

# By MARY MEIGS ATWATER

## JASPE'

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For a long time I have been promising myself the adventure of experimenting with some of the warp-dyed and weft-dyed patterns seen in ancient Peruvian weaving and in weaving from Guatemala and other countries. Last month this intention came to a head, and here is the story. Guild members who may have a similar urge will perhaps be saved some disappointments and some lost motion. I discovered plenty of things *not* to do, and that is always useful.

For the jaspé effect the warp may be tied-dyed and woven with a plain weft, or the weft may be tie-dyed, and woven over a plain warp. For the Guatemalan methods of weaving, with short warps stretched full length in a "belt-loom," warp-dyeing is perhaps the more popular method, but for our weaving equipment the weft-dyeing method seems the more practical, so most of my experiments were carried out in this technique.

The material to be dyed must first be stretched on a frame. This may be a special frame for the purpose, like the one from Cambodia shown in an illustration in an interesting book I recently happened upon. I found, however, that my spool-rack made an entirely satisfactory substitute. I took out all but two of the wires, and set these at a distance apart equal to the width of my proposed warp.

The weft-material should be wound over the wires in a continuous thread to make a skein — simply 'round and 'round, without a cross or "lease." It is important to make each turn with exactly the same tension for if some of the threads are loose while others are tight the pattern will be distorted.

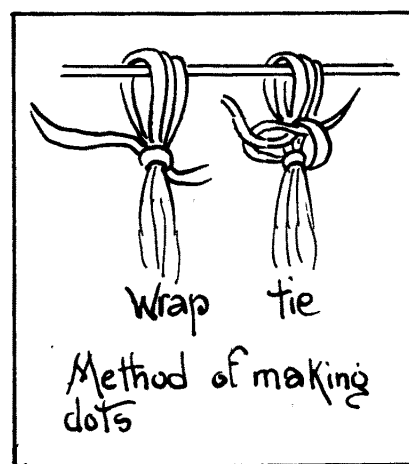
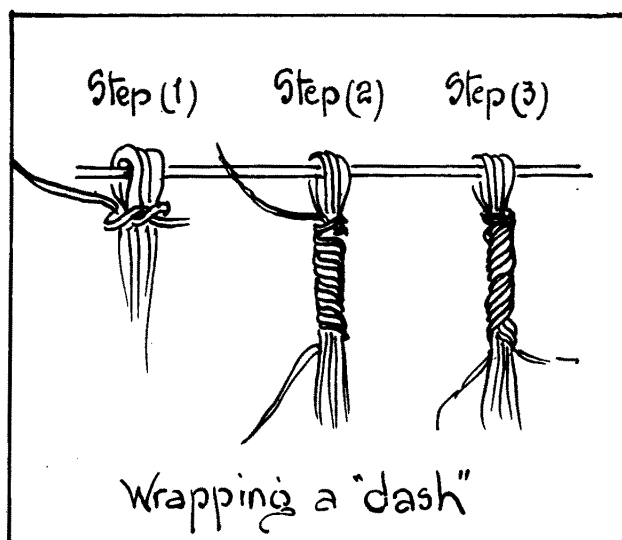
All the weft material may be wound over the bars in this manner before starting the tying, but I found it easier to wind each strand of four or six ends separately, attaching the free end of the weft material to the bar by a loop-knot while I made the ties.

For my experiments I used coarse materials, as it is easier to see what happens. I tried the thing first with rags, cut quite narrow, and sacrificed an old sheet to the good cause. I got a pattern, but when all was said and done the thing was still just a rag rug and seemed hardly worth the trouble.

I next used the light-weight rug-yarn supplied by Lily Mills (Article 814) and got much handsomer results. I tied this material in strands of six ends, but four ends would have been better. In fine material one might use strands of eight or more ends. I tried using lengths of rag for making the ties, but found this unsatisfactory as it is impossible to wrap and tie tight enough to keep out all the dye. I got much better results when I used lengths of rug-cotton for the purpose.

Patterns in this technique are made up of small dots and of wrapped "dashes" and the figures may be as elaborate as one chooses. The dots may be made as illustrated: wrap the tying material once or twice around the strand and tie tight as possible. It is the compression rather than the thickness of the wrapping that protects the material from the dye.

The method I used for wrapping the dashes is illustrated. For a dash about one inch and a half long I used a 14 inch length of wrapping material. I tied this at the center at one end of the proposed dash and then wound one end for the length required, winding the other end over the first in the opposite direction. At the end I tied the two ends together. This wrapping must be done with precision, and—I repeat—as tight as possible.



The illustration shows the frame and the simple pattern I used, tied on 17 strands. Of course the pattern might be repeated as desired.

When the wrapping and tying is completed a cord should be run through the loops at either end of the skein and tied as indicated on the sketch. It saves time to lay these cords along the bars before winding the weft-skein and winding over both the cord and the bar at the same time.

The skein may now be taken off the bars and dyed by any method one chooses. After the skein is dyed, thoroughly rinsed and dried, the wrappings may be removed. This must be done with care not to cut the material. When all the wrappings are off, the skein may be put on a swift or winder and wound off into a ball or directly on the shuttles.

If the weave is to be plain, the warp should be set far enough apart to allow beating up the weft to cover the warp. A rather better way is to thread the warp 1, 2, 3, 4 (twill) and weave a double tabby on 1-2 and 3-4.

In most of the Guatemalan pieces the jaspé is not used as an all-over

effect, but in stripes of various widths, set off by stripes in plain color—usually several brilliant colors. This makes the effect far more lively, and also saves time, as only part of the weft is tie-dyed. I have one sample in which each group of tie-dyed threads—in this case six—is separated from the next strand by ten shots in a lighter blue in plain color, the whole feature being set off from the next by bands of plain color in green, yellow, red and dark blue.

The jaspé effect is extremely bold and striking. If one wishes to tone it down a bit and give it a bit of mystery, the weft may be woven a trifle off-center, so that the dots and dashes do not register exactly over the other. The effect is to produce a smaller plain block with a shading on each side. I rather prefer this effect to the sharper and more definite effect of making the weft-shots register exactly.

