



# **Woven by the Grandmothers: Nineteenth-Century Navajo Textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian**

*Eulalie H. Bonar*

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The National Museum of the American Indian's collection of 19th-century Navajo weavings, one of the most comprehensive in the world, includes chief blankets, poncho serapes, mantas, and everyday blankets called diyogi. Most of the textiles, made between 1840 and 1880, predate production for the non-Indian market and have never before been photographed. With 80 color illustrations, *Woven by the Grandmothers* showcases not only the collection's earliest and best documented pieces but also those that most vividly represent its variety and depth. Essays by Native and non-Native authors - including D. Y. Begay and Joe Ben Wheat - explore the spirituality of Navajo weaving and situate the collection within an ongoing artistic and cultural tradition. The authors show how Navajo weaving, although considered integral to contemporary life, provides weavers with a link to earlier generations. Several of the essays describe how special songs and prayers establish a weaver's relationship with his or her weaving. Others recount the history of trade in Navajo textiles and trace the changes weaving has undergone during the last 150 years. Including notes on collectors and material information on each piece, *Woven by the Grandmothers* shows how Navajo textiles represent the roots of a weaving tradition that remains a vital part of Navajo culture.

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