

## **The Tablet Woven Band from the Snartemo II Grave**

*A simple but attractive missed hole pattern*

### **Description**

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Three graves at the Snartemo farm in Norway were excavated between 1847 and 1933, yielding a splendid collection of Migration period objects including a sword, glass beakers, gold rings and many other items.

Grave II was excavated in 1878 and, like Grave V, contained what appears to have been the grave of a warrior prince. Both of these graves contained remarkable textiles including tablet weaving. The wide band from Grave V is extremely sophisticated but the narrow band from Grave II is simple and also to my eyes attractive. The simple band from Grave II is described here.

The original was woven in wool using 17 tablets and two colours of fine wool. It is an example of two-hole weave.



**Figure 1: sample woven in two-ply Silver Viscount machine knitting wool.**

The distinguished academic and weaver Lise Ræder Knudsen, who has studied the original band, very kindly provided the following information and confirmed that my reconstructed is correctly woven. The colours I used are a guess but are reasonably consistent with Lise's information, assuming that the colours were brighter when the band was new.

"The Snartemo burials yielded two graves with well preserved textile remains and several tablet weavings. The dating is about 500 A.D. The finding place is Hægebostad in the southern part of Norway. Snartemo II was a rich grave which among many other things contained a small tablet woven band in 2 colors with a simple threaded in pattern.

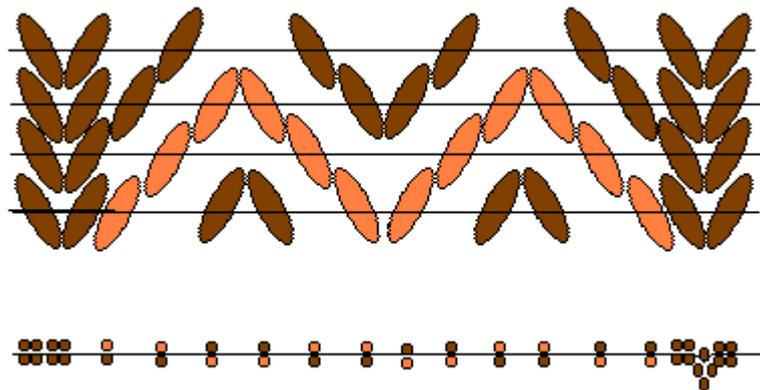
In Bjørn Hougens book "Snartemofunnene" 1935 a drawing is shown, but the analysis is not correct. I have studied the original find and made a new analysis. Unfortunately I haven't done much about trying to translate and publish my thesis, so it is not commercially available.

The band's width is 0.9 cm. The colours looks very much alike, but under a microscope there is a difference between the yarns. Unfortunately there are no dye analyses yet."

Lise provided a picture of the threading diagram (Figure 2) with the accompanying text:

"24 times forward, 24 times backwards etc.

17 tablets, 5 with 4 threads, 12 with 2 threads, 5 edge tablets, one of these invisible and presumably used in a kind of invisible sewing mounting to a cloth."



**Figure 2: the threading of the original band.**

*Image: Lise Ræder Knudsen*



**Figure 3: sample woven in linen  
with four border tablets each side**

Difficulty	Easy
Authenticity	<b>A</b> An accurate copy of a specific band. Although from an earlier period, acceptable for Viking and Anglo-Saxon re-enactment, medium to high status.
Date	500 AD
Location	Hægebostad, Norway
Number of pattern tablets	12
Number of border tablets	4
Weaving technique	All pattern tablets are threaded identically with only two threads and are turned together. Diagonal lines are produced by the initial arrangement of the tablets.

## References

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**Hougen, Bjorn.** Snartemofunnene. *Studier i Folkevandringstidens Ornametikk og Tekstil-Historie.* (=Norske Oldfunn; VII). Broggers Oslo, 1935.

**Ræder Knudsen, Lise.** *Personal communication.*

Lise Ræder Knudsen's website: <http://www.tabletweaving.dk/>

Norwegian Encyclopedia website: <https://snl.no/Snartemo%2Farkeologisk>

# Threading

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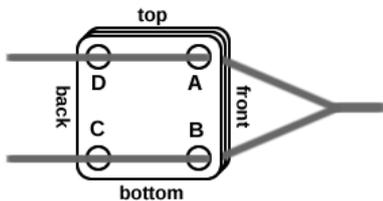
## Pattern tablets

12 pattern tablets, each threaded with one red and one yellow thread in opposite corners. Leave the other two holes empty. It doesn't matter how the tablets lie when you thread up. You will arrange the tablets correctly in the next step.

Pattern tablets are numbered 1-12.

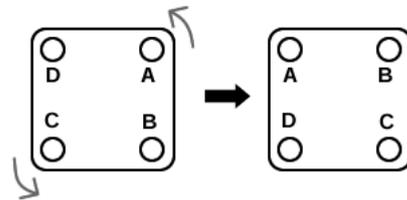
## Border tablets

Two border tablets on each side, each threaded with four red threads. The border is essential to keep the band stable and give it a firm edge.



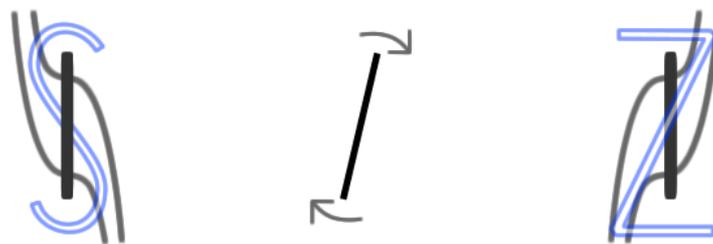
**Figure 4: labelling the positions.**

*A, B, C, D show the positions of the threads in the threading diagram. Most weavers do not label their tablets because which hole is "A" changes as you turn them.*



**Figure 5: turning the tablets forwards.**

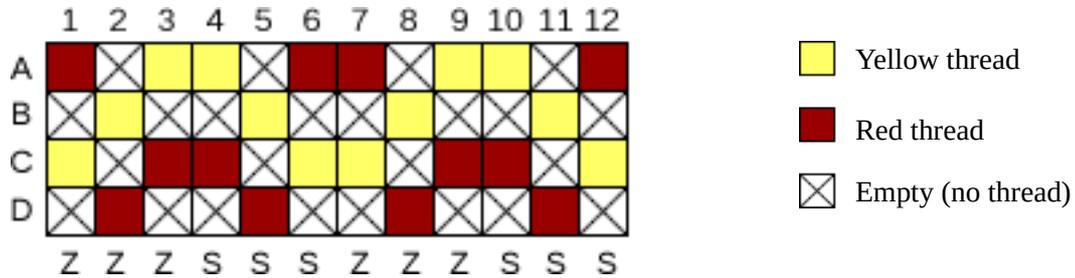
*If you work with the woven band on your side of the tablets, push the top of the tablets away from you with your thumbs.*



**Figure 6: flipping a tablet to change it from S to Z (top view).**

## Weaving instructions

After you've threaded the tablets, arrange the pattern tablets to match Figure 7. Note that the tablets are arranged in groups of three, and each group is a mirror image of the previous group.



**Figure 7: threading the pattern tablets**

Weave by turning all tablets forwards. Be careful when turning the tablets; because of the unthreaded holes, the tablets are unstable and will tend to fall out of alignment. You may find it helpful to rest the tablets on a flat surface while weaving. Whenever you pause weaving, tie a cord around the pack of tablets to keep them in place.

After 24 picks<sup>1</sup>, you will have woven 6 of the "W" motifs. At this point, flip all the pattern tablets and continue weaving forwards; you will see the pattern is now reversed and the twist in the pattern warp threads is undone.

After another 24 picks, flip the tablets again, and so on.

Instead of flipping the tablets you can instead turn the pattern tablets backwards and the border tablets forwards for 24 picks. Both methods will produce exactly the same woven band: there is no way to tell which method was used to weave the original. I personally find it hard to remember whether I should be turning forwards or backwards and so prefer to flip all the tablets and always turn forwards.

When the border warp threads become tightly twisted, flip the outer pairs of border tablets. On the next pick, flip the inner pairs of border tablets. This will reverse the twining and undo the twist.

<sup>1</sup> One "pick" is a single unit of weaving, that is turn the tablets, clear and beat the shed, tighten and then pass the weft.