

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 4/88

TEXTILE: GROVE PRIORY, BEDFORDSHIRE

Elisabeth Crowfoot

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Summary

Fragments from a woven braid in silk, silver-gilt and silver covered threads with a picoted edge, of a type used for the decoration of fashionable men's and women's garments in the 16th and early 17th century.

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(Metal analysis: Justine Bayley. Dye testing: Penelope Walton)

77.Tr XIII.120 Sq.500. A.M.Lab.no.K860180 (Kent County Museums Service).

Two fragments of woven braid, lengths c.13.0 and 29.0 cm, width 7-8 mm (fig.1).

The warp is of three different threads:

- (1) At the edges, very fine silk, yellow (undyed), slight S-spin.
 - (2) Pattern, silver-gilt strip, wound round a yellow (undyed) silk S-spun core, and
 - (3) ?silver strip, wound round a similar silk core, and plied 2Z.
- Weft threads, coarse, ?silver as in (3) but used single, not plied; metal strip c.6 twists on 2 mm.

The braid is reversible, the weave at each edge tably on 5 silk warps; the centre pattern is on 5 warps, one pair silver-gilt, 1 plied silver, 1 pair silver-gilt, 1 plied silver, 1 pair silver-gilt, weave extended tably over groups of four wefts. Alternate weft returns are extended and twisted to form a picoted edge.

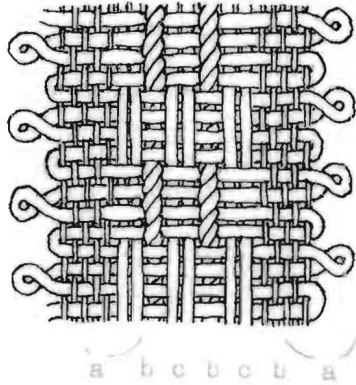
In the longest fragment of braid, two pieces have been joined together, overlapping after 6.0 cm, rather roughly sewn with S-ply silk similar to that of the metal-thread core.

The use of braids is a noticeable feature in the decoration of fashionable garments of the 16th and early 17th centuries. Various techniques can be seen, the silk and wool tablet-weaves of the "Spanish" fashion (Streiter and Weiland 1985) and later metal bobbin laces (Arnold 1985.334-338) and the style of the Grove Priory braid, with metal threads and boldly picoted edges, is well represented. The fifteenth century date suggested for this fragment is perhaps too early - it is in the fashions of the 1500s, with their fitted tailoring, that the braiding becomes most important - parallel rows on cloaks and collars, diagonal striping on sleeves, "wings" and "skirts" of doublets, and outlines on more magnificently embroidered "guards". Examples of the Grove Priory style of braid can be seen in garments surviving in museums and private collections (Arnold 1985. 133-137, 140-142, 193, 268, 288-291) and in contemporary portraits (op.cit. 90(1567), 190(1618), 295(1581), 332(c.1570); burckhardt, 247(1545), 349.).

Two very similar braids, with silk and metal threads and picoted edges, come from recent finds, Edlingham Castle, Northumberland (A.M.Lab.Report 5/88) and Norwich City Survey (Site 148N. Magdalen Street, 367.Sr 473).

77.Tr XIII.120.Sq.500. A.M.Lab.no.k 660180

Braid in silk and metal thread



(a) warps, silk

(b,b,b) warps, silver-gilt on silk core

(c,c) warps, silver on silk core

Bibliography

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- Burckhardt J. The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy
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and Weiland, E. Spanischen Mode" Wasser- und Kostümkunde
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