

# HOW TO WEAVE OSEBERG 34 d

Randi Stoltz, 21.10.2016 (English version 02.08.2022)

Tablet weaving finds from the Viking age are scarce. The textiles from the Oseberg burial are exclusive, and were probably never meant for clothes. Even if you have tried tablet weaving before, you will certainly learn something new from this band – the weaving includes many different techniques, like tabby, floats, soumak and brocading.

## Yarn

To obtain the original width, about 2,5 cm, I used very thin woollen yarn (28/2). The weft for brocading is double silk thread (30/2 x 2).

It is important to get the proportions right – the length and width of each figure should be equal. With a thicker yarn, make the band wider.



## Threading, number of tablets and yarn

Edge tablets: Three on each side, four dark red threads in each.

Pattern tablets: 30, all with two threads, one light red and one dark red, in diagonally opposite holes. (20 pattern tablets for the exercise.)

You will need 30 light red and 54 dark red threads for the warp and dark red for weft. (For the exercise: 20 light red and 44 dark red threads) The weaving is slow, so a short meter of warp will do. Yellow or white yarn in silk or wool for the brocading.

## Tablet position and turns

Let the edge tablets be alternately S and Z. One quarter turn per row.

The position of the pattern tablets is indifferent, as they are never turned round – only back and forth. Use quarter turns when the tablets are not idle.

## Tools

Because the weaving is so slow, it is nice to have the warp fastened to a kind of frame, weaving board or inkle loom. Use a normal shuttle and a thick needle for the brocading and soumak.

## How to read the pattern

From the start: Arrange the tablets so that every second tablet (A) has a dark red thread in the upper back hole (near you), every second (D) a light red thread in the upper front hole (away from you).

Each row in the pattern symbolizes one pic, each column one tablet.

Insert the weft, then turn all the A-tablets backward, and all the D-tablets forward.

The threads on top of the shed will be visible on the weave – this is about as difficult as cross-stitching or knitting. Turn the tablets, check if the colours of the threads are according to the pattern, then insert the weft.

The start of the band is tabby, and every tablet must be turned. When you start the pattern figures, some tablets are idle and make floats.



## Soumak

The soumak produce horizontal lines.

Use light red woollen yarn.

**First row:** Let the needle pass from the reverse side to the front between the edge tablets and the pattern tablets (no soumak on the edges). Then over the threads of four tablets and under two, continue throughout the row.





**Second row:** Before the return, fasten the thread, for example by letting it go round lower threads of the nearest edge tablet. Continue like the first row, over the threads of four tablets, under two. The result looks like herringbone. End as the beginning, by bringing the thread to the reverse side where the pattern tablets end. This border is repeated before and after all the S-borders.

### Brocading with silk thread

The original weaver used two different methods of brocading. In the big figures, the brocading thread goes from the reverse side to the front and back. Sometimes over the threads of one tablet, sometimes over two or three. For the S-borders, the brocading thread is not visible on the reverse side, so what can't be seen on the front, must be hidden in the shed.

Method I – for the big figures and some borders:

1. Turn the tablets according to the pattern.
2. Bring the brocading thread from the reverse side to the front, let it cover the area as indicated in the pattern and return to the reverse side.
3. Insert the dark red weft, turn the tablets for the next row and beat.

Repeat the procedure and remember to let the brocading thread be loose. The brocading thread will be visible on the reverse side.



Method II – for the S-borders: The brocading thread is not visible on the reverse side of the original. This method is faster than method I.





1. Turn the tablets according to the pattern.
2. Bring the brocading thread from the reverse side to the front between edge tablets and pattern tablets, and let it pass over the light red threads and under the dark red. Bring it back to the reverse side between pattern tablets and edge tablets.

3. The brocading thread should be loose – form a bow – se photo. Insert the dark red weft in the regular shed, turn the tablets for the next row and beat.



### **Darn in ends?**

At school, we learned that the reverse side of an embroidery should be as nice as the front. This is not the case with the Oseberg 34 d, the soumak and brocading threads float on the back. I wouldn't surprise me if there were knots too. Ends that need to be darned in, can be inserted in the shed of the edges.

