

Inlaid pins

Part of a strap, 58mm wide, is inlaid with tiny iron pins. These are arranged along the centre of the strap in the form of sexfoils, while on each side is a border comprised of single pins (no. 26, fig 29). This strap, which was recovered from an early 15th-century deposit (ceramic phase 12), appears to be the sole example from recent excavations in London and represents a form of metal ornamentation that is distinct from the more usual mounts. A strap with more ornate decoration of this type, including an inscription in black-letter, was recovered from a deposit in Amsterdam dating to the late 14th or early 15th century (Baart 1977, 93 no. 24). The form of decoration may be compared to patterns made with tin pins on contemporary knife handles (Cowgill et al. 1987, no. 138 pls 4e and 5c).

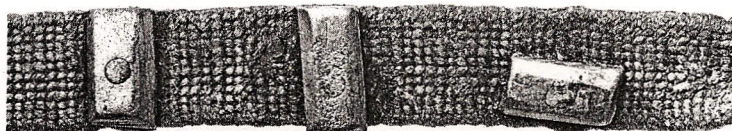
Tablet-woven girdles

While leather girdles could be dyed, painted, stamped, incised, punched with openwork, engraved or embroidered, tablet-weaving also offered considerable scope for patterning a girdle. This was dictated by the choice of coloured

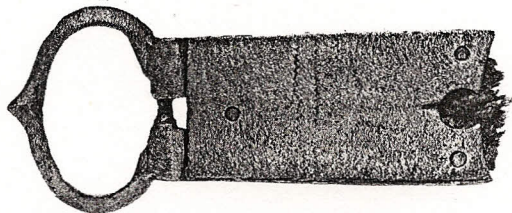
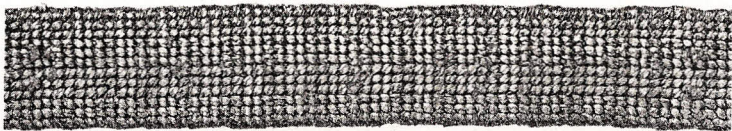
threads, the way the tablets were threaded and how they were manipulated. Technical descriptions of tablet-woven braids, which include a number of girdles, from London deposits of the 14th century and early 15th century are given in the volume on *Textiles and Clothing* (Crowfoot et al. forthcoming), a few observations, however, are noted here.

Braids used as girdles were usually produced in double-faced weaves and skilled weavers adapted the way that girdles were patterned to meet changes in taste. Consequently different styles can be distinguished from among the examples preserved, although none is from a deposit earlier than the 14th century (ceramic phase 9). The chief difference between those of the 14th century and those of the 15th century is that the later girdles tended to imitate expensive fabrics such as velvet, satin and satin damask, whereas in the 14th century coloured stripes and twill effects were more common.

Examples of 14th-century tablet-woven girdles from London include one 8.5mm wide woven in two colours of silk thread to form alternating bands of pink and green, or yellow, running widthways (fig 30). Another girdle, approximately 18mm wide and now very fragmentary, is woven

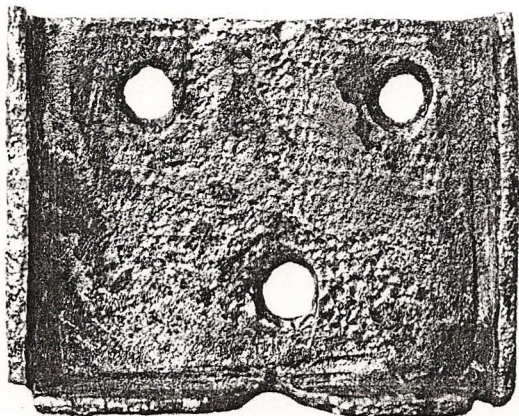
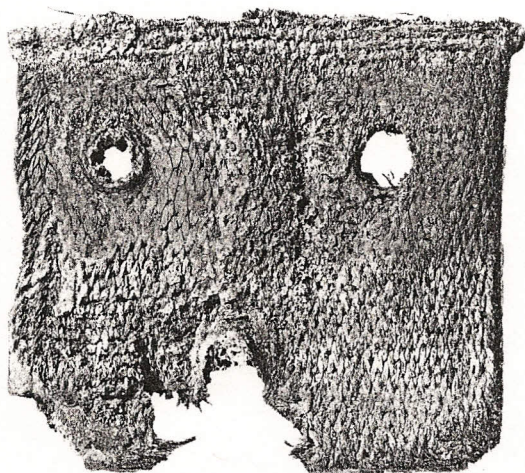


30 Tablet-woven girdles, top – silk with bar mounts no. 1134 (2:1), and bottom – worsted with buckle no. 325 (1:1)



from silk thread and two colours of worsted thread. Undyed silk and black worsted threads were grouped to form stripes running along the length of the girdle and further patterning of the girdle was carried out by turning the centre tablets in a different sequence from the rest of the pack. In addition, worsted thread dyed red was used for the weft, and this would have been visible only along the edges of the girdle and within the stripe in the centre.

There is also part of a 14th-century girdle tablet-woven from worsted thread preserved in association with its buckle (no. 325, figs 30 & 49).



31 Silk tablet-woven girdle and strap-end no. 618 (4:1). The impression made by the girdle in the metal can be seen.

This is a buckle that is classified here as being among the best quality of those mass-produced in copper alloy. The fact that the girdle is made from worsted thread rather than silk, which would have been more expensive, emphasises the relatively low status of most of the material considered here.

Two other narrow tablet-woven braids from 14th-century deposits (ceramic phase 9 and 10) could originally have been used as girdles. One is a monochrome twill and the other has a lozenge pattern. Braids of similar width were, however, used as spur leathers and as filets for the hair. Examples of the former were recovered from the tombs of Fernando de la Cerda, crown prince of Castile, who died in 1275 (Gómez-Moreno 1946, pl 140; Carretero 1988, 37) and of Sancho IV, king of Castile, who died in 1319 (Museo de Santa Cruz 1984, 136 no. 60). Also, the 'grene knight' in the anonymous 14th-century English poem 'Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight' is described as wearing 'clene spures . . . Of bright golde, upon silk bordes barred ful ryche' (Ford 1954, 356). Meanwhile, a silken filet from 14th-century London is described under Hair Accessories (no. 1450, fig 192).

Tablet-woven girdles from early 15th-century deposits in London (ceramic phase 12) are made wholly from silk thread. One is 15.5mm wide (fig 31) and the other 28mm. The warp threads are densely crammed together and the tablets appear to have been turned in two packs in a similar sequence on both girdles, to produce a smooth, monochrome surface rather like satin.

Mounts were riveted onto tablet-woven girdles just as on those made from leather (eg fig 30 & nos. 1132-33, fig 133). Beads and gemstones could also be added, as on the spectacular tablet-woven girdle from the tomb of Don Fernando de la Cerda mentioned above.