

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE WHITE MAN  
ON SOUTHWEST INDIAN ART \***

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When the Spanish arrived in the Southwest in 1540, they found a stone age people practicing craft arts at a high level, particularly basketry, weaving, and pottery. Advanced beyond strictly craft arts were kiva murals, for those contained the seeds of greater creativity.

The Spanish were bent upon conquest and conversion. They brought with them wheat and other farm produce, sheep, horses, and cattle, as well as new items of dress and household goods. Early in the 19th century came Anglo-Americans — traders, trappers, surveyors, homesteaders, and in their wake the railroad with more White men and multitudinous, miscellaneous goods.

A few of the results of these contacts will be presented.

Land meant life to the Indian. Until the White man came, the Indian was reasonably free to live where he willed and to till whatever lands he wished. Spanish land grants were not large enough, nor did they fully protect the Indian. Reservations carved out by the Anglo-Americans in later years partially protected the Indian from unscrupulous Whites, but at the same time struck at basic freedoms. How much was lost in art with the loss of freedom cannot be measured.

The religion of the Southwest Indian reflects his adaptation to the land and his environment through the centuries. Endless designs, both prehistoric and historic, reveal sensitive reaction to wind and weather, to the elements of nature connected with agriculture. The late F. H. Douglas, anthropologist, regarded as the type Southwest Indian design the stepped pattern, the symbol of the rain cloud. It is painted on pottery, embroidered on dance kilts, carved on wooden slat altars. The Indian's relation to the world about him was a close and intimate one.

Since World War II, many of the Indians of the Southwest have acquired scientific knowledge of farming and stock raising, of dams and high powered pumps; this knowledge is striking at the roots of many native beliefs. It is wreaking havoc with the Indian's dependence on rain from the heavens above which he "pulls down" in the graceful and symbolic motions of the Corn Dance. Thus with scientific knowledge the ceremonial dance will go and with it all the accompanying painting, carving, weaving and allied arts.

A strange anomaly did occur in connection with Catholicism in the Rio Grande pueblos. The religion was forced upon the natives. They accepted it, but at the same time secretly continued to practice their own rites. For example, today at Santo Domingo pueblo the Indians worship in the small church, then file out and start the Green Corn Dance. Both services are performed with equal sincerity. This and other dances have secret rites which are practiced with strict adherence to tradition, and with the preservation of pertinent ceremonial arts unaltered by contact with the Whites.

Significant changes in political organization are taking

heavy toll in the craft arts, particularly through newly organized tribal councils. These White-inspired bodies are fast absorbing White ideas. Perhaps this can best be illustrated in an incident of recent date. On the advice of a White man, the majority of the Navajo Tribal Council was ready to abandon their own Crafts Guild. A former director of the Guild who was on the Council was all that saved the day — and the Guild.

Arts and crafts are suffering in the newer education programs, for they are completely ignored. During the 1930's and 1940's there was a flurry of teaching painting and some crafts at the Santa Fe Indian School. A report in late 1958 indicates that such instruction is practically a dead issue. The same is virtually true in other Indian schools. Further, the Anglo-American educational system has removed young Indians from the parent-child pattern of craft teaching, the normal native situation. This takes a heavy toll in the crafts.

The rapidly changing economic picture is also diverting interest from native arts. Wage earning is one of the greatest deterrents. Why weave for five or ten cents an hour when \$1.50 or more can be had for simpler tasks? Moving off the reservation to follow a job has been particularly influential in the loss of interest in native life and therefore in crafts. The Navajo tribe is accruing considerable wealth through the management of its own sawmill, oil and critical mineral leases, motels, and other ventures. Directly and indirectly the allocation of funds derived from these and other sources, such as old age benefits, is affecting the individual, in many instances to the detriment of craft production.

Before turning to individual craft arts, one general

observation might be made. Basically, there is continued production where one or both of two circumstances prevail: where native use of crafts is marked and where there is a market for the craft.

The White man has effected great change in the clothing of native Southwesterners. When the Hopi acquired sheep, they began to weave their secular garments in wool, but ceremonial garb continued to be produced in the traditional cotton. Further influence is to be noted in the decoration of everyday garments, as flowers on Zuni dresses, while ceremonial pieces were ornamented in age-old patterns of clouds and rain. Later, ever greater quantities of American goods completely wiped out any native dress for daily use. Today Hopis are the only pueblo weavers of any consequence; they supply many other puebloans with ceremonial blankets, kilts, and sashes.

The Navajos present another picture. They borrowed sheep and weaving technologies from the puebloans. Aside from the wool itself, the only non-Indian influence up to 1875 was machine-made bayeta; this yarn was unravelled and respun by the Indian before it was used. About 1875 Germantown yarns and aniline dyes came in and greatly changed the entire weaving picture. Sophisticated edge to edge patterning gave way to all-over and end-to-end designs, small elements were replaced by large ones, and the earlier subtle coloring often became garish. In the late 1800's the Navajo blanket became a rug to satisfy growing demands from the White man. Many additional influences from Whites were to follow: a return to vegetable dyes instigated by a trader; the use of special chrome dyes manufactured by an American chemical company; fine all-over patterning inspired by two architects; the use of design elements

casually drawn on the trading post counter. The most sophisticated patterning and weaves are found in the saddle blanket, the sole loom product the Navajo weaves for himself. Little artistic influence from the White man is in evidence here.

Today Navajo weaving is fast disappearing. Economic and other White-influenced factors seem to be responsible.

Basketry is a craft of great antiquity in the Southwest. Today little is done in any of the pueblos except among the Hopi. Cochiti pueblo makes a plaited ring basket in the traditional bowl form, conceding to the taste of Whites in a larger size. Among the Hopi the same basket is made. White influence is to be noted in experimentation with design and with green, white, and yellow yucca. Much development in this basket can be attributed to the Hopi Craftsman, an annual show sponsored by the Museum of Northern Arizona at Flagstaff, Arizona.

Other Hopi basketry is produced today in rather large quantities. Many dealers handle these baskets for they are the most colorful in the Southwest, and the quality has remained high or has improved. Designs are traditional, although certain elaborations have been encouraged by White men. The colors are either native or aniline. Perhaps the continued use of baskets by the Hopis themselves has also influenced this craft: it is requisite among them for the bridegroom to receive a handwoven plaque from his bride, and the tray which holds ceremonial piki bread also must be of native weave.

Among non-pueblo tribes, basketry has disappeared or is fast disappearing. The Papago Indians began the manufacture of yucca baskets around 1920: such baskets could be made more rapidly than the willow basket;

materials were close at hand; yucca baskets could be priced more cheaply and therefore more of them could be sold to Whites. But even this popular substitute for the fine willow basket is bowing out in favor of high wages for cotton picking.

The Pimas, close relatives of the Papagos, rarely make baskets today, in part because of wage earning, lack of native use, and because the White man will not pay the price for this native product. Also young girls are in school at the age when they should be learning to make baskets.

Apache Indians make a few baskets, but again the substitutes provided by the trading post have discouraged both the production of baskets and their use. Twined burden baskets which appear at a girl's puberty rite reveal White influence in tin tinklers attached to the ends of yellow-dyed buckskin thongs, or in a metal ring inserted in the rim to give added strength. White influence is apparent in life form designs now used in Western Apache coiled baskets; H. H. Roberts, anthropologist, reports that such designs began to attain popularity in 1918 because of White buyers. Finer weaving, more elaborate small-patterned designs, and more dynamic arrangements were also developed around 1918.<sup>1</sup>

Pottery has fared better than basketry, for there has been greater interest in and encouragement of this craft from White men. Also pottery has a better sale value. The anthropologist E. L. Hewett and others in Santa Fe directly encouraged Maria and Julian Martinez to make, exhibit, and sell their black ware. The success of the Martinez' venture inspired other potters at San Ildefonso and Santa Clara pueblos to follow along similar lines, and the success of both villages certainly encouraged San Juan

pueblo potters in the development of red wares. All three villages continue to profit by sales to Whites. Potters of all three have made concessions to the buyer in form and decoration of their ceramic products.

Three lines of historic development might be pointed up relative to pottery. Where there has been continued use by natives, traditional forms and decorations prevail on pots, particularly if they are put to ceremonial use. Ceremonial bowls used on altars at Zuni adhere to traditional cloud forms and decorations with frogs, tadpoles, and dragonflies. It was a bit shocking to see this strong tradition broken by an old woman of this pueblo when she modelled frogs peering over the edge of a small ash tray.

Another line of development has been to follow generally the traditional techniques of the craft, with some deviation in forms and decoration. The majority of Southwest pottery falls into this category, with cookie jars and candle sticks made in Hopi buff ware or Santa Clara black ware.

The third line of development is characterized by radical change. Tesuque-modelled hatchets decorated in poster paints are the epitome of this development. It is amazing what favor the Tesuque wares have found in the eyes of White men. Even conservative Santo Domingo has succumbed to this sad style.

The Southwest Indian never used a wheel or a kiln in his ceramic industry. When Charles Loloma first used both of these a few years ago, he demonstrated their potentials in Indian craft. Through a Guggenheim Fellowship he studied ceramic techniques and designs of various civilizations. He uses clays and glazes from native sources. Through these developments, coupled with fresh designs and the use of kiln and wheel, Loloma has brought much that is new to

the field of Indian ceramics. His wares have met with success, receiving high acclaim in artistic circles and selling well at the same time. High awards at White exhibits have greatly encouraged Loloma.

A completely new art in the Southwest is silver work. Now about one hundred years old, and first acquired from Mexicans, this craft has justly been accepted in wide circles. At first silver work was produced for Navajos and other Indians; then it was an expression of great simplicity. At the end of the 19th century White-influenced changes began to occur and also the first large scale production of silver work. Thereafter, through further White influence, silver work began to vary in form and ornamentation. Many Navajo silversmiths still prefer massive plain areas and a few larger stones, yet they respond to the whims of the buying public with baroque styles. Critical judging by Whites at the Gallup Ceremonials and other exhibits has helped to educate the public and to keep the craft at a higher level.

Despite the White man and his demands, there is still tribal variation in silver work. Shortly after the Navajo began to do silversmithing, the Zunis learned the craft from them. For a time there was considerable similarity in the two expressions. Then the Zunis began to reflect the influences from their own traditional arts. More elaborate patterning required more and smaller stones to embellish the metal. To this day the greatest attribute of Zuni work is the meticulous cutting and shaping of many small stones for a single piece. A ring which measured one inch in length and less than an inch in width was set with 80 lovely stones. A great deal of time is consumed in such work,



and generally the price is not commensurate with the craftsmanship involved.

During World War II Zuni silver became very popular as it was one of the few types of unusual costume jewelry available at this time. As a result of its popularity, many Zunis, both men and women, became smiths. Today it is estimated that 80 per cent of the families of this tribe follow silversmithing; most of the work they produce is for White consumption.

Much Navajo silver work has been copied by the Whites in machine made pieces. This has made it difficult for the finer craftsman, for it throws prices very much out of line. It was thought for a long time that Zuni small-stone work could not be duplicated, but again the machine has not failed. Zunis complain that they create a new piece and in no time a cheaper copy is on the market. This is no encouragement to the creative artist. Most recently their lovely shell and turquoise channel work has been copied by White men in southern Colorado; not only are the reproductions effective, but they are also more efficiently and therefore less expensively produced. The White man's activities may well spell the end of Indian silvercraft.

Guilds have played a part in some of the crafts of the Southwest, but perhaps they have been most important in Navajo silversmithing and weaving. Originally set up by Whites and still administered by them, the Navajo Arts and Crafts Guild has been a prominent factor in the perpetuation of high esthetic values, of which there is such a rich tradition in the Southwest. In some measure the Guild has offset some of the poor taste of the buying public. The Guild is responsible for higher quality in craftsmanship and

design and for simplicity in the use of stones and stamping. It has also encouraged finer weaving.

Less influence from the White man has occurred in the religious arts. Where native religion has survived in spite of other changes, there we find ceremonial arts in their purest form. For example, when the sandpainting is made as part of a Navajo curing rite, the subject matter is strictly native. The Christianized Papago have a devil in one of their myths. Contact with Europeans has resulted in black, white, and "just right" people in a Hopi legend. On the other hand, many Navajo myths begin and end "in the long ago," without benefit of historical embroideries.

Masks, the most important accessory of the costumed dancer, reveal few touches from the White man. On the other hand, costumes have changed greatly, particularly in the addition of European clothing. Body painting for ceremonial occasions remains traditional, while the painting of face and body for war and social reasons has tended to disappear.

The kachina doll serves as an interesting example of change due to White influence. Appearing first as a flat, non-sculptured image, it became a stylized carved and painted figure during the middle and late 19th century. Late in that century rather extensive collecting of kachina dolls by scientists resulted in increased production and better craftsmanship. More recently an expanded buying public has caused further change such as fully sculptured figures, intentionally confused painted designs, miniature dolls which are inaccurately and inadequately decorated, and decorations of fur, greenbough, cloth, and other materials. There is a good market for the well-make Hopi

doll as well as the cheap Japanese copies or lathe-turned examples made by Whites.

Ceremonial paraphernalia has remained the same or has been subject to small changes. Very likely the ritual objects used in secret ceremonies have changed the least, but in public rites certain superficial changes can be noted. Rattles generally remain the same; in place of the ceramic drum a metal container with skin stretched over the top may be used; ceremonial staffs may be bedecked with gaily colored ribbons from the dime store.

One of the most recently developed Southwest Indian arts is water-color painting. With rare exceptions this art belongs to the 20th century. Some of the earliest water-color work was done by school children at San Ildefonso about 1910; shortly thereafter some young men of the same village began doing paintings of their ceremonial dances. Several White men in Santa Fe greatly encouraged these young fellows, giving them materials and a place to work. Partly because of this and partly because of the efforts of several teachers at the Indian School, the Rio Grande pueblo art movement was looked upon as a White-inspired expression. Certainly "art for art's sake," as painting is often called, was a new concept among these neolithic decorators. Paper and some of the painting media were new, and painting in a realistic manner was largely foreign to the art tradition of the Southwest Indians.

However, in analyzing this Indian painting, we find that the native traditions were and are so strong that they have affected the majority of water colors. First, there is the long tradition of painting itself; the first Indian who put brush to paper did it with an experienced hand. For centuries he had painted cave walls, pottery, his body, ceremonial

paraphernalia, textiles, and kiva walls. The Indian artist attempted a naturalistic portrayal of the human body, and was not too successful, but he excelled in portrayals of geometric detail of mask, headdress, and kilt.

Regardless of subject matter, age-old qualities of the decorative arts assert themselves time and again in Indian water-colors, despite any influences from the White man. In the characteristic Rio Grande pueblo painting of a row of dancers, there is rhythmic repetition, perhaps of alternate type, with men and women dancers, dark and light colors, or alternate repetition of dance steps. Dancers often form a diagonal line across the paper, without benefit of any background or foreground. Navajo painting is more apt to stress all-over design than it is to feature European composition. A Tahoma illustrates this point. Gracefully curving lines of clouds in the sky are repeated in similar lines of rearing and running horses. Even the small shrubbery in the foreground repeats the same curving rhythm.

One of the direct influences from the White man in this art, oddly enough, is in abstract expressions. It may be that this art style has strong appeal for the Indian for the very reason that it is familiar to him; further, it stresses form, color, and design. In fact, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this may become the forte of the Indian artist. With the wealth of traditional designs which he inherits from both his prehistoric and historic ancestors, he might go far in this style of art. Too, it is closer to the decorative arts. And it may be a rich substitute when dances and other aspects of native life are no longer in existence.

In summary it may be said that there are three general

categories into which the art and crafts of the Southwest Indian may fit in relation to his contacts with the Whites.

First are those expressions which have changed little or not at all so far as White influence is concerned. This would include, largely, ceremonial arts and paraphernalia still used in native rituals. There are some secular expressions, of course, which have changed only as they might have within their own culture sans any outside contact. Some Hopi basketry is a good example of this.

A second category is that in which some change has occurred in certain crafts. Pottery which is made of native materials, in traditional techniques, but which varies somewhat in forms and decoration, would exemplify this group. In basketry, prehistoric techniques still prevail, but new forms and designs have been inspired by the White man. In spite of certain changes, Navajo weaving is still traditional in the use of the native loom and techniques.

The third category is that in which there has been great change or completely new developments as a result of White contact. Silvercraft would fit here, with the totally new material, metal, and the accompanying new technologies. Even here, however, there has been a carryover in feeling for design and form, an elaboration of the metal with native use of jet, turquoise, and shell. Some of the patterning in these materials is in the traditional manner.

It may be said, then, that the White man has made certain inroads on the crafts and art of the Southwest Indian. In many cases there has been a remarkable synthesis between the native and the introduced. Contemporary Southwest Indian art is still dominantly Indian, whether in new materials or old, new forms or old, new designs or traditional ones.

What is transpiring today in the lives of the Southwest Indians is perhaps one of the most important chapters in this art, for here the influences are striking not at the arts themselves, but at the Indians' very way of life. In the end this will be more influential than farming out silver and new ideas for designs, far more important than directing efforts in the classroom. These changes in the life way, in effect, will completely alter the directions of Southwest Indian art.

#### Notes

\*This paper was presented at the sixth annual meeting of the American Indian Ethnohistoric Conference, held at the Natural History Building, Washington, D. C., November 18-19, 1958.

1. H. H. Roberts, *Basketry of the San Carlos Apache* (Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History, vol. 31, pp. 121-328, 1929).

