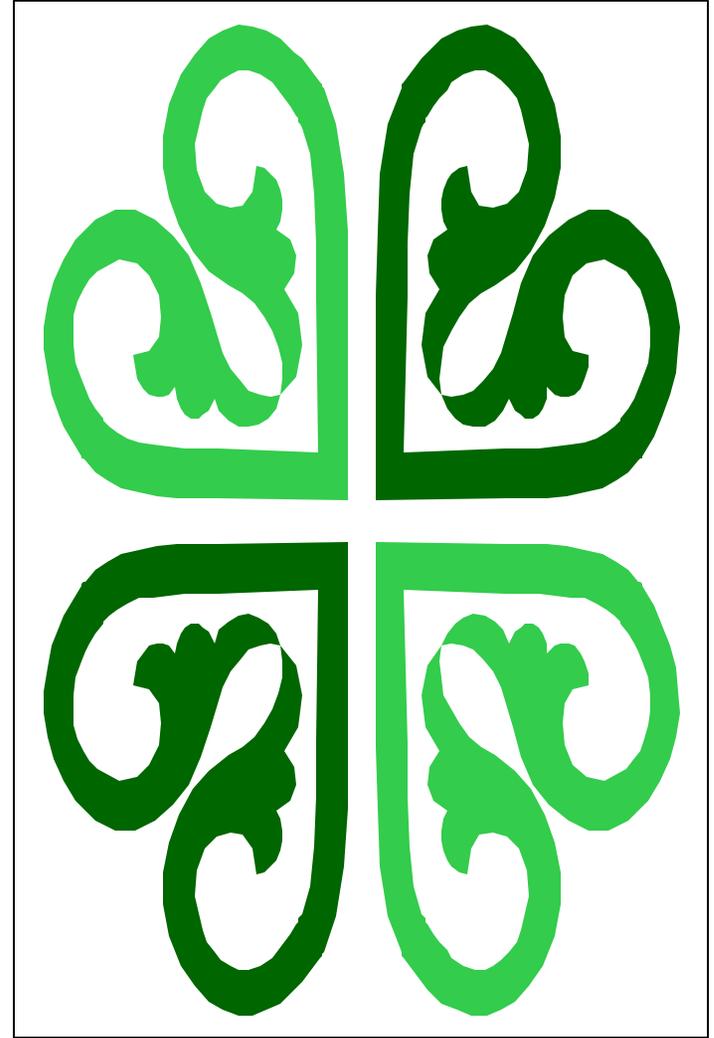


Aire Currents

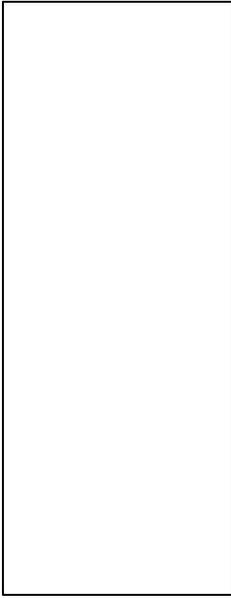
*Newsletter for the
Canton of Aire Faucon*



*Volume VII, Issue III
March A.S. XXXVII being 2003 Gregorian*

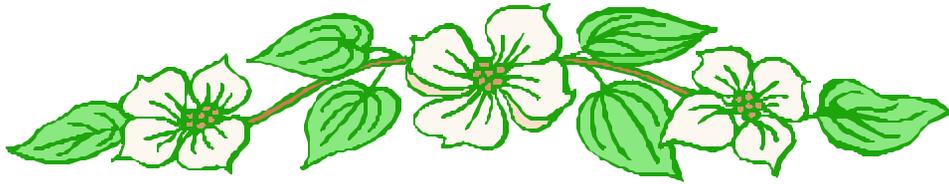


Janet Thompson
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Come visit us on the web ...

<http://aire.atlantia.sca.org/airenoframe.htm>



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Kingdom Calendar

February 2003

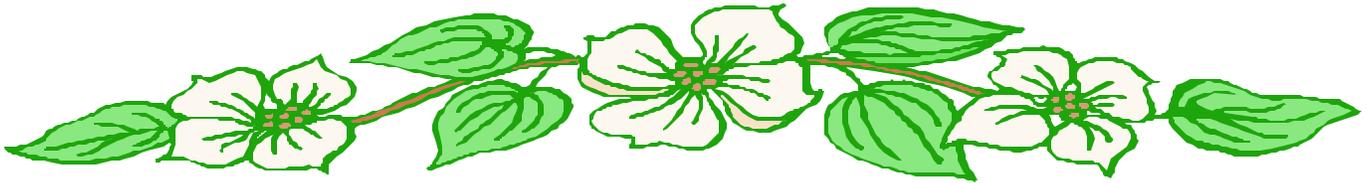
1	Atlantian University	Bridgewater, VA
7-9	Tourney of Ymir	Wake Forest, NC
15	All for One, One for all, Parte Deux	Salisbury, NC
15	Mid-Winters Dance Revel	Lothian, MD
22	Performer's Symposium	Fairfax, VA
22	Ice Axe	Powhatan, VA
22	Feast of St. Brigit	Lewisville, NC

March 2003

1	Kingdom Arts & Sciences Festival	Greenville, SC
8	Banquet dels Quartre Barres	Chesterfield, VA
10-16	Gulf Wars XII	Lumberton, MS
15	Lezione at Palazzo	Crozet, VA
21-23	Raiders of the Lost Cove V	Camp Lejeune, NC
28-30	Baronial Birthday and Investiture	Williamsburg, VA
29	Inn on the Road VII	Casar, NC
29	Defending the Gate	Fredericksburg, VA

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Marion April 22
William April 21



MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2003

New Business: Inn on the Road: The Event Registration form has been turned into the Kingdom Calendar Deputy. Still need volunteers for clean up crew (Marion and the Evans volunteered). Also need kitchen help. Ceara has volunteered to be the event's general gopher. We are missing one of the canton's water coolers. Baronial Birthday: Marion has submitted a bid, with Talorgen as her co-autocrat. The tentative site is the new site opening up in Elkin, NC. It is an all primitive site, and period pavilions are wanted. Susanna will be in charge of the A&S competition. There is a possible demo opportunity at Union Elementary School. They would like two programs, one for the older children and one for the younger. Would like this in March sometime. They will feed us lunch.

Kingdom Curia: There was a Curia held at Ymir on February 8th. The position of Secretary to Their Majesties Curia is being dispensed with. There will be a new Deputy Seneschal position under Corwyn, that of Chancellor for Youth Activities. All minors attending an event must have a blue card or waiver signed by their parent/guardian. Anyone under 16 must have an adult designated as responsible for them, if not their parent or guardian and must have a signed medical waiver. All Rules/regulations/laws for children are being incorporated into one section in the Kingdom Laws. The term limits for Baronages. The Crown has the authority to move term limits by up to three months. There will be a new Kingdom Level event; The Tournament of Chivalry. It will be held the 2nd week of December and will have a format similar to Feast of St. Fortunatus, that of a challenge tourney. Any plastic armour must be covered by cloth or by leather by September 1st, 2003. Reminder: anyone can recommend anyone else for any award.

A new level of awards will be added to the Kingdom awards, effective as of April 1st, 2003.

Service	A&S	All Fighting	Thrown Weapons
Opal - AOA inc.	Bright Leaf - AOA	Silver Osprey - AOA	King's Missiliers- AOA
Golden Dolphin - GOA	Pearl - GOA	Sea Stag - GOA	Yew Bow - GOA

Individual Acts of Achievement

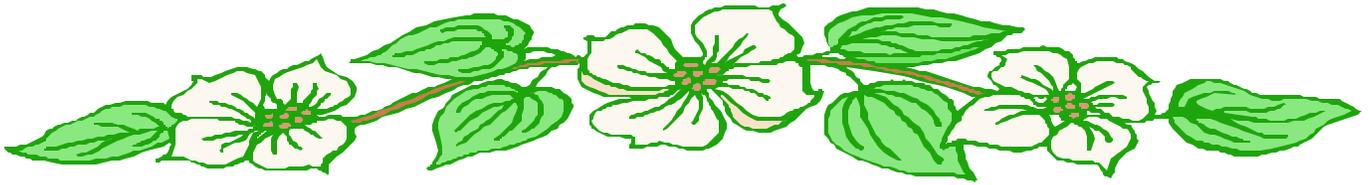
Fountain	Silver Nautilus	Shark's Tooth
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Exchequer: \$1234.72 in checking account. Candlemas was break even for the canton (way to go considering the weather!). Still waiting on the refund check for the deposit from the Girls Scouts.

Marshal: Christian Nuremberg was in the rapier finals at Ymir. He is to play his prize at Raiders of the Lost Cove on March 22nd. Marion is playing her prize at Coronation.

MoAS: Everyone should go to KASF in Nottingham Hill on March 1st. In a Phoenix Eye is in June; there will be more information forthcoming. There will be a Heraldry Workshop on March 22, 2003 at the Newton Rec. Center, Newton, NC from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The purpose is to assist people with development, design and submission of name, device and persona, also to assist in banner construction and display of heraldry. Ceara would like to teach a basic sewing class, need to set a date.

Chatelaine: There were four newcomers present. Introductions were made. There is a loaner garb opportunity. A play based on Vikings and Gypsies. Opportunity to sponsor individual costumes. There is a gathering of the Southern Costumers Guild at Mistress Jessamyn's on February 22nd.



THE SENESCHALE'S SENDING

Thanks to everyone for helping run February's meeting in my absence. The dreaded flu bug (or was it Ymir, since so many others came down sick afterwards) kept me away. It was wonderful to read the notes and "hear" about the newcomers who were made to feel welcome, the loaner garb opportunity and the demo opportunity we have. Hopefully, we'll be able to take advantage of them.

Unfortunately, it looks like I'll miss seeing a good many of you at the meeting in March as well. My plans, for now, include attendance at Gulf Wars, so I'll be shopping, and A&S 'ing, etc that week.

In service,
LADY MAEVE



A&S' LIGHT

Check out these pages for information on Atlantia's kingdom-wide guilds -- for costuming, dance, embroidery, fiber arts, glasswork, lace-making, and spinning -- as well as localized guilds.

His Excellency, Baron Corun MacAnndra, Baron of Storvik, gave a beautiful description of what the MoAS badge means.

It is the light of knowledge that all those involved in the Arts and Sciences keep alight for all to see.

But it has come to symbolize more than that to me. As Officers, each MoAS at every level undertakes the obligation to keep this flame lit.

The badge then becomes the burning fire of passion for those who wish to become versed in some aspect of the Arts or Sciences.

It is the light on the desk by which we read our research material.

It is the cook fire and the flames of the furnace in which hot metal is forged to strengthen our fighters and bring us prowess on the field.

It is the hearthfire that warms us during the winter months and dispels the darkness of ignorance.

It is the light in the window of the Kingdom that acts as a beacon to all of Atlantia's craftspeople.

So then, Officers of the Arts and Sciences, wear your badge proudly, and be that beacon. For it only takes one candle to light the way for others to become shining examples, and thereby gloriously brighten Atlantia.

Sincerely,
LADY SERAPHINA



THE CHATELAINE'S CALL

I have had several interested people contact me through email, asking for information on our group happenings. We also had two new people show up at the last business meeting. Jared, who is interested in fighting, and his mother Janice, who is interested in just about everything. Janice said that her husband and daughter would also like to come play with us. We will hopefully see them again at Candlemas.

If anyone is in contact with new folks and would like to give them my email, please feel free to do so.
Mogee1@juno.com

Sincerely,
LADY MARGARET



THE CHRONICLER'S MUSINGS

Always in Service,
LADY MAEVE

PERIOD MIDDLE EASTERN DANCE

The Period Dancer in the Middle East: A Survey
By Sayyid (Lord) Asim al-Talib

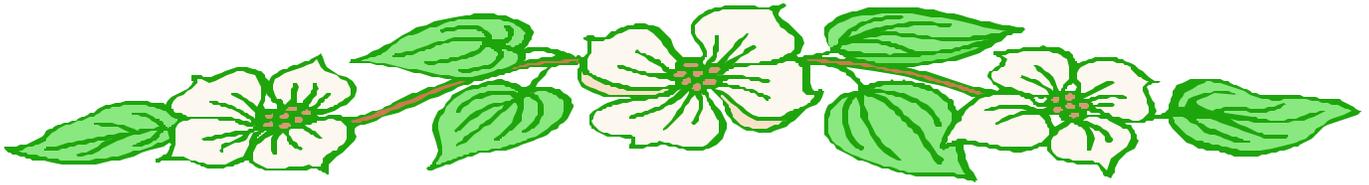
[NOTE: This is very much a work in progress. Not only are conclusions in flux, but also new data is being gathered, especially primary source information. Any dance research mavens, critiquers, or people simply curious to know more, are welcome to email me.]

Professional Dancing

The vast majority of professional raks dancers were women - although men were not unknown. The records, at least from the sparse English language sources I've been able to read so far, indicate that many early-period professional dancers were also slaves.

It's important to remember that slavery, in Islam, is a somewhat different thing in Islam. Although still an act of reducing a person to an object, Mohammed's laws improved the slave's lot. He encouraged the owner to treat his property with fairness, and to restrain from ill use. He also made manumission, the act of freeing a slave, an activity that Allah looked kindly upon.

In addition, the pre-Islamic cultural background contributed to raising the value of a slave trained for entertainment, even as it created a low value for their arts on a cultural level. Long-standing interests in music and dance wrestled with the strictures of Islamic law. Just as harmful to the development of raks was the disdain amongst the "learned classes"; the few, sparse artistic dance references[1] reflect this issue.



Almost all dancers in period were not only dancers. They were more like vaudeville actors, able to sing, write poetry, and do any number of entertaining acts.[2] This was especially true of the slave-dancers, in fact; they were more than able to hold conversations on any number of topics. Indeed, dance was a lesser component for many of their repertoires, as many people saw it as the least of the arts.

These factors all combined to make dance a "low art", best done by the common people or by slaves trained in the act. The "guilty pleasure" feeling that dance generated in the average Islamic person meant, amongst other things, that they were willing to pay well to enjoy it. Therefore dancers, although being outcasts from much of polite society[3], also seemed to have enjoyed an above-average wage, if a free woman. As a slave they were offered for a high profit, encouraging the acts of training and supporting the slave dancer.[4]

Either way, I theorize[5] that we end up with 3 major classes of professional dancers. The first is the professional slave dancer, sold directly to individuals. Most of the buyers were of a high level, including people attached to the royal court, if not the Caliph or Sultan himself. Part of the reason was not just the high price of purchase, but also the need to clothe, feed, and shelter a highly trained individual.

The second is the Prostitute/Dancer. They seem to have not gone through extensive training on average, as their style is regularly maligned in the European writings that primarily mention them[6]. They were plentiful, however, and willing to dance in front of anyone for the right price. This seems to have left a number of commentators with the impression that all dancers, public or not, were prostitutes.

Third, there is the performance-only dancer. Often she was willing to dance for anyone, but not necessarily to have sex with him. This is a subject of some investigation, as such entities as the Ottoman-era dance companies imply that they were primarily, if not completely, non-sexual in nature. These individuals would be the closest to modern-era professional dancers.

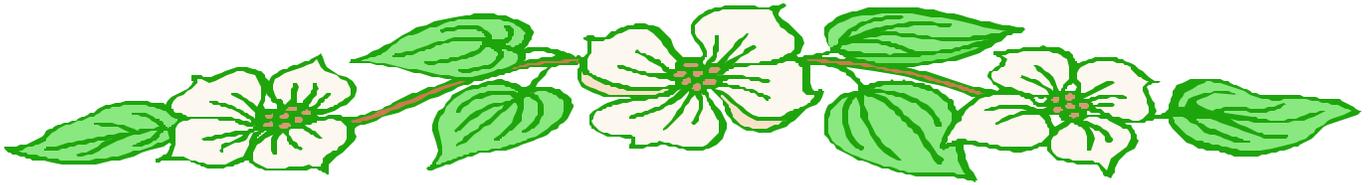
Social Dancing

Many people who would never think of dancing for money did so for fun in period, as well. Although this strongly depended on the time and place in period, there are a number of examples of period dancing going on. A considerable number of laws were placed on the books in various areas to curtail dancing amongst the common folk, a sure sign that such activities were occurring.

Of note is the tradition of the nighttime music and dance performances, similar to the Scadian bardic circle concept. There are pre-period references to such activities, including, amongst some groups, a call-and-response singing tradition with dancing added on top. The Bedouins may have been one significant transmitter, as their term for it, Zambras[7], was picked up by a number of other cultures, including al-Andalus.

There are few details about these activities. Shiloah comments on al-Shirwani's description of a Zambra that another writer attended in 1016. He explains that the writer saw female musicians who accompanied a female dancer, but Shiloah goes on to explain that male musicians also took part.

The scarcity of comments belies the frequency of dance. As Chengir says in his *Lecture on Historical Dance*, "The very mention of dancers at a wedding...implies that these were common place occurrences that al-Ghazali felt he needed to discuss." He builds a case for dance being popular by pointing out how often it was repressed, an interesting tack in the research into this field.



Raks-Style Dance in Period

Chengir also notes that raks, "belly dance" is far from the only form of dance in period; he identifies 6 distinct types. We will focus this section on raks ("belly dance") in period.

Looking at And's research, it is almost certain that late-period raks in Ottoman times was very similar to pre-raks shaquri raks, lacking the modern embellishments such as stage usage and ballet-ish toe work. And gives an extended piece from a 15th Century Turkish treatise on dance. This work also describes the dance in some detail, and puts it into a spiritual context[8]. In the process, it documents "raks" as the correct period term[9] for this dance.

Both Shiloah and And note Guillamue Postel's period observations of what could easily be a form of raks, complete with handkerchief. According to Postel, one dancer "does a mime, so strongly mimicking the gestures of love that describing it...would excite more desire than pleasure." [10]

And writes an extended description of the public dance, apparently a composite from period and post-period sources:

"...dancing consisted of suggestive contortions, a good deal of stomach play and twisting of the body, falling upon the knees with the trunk held back until the head nearly touched the floor behind [...], writhing, swaying the body with a slight twist[...]"

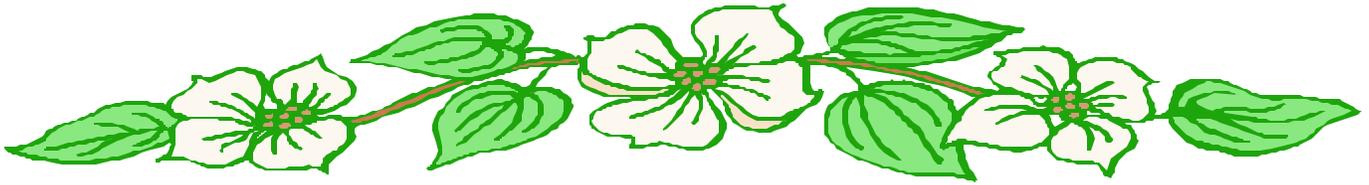
It is notable that, although the boy dancers had their own styles, they also did dancers that mimicked the women, as the women did for the men's dances.

One more description comes from Persia. According to Shiloah, Al-Masudi's work *Meadows of Gold* contains an extended description[11] of the "principles of dance", as they were explained to Persian Caliph al-Mu'tamid. This description, or at least Shiloah's take on it, fits well with other, period, descriptions of raks.

Conclusion

There are many other aspects of dance in the Middle East one can cover, from the folk dances to the tale of the Persian Caliph al-Amin performing kurre, a "ball dance" in court. Even with all that, there is much missing. We still lack a detailed period source, an "instruction book" on period raks. There are no "from a dancer's perspective" writings known. Even the writings we do have lack the kind of detail that makes excellent re-creations easy. It may be that such a thing does not exist. After all, raks is an improvisational form, and the interactions we have had with raks dancers in the 20th century indicate that the dance has been passed orally from person to person, and formal instruction was merely an expanded version of that.

At the same time, I think we are on the verge of major breakthroughs in the research into period dance. With the period sources quoted in the books here, we could see our way to a strong definition of the "look and feel" of period raks. We may always lack a understating of "how", but we, today, can re-create the style and clothing to a great degree. In this way, raks can fit into the SCA as not just a fun activity, but also the result of intensive research and polishing of many different, and varied, skills.



[1] Shiloah (pg. 137) mentions that "the principals of dance" are touched on in MEADOWS OF GOLD...

[2] Chamas (no page).

[3] I have yet to find even a hint of a period reference to a dancer's day-to-day life.

[4] Or both - Mersini indicates that Khayzuran (Caliph Harun al-Rashid's mother) was a free women when sold into slavery.

[5] I must emphasize that this is a "running start"; there is little documentation for these divisions on a formal basis, especially the "professional full-time dancer" versus "dancer/prostitute" split

[6] There are, potentially, many reasons this may have occurred, cultural bias being one of them.

[7] Shiloah (pg. 77) is my primary source for this information.

[8] The context (And. Pgs. 11-13) is that raks represents the "Autumn" period, with 3 other dance styles falling under the other seasons.

[9] According to Shay (Endnotes to Chap. 7), raks is also a Farsi term. A case could be made for tracking the history of raks via entomology.

[10] Shiloah pg. 139

[11] Shiloah ps. 137

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