflict with mundane arms)

Amr ibn Hind called before him two poets, uncle and nephew, and told them that he was giving them leave to depart his court to visit with their kin and entrusting them with letters to the Governor of al-Bahrain, instructing him to welcome them well and reward them for their services.

When they had been a little while upon the road, the uncle grew suspicious, for he knew that ibn Hind was a cruel and tyrannical king, and both poets had in the past written satires against him. He therefore proposed that they open the letters, and if they were as they had been told deliver them, but if not not. But his nephew, trusting in the King, refused.

When they were a little farther on their road, they met a youth, and the uncle asked him if he could read. He replied that he could. "Then read me this." And the youth read:

"When this letter of mine is handed to you by al-Mutalammis, cut off his hands and feet and then bury him alive."

Al Mutalammis assured his nephew that his letter would prove to be the same, and urged him to open it, but the nephew refused. The uncle thereupon fled to Syria, but the nephew delivered the letter and was cruelly done to death. And that was the death of Tarafa, who composed the second of the seven odes that are the glory of the poetry of the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance, before the coming of our lord the Prophet Mohammed, peace and blessings upon him, his kindred and his companion train.

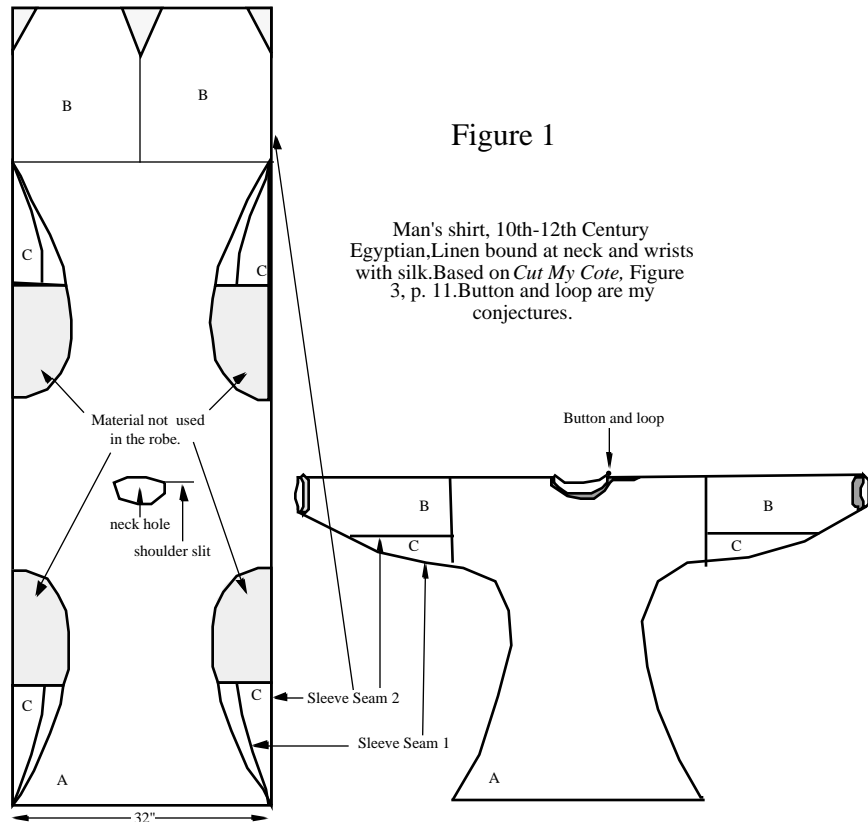(Based on an account in A. J. Arberry's *The Seven Odes*)

Notes on Islamic Clothing and Weapons

One of the problems with having a Muslim persona is that it is often difficult to get information on garb. In part this is because most people writing in English are more interested in medieval Christians than in medieval Muslims; costume books rarely have much that is useful for our purpose. In part it is because Sunni Muslims regard the making of pictures of living creatures as forbidden by religious law. Fortunately, the injunction was not always obeyed.

Persia eventually became (and still is) a predominantly Shia area. If you have a late Persian persona, you should find it fairly easy to get information on clothing. Simply find a book containing reproductions of lots of period Persian art. One particularly good source is the Houghton Shah-Nama, reproduced by the Metropolitan Museum under the title *A King's Book of Kings*.

The purpose of these notes is to pass on a few facts I have turned up about period garb, in particular period garb from southern and western Islam (my persona is a Maghribi, a North African Berber from about 1100 A.D.).

Figure 1 shows the cutting diagram for a garment presently in the Royal Ontario Museum. It is described as a shirt or Camis. The material is linen bound with silk. It is cut from a piece of cloth 32" wide.

Figure 1

Man's shirt, 10th-12th Century Egyptian,Linen bound at neck and wrists with silk.Based on *Cut My Cote,* Figure 3, p. 11.Button and loop are my conjectures.

Overgarments

Period pictures show several sorts of robes, with both tight and loose sleeves; the latter are sometimes short-sleeved and worn over a tight-sleeved garment. Mayer mentions that in early period the tight-sleeved robes would have had sleeves many inches longer than the arms, and been worn "ending at the wrist in many folds." Period pictures also show what seems to be a jacket, open in front, with wide sleeves possibly trimmed in fur. Mayer says that the robe worn in the Fatimid period (i.e. Egypt before Saladin, who ended the Fatimid dynasty) was a tunic with a traditional straight slit; it is not clear to me if he means that it was open all the way in front, or closed with a vertical slit at the throat. Some period pictures from Muslim Spain show parti-colored robes.

I have generally based my robes on the shirt described above, which has a slit (and, I conjecture, a button) over the left shoulder. This is probably a mistake, since neither slit nor button is generally visible in period pictures; it may have been a feature of the shirt but not of the robe over it.
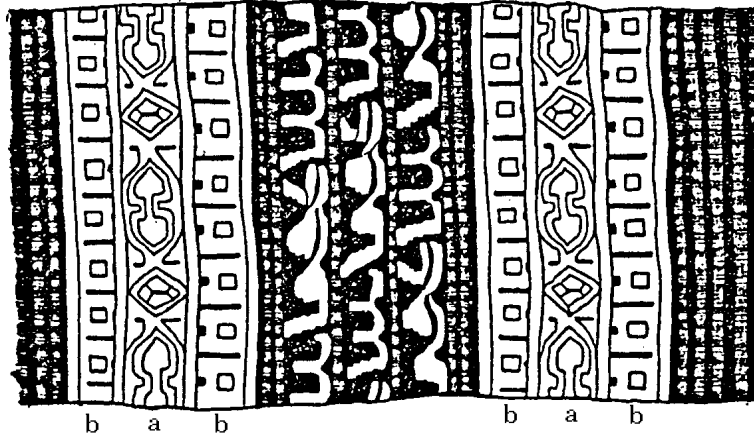
Figure 2
A piece of cloth tentatively identified as a turban end. Egypt, 12th century.
Length 85 cm, Width 42 cm. From Kühnel, piece '04, 284

Turbans

Kühnel lists several pieces of cloth tentatively identified as pieces of turbans from 12th century Egypt; typical widths are from 35 to 48 cms. There is also one possible turban from later (Egypt 13th-15th centuries) that is 70 cm wide. I accordingly make my turbans about 20" wide.

He also shows a picture (reproduced as Figure 2) of a piece of cloth believed to be a turban end from 12th century Egypt. It is made from blue dyed linen. The bands labeled *a* are red-brown, salmon yellow, yellow and light green, with black outlines; he does not say which parts are which colors. The bands labeled *b* are black and yellow. The middle section is in yellow linen on blue, and consists of repetitions of the Arabic "Help from God."

I have no precise information on the length of turbans. At various times, non-Muslims were restricted to maximum turban lengths ranging from five to ten ells, which suggests that Muslims would at least sometimes wear turbans longer than that. If one interprets the ell as the English ell of 45 inches (Mayer, my source on this, does not say what ell he means), ten ells would be twelve and a half yards. I find that a length of about fifteen yards works well. Mayer describes the restrictions as a response to increases in turban length. Since he is describing a period later than my persona, it is possible that my turban should be somewhat shorter, but since I have no precise information for my exact period it is hard to be sure.

Other than this, my only basis for the way I tie my turban is what works–that is to say, what produces a result that looks like period pictures, such as those in *Arab Painting*. I generally use a piece of light cotton 15 yards long by about 20 inches wide, although I occasionally use twice that width to get a very bulky turban. Before starting to wind the turban I put on a turban cap–a plain skullcap of heavy cloth. Its function is to keep hair from getting wrapped into the turban and to make sure that no hair shows through; while not essential, it is useful.

I start with one end of the turban about six inches below the base of my neck; this is going to be the tail which one sees on some period turbans. The turban passes from there over my head to just above the forehead and then starts being wound. A single wind is a circle (clockwise seen from above) tilted somewhat from the horizontal. As I wind the turban, the circle precesses; the low point moves around my head by about 90° each wind. So if the first time around the low point is under my right ear then the next time it is at the back of my head, then left ear, then ... (this is very approximate). As you go, you can let the tilt increase, since the bottom of the circle will anchor itself below the bulge of cloth already there. When you are down to the last two

yards or so, make a horizontal circle around the whole thing and tuck the end in. The result is the horizontal band that one often sees on period pictures.

For a more detailed description, see the next article. Practice when nobody is watching.

Tiraz Bands

Period pictures of Islamic garments frequently show ornamental bands on the sleeves. These are called tiraz bands. They normally consist of an Arabic inscription with associated decoration.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم بركة من الله وكرامة للخليفة
عبد الله المطيع لله امير المومنين اطال الله بقاه

Figure 3
A Tiraz Band from Egypt, 946-947 A.D., Based on item 2631, Tafel 1, *Islamische Stoffe*

Tiraz bands are supposed to have started as a feature identifying cloth woven for the ruler's own use. Since giving away garments was a common form of generosity, those favored by the ruler wore such clothing. After a while, everyone wore robes with tiraz bands. The inscriptions commonly called down blessings on the current Caliph, although other religious formulas might appear instead. An example from tenth century Egypt is given in Kühnel, p. 17. The inscription on the garment, the equivalent in ordinary Arabic letters, and the English translation are shown as Figure 3. The translation is:

In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. Blessing from God and mercy upon the Caliph, the slave of God al-Mutili'llah, the prince of the believers. God lengthen his existence.

Sometimes, especially on later garments, the tiraz inscription seems to have become pure ornament, no longer meaning anything. I do not know whether the ornamental bands on European sleeves were a development from the tiraz band, but it seems likely. In *Arab Painting*, the tiraz bands seem often to be black on gold

Notes on Mameluke Costume

The following information is from Mayer. It applies to the Mamelukes, who ruled Egypt and much of Syria from 1250 to 1560 A. D. I do not know how much of it would be true in other parts of al-Islam or at other times.

There was a religious injunction forbidding gold and silver on the clothing, except for the belt; as a result, belts were often very rich. There was a similar injunction, which I believe applied through most of al-Islam through most of history, against garments with too much silk in them. Interpretations of exactly what was forbidden varied, and the injunction seems to have been widely violated.

The sultan changed into white garments for the summer in May; he changed back into woolen clothes (color not specified) in November.

Turbans are especially associated with the Masters of the Pen; the military aristocracy (i.e. the Amirs) wore the Sharbûsh (probably "the stiff cap trimmed with fur, rising to a slightly triangular front, and characterized by a metal plaque above the forehead") and the Kalauta ("a yellow cap worn by the Sultan, the amirs and the rest of the military, with a broad border band and clasps.") The Sharbûsh is mentioned as far back as the time of Saladin; he founded the Ayyubid dynasty which preceded the Mamelukes.

A common form of footgear was the Khuff boot, described as a long leather stocking; it apparently had a vertical seam up the side, which is sometimes visible in pictures. The winter Khuff was yellow or black leather, the summer Khuff was white. A shoe was worn over the Khuff.

"Above shirt and drawers the Mamluk amirs wore Tartar coats, above them takalâwât, and above those 'Islamic Coats.' Then the sword was girded on to the left and the saulaq and the kizlik on the right." The Tartar coat was a crossover robe, like a modern bathrobe, with "a hem crossing the chest diagonally from left to right (in contradistinction to Turks, who preferred a hem from right to left)." I cannot clearly identify what all of these things were; the saulaq seems to be some sort of bag of black leather, possibly for carrying food.

According to Mayer, women wore a chemise under a gown; by the early fourteenth century, the latter was short with wide sleeves. They wore pants under the chemise, or trousers, the latter possibly instead of the chemise. Over everything they wore a wrap, typically white, fastened by a girdle. It appears that women sometimes wore turbans, although the practice was disapproved of and frequently forbidden.

On the subject of veiling, Mayer writes:
"It goes without saying that women went about veiled. Various forms of veils ... existed, mainly of the following types:

(a) a veil of black net covering the entire face.
(b) like (a) but leaving two holes for the eyes.
(c) a white or black face-veil covering the face up to the eyes.

To appear in public without the veil was a sign of great distress.

It is quite possible that dancers and singers used no veils, but of course we have to take into consideration that on miniatures, metalwork, etc. they are invariably shown indoors."

Mameluke women apparently wore khuff boots, with a low shoe over them outdoors. They also used wooden clogs. Red trousers were one of the signs of a prostitute.

I have two sorts of sources for Islamic underpants. *Arab Painting* shows several pictures of men with the robes pulled up and the underpants exposed; the general impression is of a loose drawstring garment roughly knee length. There are similar pictures in other books. Also, Tilke shows detailed pictures of several types of modern (i.e. 19th or 20th century) Islamic underpants, which seem consistent with the period pictures. Figure 4 shows how I make mine; I believe the cutting pattern is somewhat simpler than for the garments Tilke shows, but the only copy of his book I currently have access to is missing some of the relevant pages. There is a drawstring. Aside from some tendency to pull out at the crotch, where four seams meet, they work fine; perhaps there should be an additional piece there. The figure also shows a second pattern I use and another design, from Tilke; the original is North African.

There are a number of traditions of the Prophet in which he recommends that pants should reach
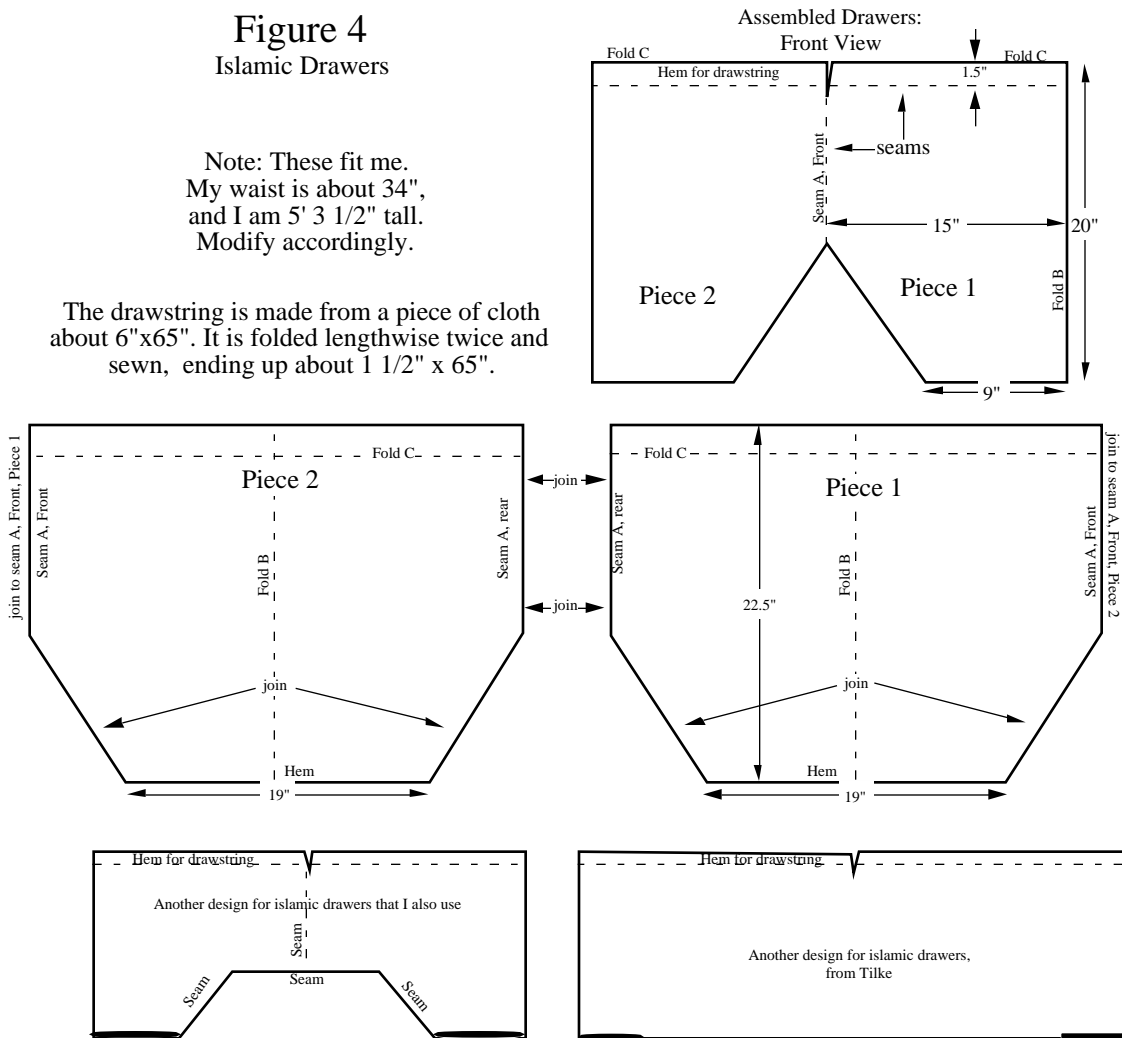
to somewhere between knee and ankle.

Mayer shows a surviving pair of pants, but I suspect from his text that they are for a woman.

Figure 4
Islamic Drawers

Note: These fit me.
My waist is about 34",
and I am 5' 3 1/2" tall.
Modify accordingly.

The drawstring is made from a piece of cloth
about 6"x65". It is folded lengthwise twice and
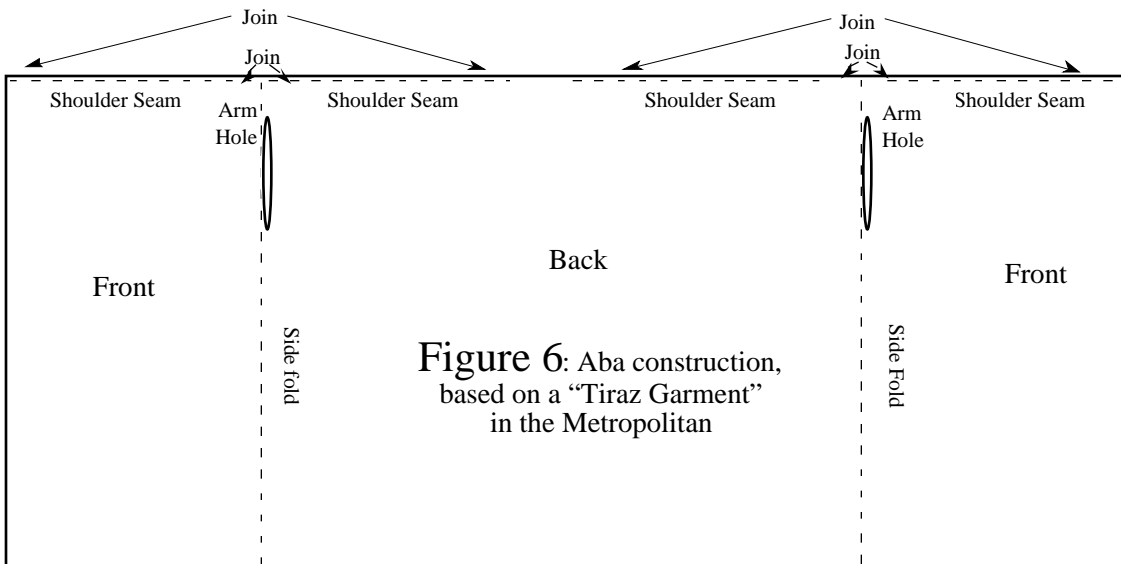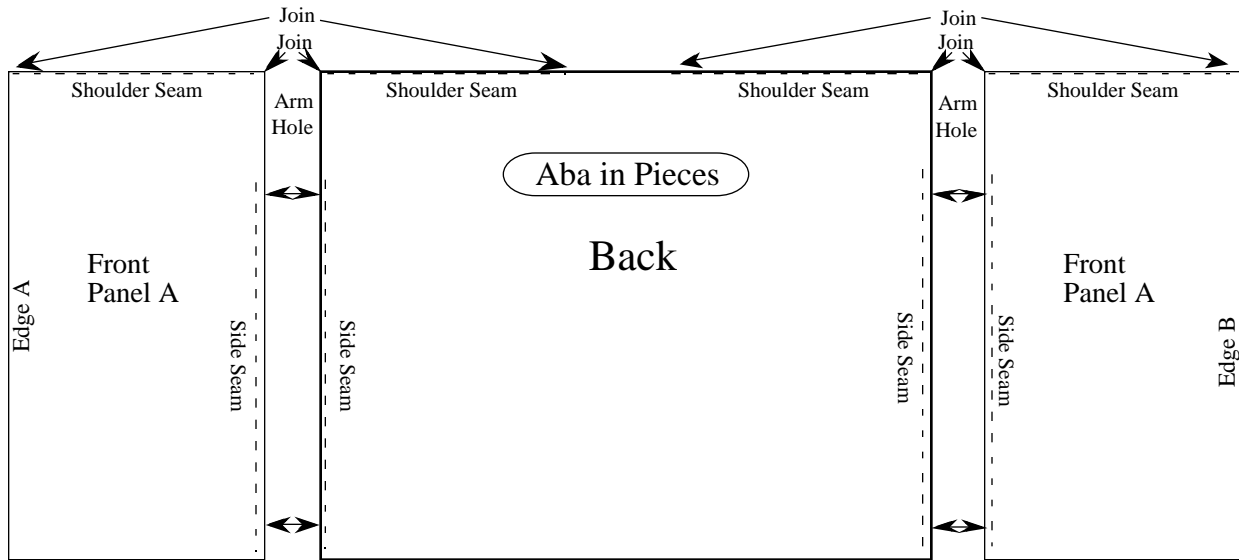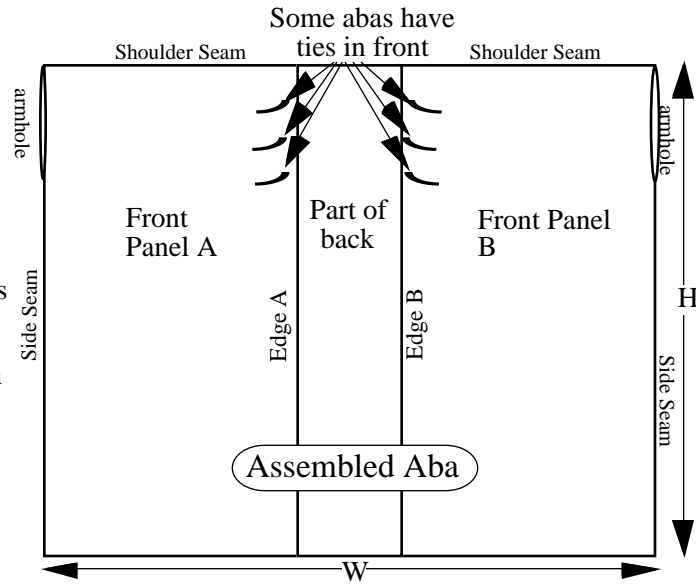sewn, ending up about 1 1/2" x 65".

The Aba

The aba is an Islamic over-robe, like a poncho but open in front; Figure 5 shows how I have made most of mine. It is still worn in modern Islamic societies; Tilke shows many different types. The earliest picture I have seen is in Nicholas de Nicolet, who shows something that looks like an aba. It is, however, frequently mentioned in period, most commonly as a wool overgarment. There seems no reason to believe that it was any different then than now, although absent pictures or surviving garments, one cannot be certain. Silk abas are also mentioned.

There is a garment in the Metropolitan Museum in New York which was described as a "Tiraz Garment" but had the form of an aba. It is made from a single piece of cloth with the arm holes woven in, as shown in Figure 6. You simply fold on the dotted lines and sew the shoulders together. The figure shows only construction, not details. To make a reasonable imitation without your own loom, treat the arm holes as giant button holes–sew around them many times, then slit.

Figure 5: How to make an Aba

W is the wearer's width, measured wrist to wrist with the arms spread. H is the height from neck to between knee and ankle, according to how long an aba you want.

Some abas have ties in front

Shoulder Seam

Shoulder Seam

armhole

armhole

Front Panel A

Part of back

Front Panel B

Edge A

Edge B

Side Seam

Side Seam

H

Assembled Aba

W

Join

Join

Join

Join

Shoulder Seam

Arm Hole

Shoulder Seam

Shoulder Seam

Arm Hole

Shoulder Seam

Edge A

Front Panel A

Side Seam

Aba in Pieces

Back

Side Seam

Side Seam

Side Seam

Front Panel A

Edge B

Join

Join

Join

Join

Shoulder Seam

Arm Hole

Shoulder Seam

Shoulder Seam

Arm Hole

Shoulder Seam

Front

Side fold

Back

Side Fold

Front

Figure 6: Aba construction, based on a "Tiraz Garment" in the Metropolitan

Seal Stones

There are traditions that the Prophet recommended making signet stones from carnelian.

Christians, Jews and Samaritans

The Covenant of Umar was a set of rules for the tolerated religions, supposedly laid down by the second Caliph. One part of it was the requirement that Christians wear blue turbans, Jews yellow and Samaritans red. This requirement seems to have been enforced intermittently.

Knives

I have not been able to find any book with detailed information on what styles of knives were used when in al-Islam, but have come across the following fragments of information.

Jambiya: This is the Arabic term for dagger, and is used to describe a number of rather different weapons. *Islamiske Våben* shows what I would describe as a Persian Jambiya dated to the sixteenth century. It is referred to as a Khandjar, another Arabic word for knife or dagger and one applied by Stone to a rather different type of knife. Two jambiyas are shown here; the top one is Kurdish, the bottom Moroccan.

Kard: This is a straight-bladed Persian knife; the smaller ones look rather like modern eating knives. Some have reinforced points, presumably for going through mail, but many appear to be general-purpose utility knives. Most surviving specimens are out of period, but *Islamiske Våben* shows one (Persian) from 1616 and another (Indian) from 1524, so (assuming they are correctly dated) kards exist in period. One sometimes sees them for sale, at Pennsic and elsewhere. Kards I have seen range from about nine to sixteen inches in overall length.

Khatar: This is the Indian punch dagger. Two appear in a picture in *Islamiske Våben* dated 1528. A large Khatar, or possibly a Pata (the sword version of the Khatar) is described by Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century as a weapon of the Hindus in India.

Pesh-kabz: This is a Persian and North Indian armor-piercing dagger. It is single edged; the back edge has a reinforcing rib, giving it a T cross section. Typical length is about sixteen inches.
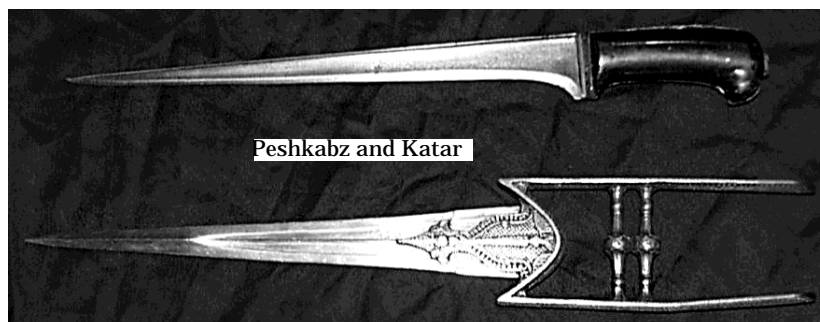
Peshkabz and Katar

All of these are probably appropriate for late Islamic personae and possibly for early ones. Examples can be purchased from arms and armor dealers. A catalog I have from a few years ago lists kaskaras, khatars, jambiyas, pesh-kabz's and kards, with prices starting at about a hundred dollars. Antique Islamic weapons, although not cheap, are usually less expensive than their European equivalents, especially if they are plain–without gold inlay and the like. Since the form of many of the Islamic weapons remained the same from (at least) late period until the nineteenth or twentieth century, a specimen dating from the eighteenth or nineteenth century may be reasonably close to what your persona would have worn.

Swords

Contrary to many movies, anecdotes, and historical novels the Saracens at the time of the crusades used straight swords. The curved sword seems to have become popular in the Middle East somewhere between the thirteenth and fourteenth century (see Nicolle and sources he cites). The traditional way of wearing the sword was on a baldric slung over the shoulder.

The kaskara, a straight bladed sword used in the Sudan and Northern Africa, appears to be a survival of the medieval Islamic broadsword; Stone shows one with a tenth century blade, and two (of unknown date) are shown on this page. If you have a pre-fourteenth century Islamic persona, want to wear a sword, and have access to someone who deals in antique arms and armor, you should be able to get a real kaskara for about the cost of a reasonably good replica broadsword.

The yataghan is a slightly curved Turkish sword sharp on the inside of the curve. I have seen a reference to a surviving yataghan dated to the sixteenth century; I believe they go back earlier than that.

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[An earlier version of this article appeared in a Creative Anachronist Islamic pamphlet.]