

Arts - Spinning

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The first definition of *spinning* from the Merriam-Webster dictionary is
“to draw out and twist fiber into yarn or thread.”

Spinning was first carried out without the use of any tools. The fibers were held in one hand, while the other hand pulled and twisted. This is a very time consuming method, so one can see why the ancients improved on the process. Many authors agree that the practice of spinning fibers to form yarns and thread has been in existence for well over 10,000 years. The earliest example of twisted fiber found to date was found on the Venus Lespugue, an ivory figurine wearing a loincloth, and was dated approximately 25000 BC.

Spinning is a craft that has been discovered over and over again. Each culture adapted how they spun to best suit their needs, taking into account available fibers and the environment. There are several different types of spindles that have been used: hooked sticks, drop (or suspended) spindles, and supported spindles. The oldest actual “tools” used for spinning were probably rocks and sticks. The rock would be used similarly to the way a drop spindle is used. Using a leader thread tied to the rock, the rock is spun to make a strong twist while the fibers are pulled by the hands. Nomadic tribes in remote parts of Asia still use rocks to do their spinning. The hooked sticks would have been used as an extension of rolling the fibers along your leg to create the twist. Unfortunately, due to decomposition, we are unable to accurately place the time and place the hooked stick was originated as a fiber tool.

The drop spindle could be a sensible extension of the rocks and sticks. A whorl, which can be made of rock, clay, wood, etc, was attached to the bottom of a stick. This tool is able to get better momentum, giving a tighter twist. This is the type of tool I used for all of the yarns I have made.

I used wool and silk in this project.

The wool was purchased pre-carded, so all I had to do was pull off a piece to spin. I spun plain grey wool and variegated purple/gold wool.

The silk was purchased as a small hank, very similar to the teal silk in my display. Due to how easily the fibers pulled apart once the yarn was spun, I made this into a two-ply yarn. Plying was done by taking two singles and twisting them together in the opposite direction from the original spin. This relaxed the original twist and caused the singles to wrap together to form a thicker yarn.

Bibliography:

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