

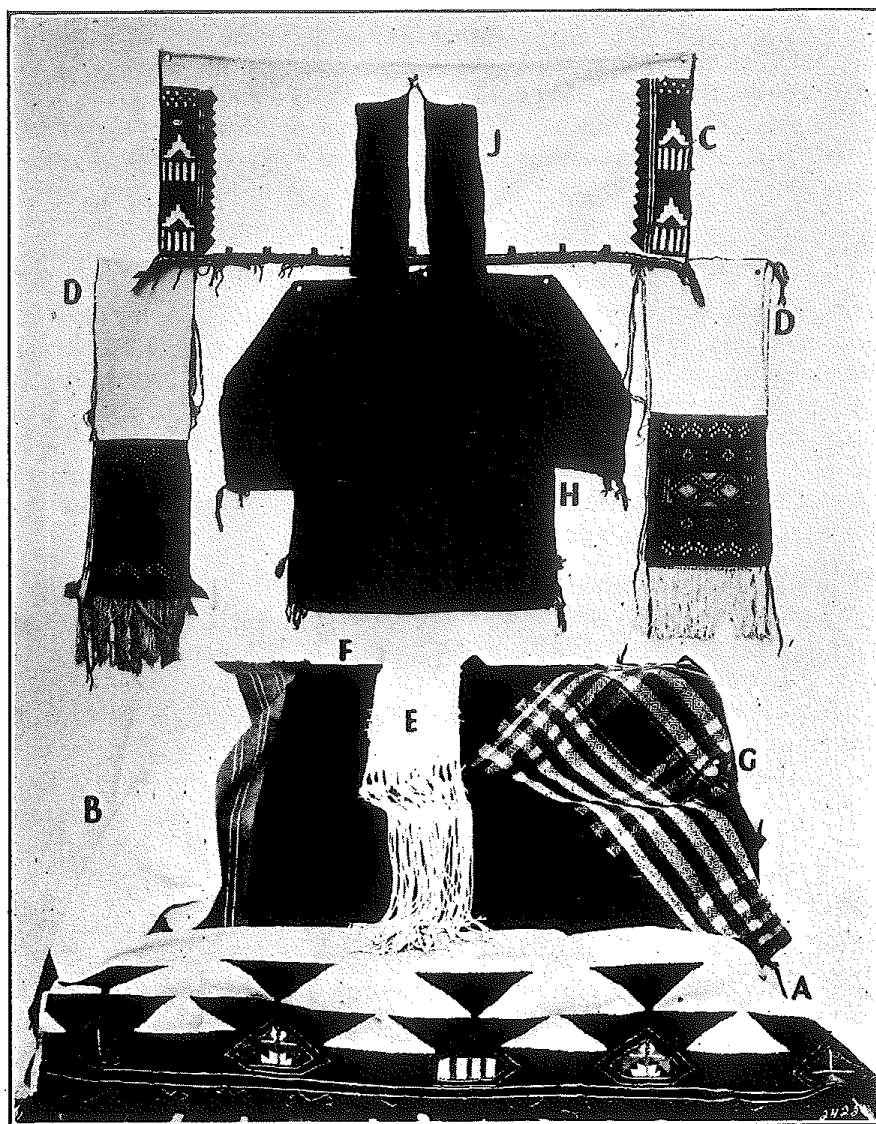
# DENVER ART MUSEUM

DENVER, COLORADO

## *Department of Indian Art*

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HOPI WOVEN FABRICS

*Leaflet No. 18*

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## HOPI INDIAN WEAVING

**LOCATION.** The Hopi Indians—formerly called Moqui—are a sedentary, agricultural people of Shoshonean stock living in ten pueblos or villages in north central Arizona. The population is not far from 3,000. For further information see Leaflets 4, 8, 9, 13 and 18.

**HISTORY.** Presumably the Hopi have carried on the weaving of their prehistoric ancestors, who wove fabrics from cotton, yucca fibre, fur strips and feathers. The earliest mention of Hopi weaving is by Espejo in 1581. He describes white cotton dresses evidently like those made today. The weaving of wool was begun sometime after the introduction of sheep by the Spaniards, who first entered the southwest in 1539-40. The two types of weaving have been carried on ever since and are made today in considerable quantities.

**WEAVERS** of today are men, with a few rare exceptions, but 19th century travelers speak of the women as being the weavers. At present there are about 200 weavers, of whom perhaps 75 make heavy wool blankets. All men above middle age can weave. The center of the industry is Hotevila, with Shimopovi in second place.

**LOOM.** Weaving is done on a horizontal loom similar in most respects to that of the Navaho described in Leaflet 3. The upper beam is fastened to the beam ends or to pegs set in the walls of the kivas or in the exterior or interior walls of the houses. The lower beam is tied to the floor with ropes run through sockets or around pegs driven in the floor. The warp is strung in a series of long figure 8s between two rods laid on the floor and held in place by pegs. After the warp is strung one of the rods is tied to the lower beam and the other is tied at the ends to a pole suspended from the upper beam by a rope strung in a spiral. By pulling this rope the warp is kept tight.

**WEAVING.** Hopi weaving is more complicated than that of the Navaho. Plain, checked and diaper weaves are used, the latter being a style showing a repeated figure, usually a diamond, in the cloth. These different styles are produced by the complicated use of several heddles or heald rods. For a description of these rods see Leaflet 3. Some types of blanket have diaper weaves on the edges and plain weaving in the center. When making these one edge is woven first. Then the warp and its poles are taken from the loom, turned upside down and tied back in the loom for the weaving of the other edge. When the edges are done the center is woven in. The yarn is passed through the warp and beaten into place with wooden batten sticks, combs and needles as in Navaho weaving.

**BELT WEAVING.** Belts, sashes, garters, headbands and other narrow fabrics are woven in considerable quantities. The loom is like that used for large fabrics except for two points. The warp is attached at the top to a wooden roller instead of a rod and its other end is held in place by a band passing around the back of the weaver. Belt warps, heddle manipulation and designs are exceedingly complicated. For details see Proceedings of the United States National Museum, volume 54, pages 255-257.

## COTTON

**CULTIVATION.** The cotton used by the Hopi, *Gossypium* Hopi Lewton, formerly grew wild quite generally in the southwest. But the coming of large herds of domestic animals reduced its growth to a great

extent. In recent years it has been cultivated in the region of Moenkopie, the westernmost of the Hopi towns, and to a lesser extent around Oraibi. After the coming of many American trading posts the Hopi began to neglect its cultivation and to spin their yarn from cotton batting bought at the traders. Still more recently they have done their weaving with a cotton string. In 1930 long staple cotton was introduced with the hope that its cultivation would be taken up by the Hopi.

**PREPARATION.** The cotton bolls were freed from seeds by whipping them with a bundle of pliant rods on a bed of sand, leaving the cotton in a fluffy mass which was worked into loose rolls by hand.

**SPINNING.** The loose rolls are spun into yarn on a spindle consisting of a slender rod 12 to 20 inches long, over which is slipped a heavy perforated disk of wood, horn or earthenware. For more details about spinning see Leaflet 3.

**ARTICLES MADE.** Blankets (A), about 50 by 60 inches, either plain or ornamented with embroidery, shawls (B), somewhat smaller, men's dance kilts (C) and sashes (D) decorated with embroidery, and ceremonial and wedding sashes (E) with large tassels are the most common articles of cotton. The blankets first mentioned are bride's dresses and are unornamented for the first year. The shawls, of several sizes, are worn by the women on festive occasions, and the kilts and sashes are worn as dance costumes.

## WOOL

**SOURCE AND PREPARATION.** The Hopi obtained sheep from the Spaniards at an early date and are today the owners of large flocks of sheep and goats. The large amount of dark woolen articles woven by the Hopi indicates a high percentage of black sheep in their flocks. The fleece is clipped, washed and spun as by the Navaho. The Hopi take more care in their spinning than do the Navaho. The uniform thickness and evenness of the yarn are insured by rubbing it with a corn cob and by singeing off excess fibre. The yarn is very strong and lasting.

**ARTICLES MADE.** The best known wool product of the Hopi loom is the dark brown or blue woman's dress (F), usually about 50 by 60 inches and having a black or dark brown center section and broad bands of diamond pattern blue weaving on the long edges. This dress was formerly woven by all the Hopi but is now found only at Hotevila, or in the other villages on ceremonial occasions. The blanket made by the Hopi most like those of the Navaho is usually of a size convenient to wrap around a man. (See cut on Leaflet 17.) Its main color is likely to be dark, with narrow transverse stripes in a few simple light colors. The name "Moqui pattern" is usually applied to this striped design. At times simple decorative figures are found in these stripes. A medium grey ground is often used. At Hotevila today a number of blankets are woven with black and white stripes and checks. Children's blankets (G) show small black and white checks also. A few blankets are seen with colors and designs like those of the Navaho, and some are decorated with Kachina figures. Formerly many men's shirts were woven of heavy blue wool (H), though occasionally black and white checked. These shirts were shaped like a middy blouse and the seams under the sleeves and down the sides were often left open. Narrow belts and garters are made, usually in red, green, black and white.

**COLORS AND DYES.** The Hopi colors are few, red, green, blue, yellow, black, brown and white being those commonly used. In former times they were produced with native colors, but any colors now being made or which can be seen in museums are the result of aniline dyeing. Blue is the one exception, as it has been made with indigo since Spanish days. But little of it is used today.

**EMBROIDERY.** The white cotton dresses, kilts and sashes are decorated with wool embroidery. The yarn is now all American made, in the colors mentioned above. Steel darning needles have replaced the bone awls formerly used. The article to be embroidered is stretched on a wooden frame. The art of embroidery as now practised is a fairly recent one and is probably an outgrowth of the painting on kilts mentioned by Espejo or of the raised patterns found in the weaving. The designs are almost without exception conventionalized clouds, rain, fields and butterflies. The broad colored bands on the shawls and sashes are sometimes embroidered and sometimes woven. The principal designs are placed on the ends of sashes, the short sides of kilts and on the bottom long sides of the dresses.

**KNITTING** was learned from the whites at an undetermined date. It is done on wooden needles or on those of bone or celluloid purchased at the traders. Footless and kneeless stocking of thick blue (J) or white are the main product of this industry, though in recent years small thick mats have been made.

**TRADE.** While weaving was once practised to some extent in the other pueblos the Hopi have long been the principal source of the wool dresses and the cotton kilts and sashes used in the ceremonies of the eastern pueblos.

Compiled from the following sources by Jean Allard Jeançon and F. H. Douglas:

**UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM**

Proceedings, Vol. 54, pp. 235-297. The Hopi Indian Collection in the U. S. National Museum—Hough.

**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 60, No. 6. The Cotton of the Hopi Indians—Lewton.

**MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ARIZONA**

Museum Notes, Vol. 3, No. 1. The Hopi Craftsman.

Bourke—The Moqui Snake Dance.

Espejo—Diary. The Quivira Society Edition.