

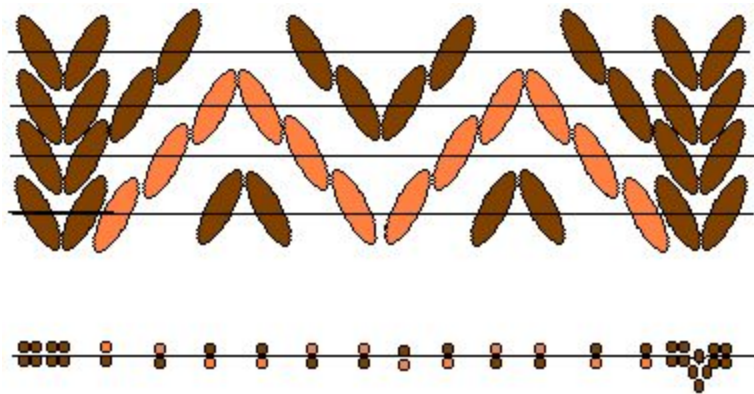
## Early Period Tablet-Woven Belt

Lady Ursula de Stratton, Barony of Arn Hold

### Development and Inspiration

This belt developed out of a challenge by Baroness Teaghan of Arn Hold, who asked her populace to create belts, garters, or codpieces to model as part of a bid for Baroness's Champion. When I began researching, I knew I wanted to weave a belt. I also knew that my tablet weaving experience was somewhat limited, and that much of the tablet weaving done in the SCA is not documentable. Tablet woven items, made from wool, linen or silk, rarely survive the ravages of time, so we are limited in our period sources. Tablet weaving is a craft probably thought so common in period that it would not have been committed to paper, so I have been unable to find any written primary sources. I wanted to recreate a piece appropriate to my twelfth-century persona, but the few surviving tablet woven items from this period are far beyond my skill. It was more important to me to have a documentable piece than something pretty but modern, and that is how I decided to recreate one of the bands found in the Norwegian town of Snartemo, dated to the 5th century CE.

The pattern I chose came from the Snartemo II grave. My information was provided to Shelagh Lewins by Lise Raeder Knudson of the Conservation Center Vejle, where she is Head of Conservation for Archaeological Textiles<sup>1</sup>. Ms. Lewin writes that Ms. Knudson provided the following diagram and information.



*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*

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<sup>1</sup> See her work and info here: <http://konsv.academia.edu/LiseR%C3%A6derKnudsen>

*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.<sup>2</sup>*

There appears to be little or no published information about this grave find, at least not in English, but Ms. Knudson's work proved invaluable as did Ms. Lewin's diagrams and descriptions.

## **My Process**

The original band was only 0.9 cm wide and made in very fine thread. For my belt I chose to use a commercial worsted-weight wool yarn (approximately 10 wraps per inch). The colors are modern dyes, but plausibly period. The dark gray is something that could have come from a naturally-colored sheep, and the gold would be achievable by using marigolds, weld, or onion skins. This band uses a threaded-in pattern, where cards are threaded with different colors of yarn in different positions, and the resulting turns create the pattern. The challenge compared with many threaded-in tablet weaving patterns is that this pattern uses four-holed cards, but with yarn in only two of the holes. This uneven threading causes the cards to turn unpredictably if left unattended, making it difficult to keep the weaving consistent and the pattern accurate. However, the long floats created by the empty holes make a lovely and bold pattern in the finished piece. Once I understood the technique, the weaving went fairly quickly. I estimate it took me about twelve hours to weave the belt, which is about three yards long.

## **Final Thoughts**

Tablet weaving with commercial yarn is difficult. This yarn is usually woollen spun, creating a fuzzy texture that can easily tangle and even shred after sufficient abrasion from a set of cards. I would like to try this pattern again with a finer and more period-appropriate yarn, though I have yet to find a source of what the original band was made from. I suspect it would have been silk. Researching documentable period patterns has taught me a lot about the tablet weaving done in the SCA, and how much of it is based on modern weaving traditions and innovation by creative weavers. I would like to try other documentable patterns and techniques, including the more complex Snartemo bands, doubleface weaving, and brocaded tablet weaving. Overall, this was an enjoyable project.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://www.shelaghlewins.com/tablet\\_weaving/Snartemo\\_II/snartemo\\_II.htm](http://www.shelaghlewins.com/tablet_weaving/Snartemo_II/snartemo_II.htm)