

12^h Century German Pouch

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Summary

The pouch is a common design for 12th century Germany. The fabric for the pouch was woven in 2-ply wool on a warp-weighted loom with a tablet woven starting border and selvages. The striped pattern for the fabric is based on a design I found in "Hand Woven" magazine. The pouch was finished by hand with the same wool yarn that was used to weave the fabric. The lining is yellow linen. Embroidery stitches were used to create the casings for the draw sting and hoop and to create the buttonholes. The drawstring was made on a lucet with the same 2-ply wool that was used to weave the fabric for the pouch. This was my first weaving project on the warp-weighted loom.

Documentation:

Pouch Design

The design of the pouch is based on a 12th century German pouch depicted in several manuscripts and presumed to be common in 12th Century Germany. The picture to the right depicts a purse-seller in 1320 with belts and purses for sale (Period Patterns #93). The pouch in the upper right hand corner of the illumination has a draw string closure inside a wire ring at the top of the pouch. The second illumination shows a man wearing the same style of pouch, from a 15th Century French manuscript.



† Purse seller with belts & bags for sale, German, c. 1320. The fancy purses, fit for a lady,

I also found reference to a silk lampas woven cloth bag from 14th century England. The 14th century pouch has a finger-loop braid handle and tablet woven edging. Pouches made from woven material were not uncommon. Excavations in London recovered four cloth pouches. The earliest of the pouches dates to the late 13th century. All of the pouches had tablet-woven edging and some were made from a single long rectangular piece of fabric folded along the bottom and sewn up the sides (Egan, 348).



Warp-Weighted Loom

The warp-weighted loom is most commonly associated with the Norse culture. The treadle loom replaced the warp-weighted loom for commercial production of fabric beginning in the 12th Century, but excavations show that the warp-weighted loom remained common in the home until the 17th century in some parts of Northern Europe. Presumably, the continued popularity of the warp-weighted loom in the home is due to its smaller size, ease of storage, and complexity and expense to build. The setup is similar, but weaving on the warp weighted loom is significantly different, and more time-consuming, than weaving on the treadle or rigid heddle loom.

My Lord constructed my warp-weighted loom as a Christmas present the previous year, based on looms from several archeological finds. The basic structure of the loom includes two uprights, a top cross beam, a lower cross piece, rests for the fabric beam, the fabric beam, a heddle rod and loom weights. The use of this loom is covered in the Materials and Process section below.

Tablet Weaving

History

Tablet weaving has a long history, as shown by a few examples. The earliest known tablet woven band is the "Rameses III" belt from Egypt dated 1197 BC (Crockett, 11). Most scholars credit the Egyptians with developing tablet weaving. Tablet weaving spread north and east out of Egypt to Europe and Asia. Women's belts, woven on two-holed tablets and dating to the Bronze Age, were found in Borum Eshoj and Egtved in Denmark. Tablet weaving was used as a starting border in warp-weighted looms as early as the new Stone Age. Also, 6th and 7th century Anglo-Saxon belts were found in women's graves in Cambridge and Suffolk. A linen brocaded band made with 52 tablets was found in the Oseberg ship find that dates to 850 AD. Viking Era (10th and 11th Centuries) bands range in complexity from threaded-in patterns to brocaded silk. 12th Century bands from the Middle East were primarily double-faced and brocaded in silk and linen. Finally, 13th Century and later bands found in Europe were often silk with gold and silver brocading.

Materials and Tools

Tablet weaving is an art form that can be accomplished with very few tools. All you really need are a few cards, some yarn, and a method to attach the warp threads at each end.

Weaving without a loom is called the back strap method. In this method you attach the beginning of the weaving to your body, such as to your belt, and attach the far end of the weaving to a secure object across the room. The tension is adjusted by your body position.

Another simple method for weaving with tablets is to attach the two ends of the weaving to two raised posts or bars, such as the loom found in the Oseberg Ship burial. Adjusting the distance between the two posts controls the tension in this method. Pictures of medieval women weaving often portray the weaver sitting between two posts with the two ends of the weaving attached to the posts, such as the picture from Collingwood shown here.



One loom constructed for tablet weaving has two drums attached to a board that measures the length of the weaver's arm. This type of loom is common today, but was rare in period. The weaving is rolled onto the warp drum and advanced to the cloth drum as the weaver weaves the band.

The most common loom used for tablet weaving in the SCA is the inkle loom. The cards are warped directly on the loom using the different pegs to get the different lengths of cloth. A tension knob on the front or back of the loom controls tension.

Weaving Basics

Before you thread your first card you must understand how to read a pattern draft. The pattern draft will tell you the number of cards used, the colors of the yarn, and how to thread the cards.

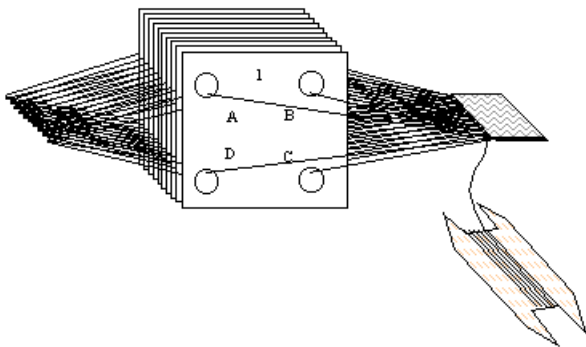
The pattern draft consists of numbered columns and lettered rows. The columns refer to the cards and the lettered rows correspond with the lettered holes in the cards. For example: look at the fifth column. The fifth column refers to the fifth card, and the blocks in that column refer to the holes in that card. Each thread is threaded through the holes in the card according to its color and placement on the pattern draft.

A	Blue	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Blue
B	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Blue
C	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Blue
D	Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Green	Blue	Blue
	Z	Z	Z	Z	S	S	S	S	S	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Cards are normally used with the front side of the card facing to the left (the printed side of the card is the front of the card). The threading direction of the card can be annotated in several ways on the pattern draft. Arrows or the notation "S" and "Z" are often used to indicate threading direction. The arrows under the pattern draft indicate in which direction the yarn is threaded through the card. If the arrow goes from



right to left the card is threaded from back to front. If the arrow goes from left to right the card is threaded from front to back. In the S and Z notation you look at the card from the top. The body of the letter indicates the direction the card is threaded. The S notation indicates that the card is threaded from front to back and the Z notation indicates that the card is threaded from back to front.

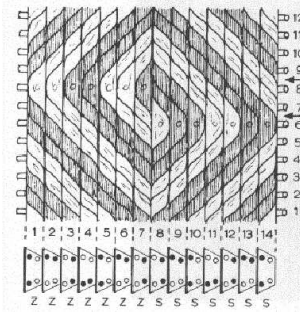


Once the cards are threaded, weaving is accomplished by passing the weft through the shed every quarter turn of the cards. A shuttle is often used to pass the weft, as shown to the right. Turning sequences determine the overall pattern on the band. The cards can be turned continuously in one direction, or the cards can alternate their turning sequence to produce more complicated patterns.

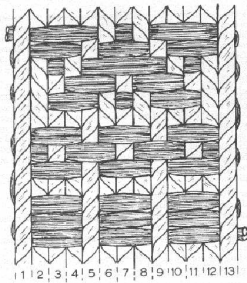
Common Weaving Techniques

Threaded-in Technique: The pattern is created by how the warp is threaded in the cards, along with the turning sequence. This is shown in the example above on reading pattern drafts. This is the most basic technique and a good place to start. This technique can produce very complicated and beautiful repeating patterns with relatively little skill or effort required.

Egyptian Diagonals: The cards are all threaded with two dark and two light colors. The cards are then stepped. Changing the turning direction of individual cards in the weaving creates the patterns. An example from Collingwood, page 107, is shown to the right.



Double Face Technique: The cards are threaded using two colors, two threads of each color per card. The pattern is created by turning individual cards to bring the color of choice forward, much as a mosaic is made up of many small bits of color. The continuous warping method is often used in double-faced weaving. The cards are alternately threaded S and Z.



Brocaded: The cards are usually all threaded with one background color alternating with the S and Z threading direction. The pattern is created by laying in a second weft on top of the band and picking up individual threads to create tie down points. The picture to the left shows an example of brocade, from Collingwood page 240. In this picture, the darker thread is the brocade thread. The brocade thread is often doubled to give a more solid look, such as shown in the drawing, or it can be a heavier yarn than the warp and weft. Brocading looks best when the yarn colors contrast well with the brocade color.

Lucet

At the Coppergate archeological site in York, England there were fourteen two-pronged bone objects that were identified as lucets for braid making. Two worked antler objects have also been identified as lucets, one carved Y-shaped tine, and the other a flat object with two short points and a rough-out for an interlace design cut into one face (Rogers). Almost any two-pronged object can be used as a lucet to produce a square-section braid. Lucet cords were commonly used as drawstrings in garments and accessories and as lacings in clothing.

Pouch Construction:

Materials Used:

- *2-ply woolen yarn All colors were obtainable through period dyeing methods*
- *yellow linen fabric Both the color yellow and the linen were obtainable in period*
- *modern thread Used on the parts of the pouch that were sewn on the machine*
- *metal hoop for top fabricated from a clothes hanger; metal wire of a similar quality was available in the 12th Century*
- *Metal belt ring The metal ring used for hanging the pouch from the belt was purchased; similar rings could have easily been forged or worked from heavy wire*

Overview of Methods Used:

- *The fabric was woven on a warp weighted loom, with tablet woven starting border and selvages.*
- *The lining was cut to fit. The side seams were sewn with a machine.*
- *All finishing, the bottom seam, and exterior seams were stitched by hand.*
- *A lucet was used to make the drawstring for the pouch.*

Weaving on a Warp-Weighted Loom:

To weave on a warp weighted loom you first must have a large wall space to set up the loom. The warp-weighted loom requires a sturdy wall surface to rest against with enough room in front of and on each side of the loom to facilitate movement. Before the warp is measured, the weaver must

decide if she is going to attach the warp directly to the fabric beam or if the warp will be woven into a tablet woven starting border. I chose to weave a tablet woven starting border for the fabric. To create a tablet woven starting border, the warp is measured as the tablet weaving is woven. The weft of the tablet weaving becomes the warp of the cloth. Once the warp is measured out it is then attached to the fabric beam of the loom. Alternating warps are then threaded through the heddles on the heddle rod. As you accumulate warp threads on the heddle rod, tie off the warp ends to the loom weights, adjusting the number of warp ends in order to obtain the desired tension. If the warp is long, the threads must be tied to the weights and the excess length tied into bundles.

Weaving is accomplished in a slightly different way as weaving on other looms. The weft is passed with the shuttle, the shed is changed by moving the heddle rod (up if it is down, down if it is up), and then the weft is beaten into the fabric. With the warp weighted loom, the weft is beaten in an upward direction with a sword beater. As the cloth is woven toward the bottom of the loom, it is rolled onto the fabric beam, and the warp threads are let out at the weights, to allow weaving to continue.

I started the weaving with a tablet woven starting border, which cannot be seen in the finished product. The weft of the tablet woven starting border became the warp for the main fabric. This tablet woven border was done in a solid color and hence no pattern draft was needed. Once the starting border was complete, I tied the warp to the warp-weighted loom's fabric beam.

I chose a striped pattern for the cloth in several earth tone colors, shown below.

			6			6			6			6			6			6			Purple	
		6			6			6			6			6			6			6		Maroon
	6				6				6				6			6			6			Orange
	6				6				6				6			6			6			Brown
7					6				6				6			6			6		7	Green

This pattern draft was inspired by one from Hand Woven magazine. Instead of using the colors from the magazine, I substituted my own choices, which are shown above. The center shaded region I repeated until I achieved the desired width of the finished fabric. Although the fabric was woven in a tabby weave, the number and pattern of colors used required a great deal of time to set up.

Overall I am pleased with the finished fabric. This was my first fabric woven on a warp-weighted loom. I had some difficulty in weaving it. The draw-in was significant. I added a spacing cord and spacing pegs to the loom, which helped reduce the amount of draw in. You can see the difference in the weave of the fabric from the back of the pouch to the front of the pouch. The front of the pouch has a much nicer tighter weave; this is the fabric woven after I got the draw-in under control. The back of the pouch has a much wider spaced weave that is not straight and meanders back and forth, because when this section was woven the draw-in was occurring.

Once the fabric was finished I removed it from the loom. I washed the fabric in hot water and agitated it in order to full the fabric slightly.

Pouch Construction:

The pouch pattern itself is very simple. I cut four rectangular pieces of fabric of the same size to form the body of the pouch. Two rectangles were from the woven fabric and two were from the yellow linen that was used as lining. The woven fabric and the lining were sewn up the sides, to create two hollow tubes. Next the lining was sewn to the woven fabric with the right sides together at the top of the pouch. Next, the pouch was turned so the right sides were out, and the lining was sewn together at the bottom. The sewing up to this point was done on a machine.

The remaining sewing on the pouch was done by hand. I sewed two buttonholes with the button hole stitch into the top of the woven fabric for the drawstring. Next I stitched the casing for the drawstring approximately one inch down from the top of the pouch using the backstitch.

I then constructed the hoop to stiffen the opening of the pouch. I cut a coat hanger and bent it into a circle. I taped the entire piece of wire to prevent damage to the fabric. The next step was to position the hoop between the lining and the woven fabric at a height that would allow the pouch to close when the drawstring was pulled tight. I positioned the hoop and then stitched a casing around the hoop to keep it in place, using the backstitch.

I used a blind stitch to sew the pouch bottom closed. I also sewed on the metal hanging circle with a series of loops, using the same thread from which the pouch was woven.

The final step was to make the cording for the pouch with a lucet. I chose a brown wool yarn of the same type used to weave the fabric. I threaded the cord into the pouch, and the pouch was completed.

Observation and Learning

I learned a great deal about weaving on a warp-weighted loom from this project. I found that weaving on a rigid heddle loom is much easier than on a warp weighted loom. The set up time and weaving time on a rigid heddle loom is about 50% faster than the set up time and weaving time on a warp

weighted loom. I think that the set up and weaving time can be reduced as I get more practice on the warp weighted loom. The nice thing about the warp-weighted loom was that the weights ensured constant tension. But, where draw in is not a problem on the rigid heddle loom, it is a significant problem on the warp-weighted loom. I am looking forward to my next project and working out some of the problems I encountered on this first project.

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