

Shuttlecraft Bulletin: Spanish and South American Weaving

The topic of Spanish and South American weaving patterns was covered by Mary Meigs Atwater in the August 1933 and March 1945 Shuttlecraft Bulletins. In 1933, Mary wrote that Spanish style homes were popular in the south west and along the west coast, and they needed compatible textiles. Weavings done in the old familiar colonial patterns would not do.

She described the Spanish decoration as lavish, with heavy and ornate effects. So, used sparingly, against a severely plain background as the white walls and round arched doorways of these Spanish style homes, they would be extremely handsome. These weavings depended upon strong color rather than pattern. Most of the drafts were simple, with the colors arranged in bold stripes. Black and red are the chief colors with clear yellow and a vivid green. Blue is not used often, but when it was, it was a strong, dark shade. See the diagram No. 1 from the bulletin here, indicating black, red and white. Wool was the most common material used, tightly woven and heavy, done either in warp- or weft-faced weaves.

She described Mexican serapes, a blanket-like shawl, as an example of work influenced by Spanish and Indian designs. Designs were also described as like Navajo weaving with figures done in tapestry weave, set off by stripes. She wrote of South American ponchos and Bolivian blankets. She provided warping instructions for a blanket to be done in a fine wool, in a summer

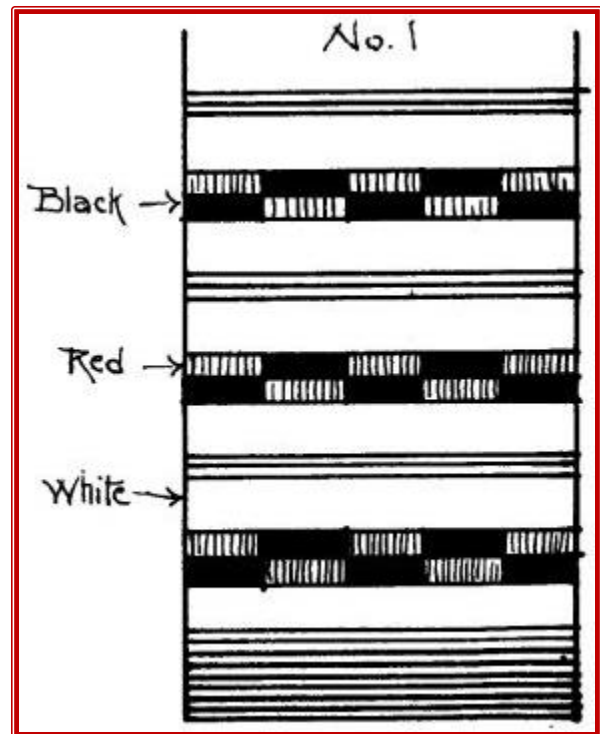


and winter weaves, that would work up more quickly than a weft-faced weave. The

blanket would have been woven in llama fiber traditionally. The figure in red, white and dark blue shows a serape from the Ft Lewis College Durango Collection illustrating Spanish, Navajo and Pueblo influences.

Mary provided a draft and tie up for a rug to be done in the pattern shown above using a 4-harness loom, using carpet warp and a lightweight wool rug yarn for weft, beaten tightly. She also wrote about Spanish rugs done in a simple overshot threading, in a diamond pattern with black borders and the center in several bright colors, red usually dominant. It would have a woven fringe in bands of color to match the center pattern sewn on to the

piece on all sides. This style rug could be woven in three pieces.



In 1945, Mary wrote of unusual and little-known techniques she explored of South American weaving. Done in 3 colors: again, typically red, black and white.

Her book, *Byways in Weaving*, published in 1954, covered many of these techniques and patterns from Central and South America, as well as other parts of the world.

Most of the weaving from Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala she described as done in narrow bands of pattern, separated by wider bands of stripes in several colors. These were done in plain warp-faced weave as seen in the 2 examples in color on this page.

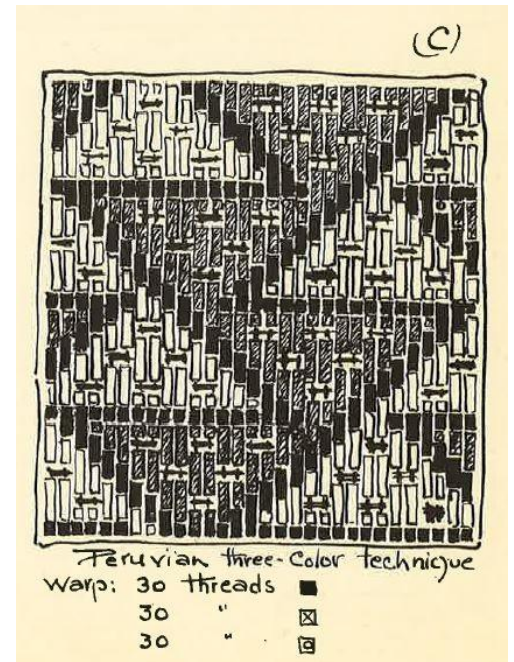


She provided detailed instructions for weaving three different figures using a 4-harness floor loom with pickup. Here is one of the diagrams of a design from Peru.

Additional information on this technique may also be seen in *Byways* book.

Today, the Cloth Roads website has examples of these weaves for sale from Peru and other South and

Central America locations : <https://www.clothroads.com/product-category/new-arrivals/>



But, probably the best site for beautiful examples of this style of weaving is the Backstrap Weaver's blog, by Laverne Waddington. These are done in traditional and nontraditional patterns and colors. Check it out at this link: <https://backstrapweaving.wordpress.com/>

Laverne also has many videos and books available on patterns and weaving technique for these weaves from all over the globe. These are done on backstrap looms, inkle looms and multi harness looms.