

CULTURE IN CRISIS

A STUDY OF THE HOPÍ INDIANS BY
LAURA THOMPSON, WITH A FORE-
WORD BY JOHN COLLIER & A CHAPTER

FROM THE WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN LEE WHORF
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with the people," said the Agency Superintendent, "they request the exclusive use of the Executive Order Reservation."⁴⁰

Stock Reduction

The present situation is still further complicated by government's stock-reduction program which was pressed immediately after the boundary settlement because of a severe drought. Reduction to the approved carrying capacity of the range (i.e., from a total of 31,189 sheep units in 1942 to 23,627 sheep units in 1943)⁴¹ necessitated the selling of about 24 percent of the total Hopi livestock. Because of the unequal distribution of stock on the range in relation to range capacity, the program called for an average reduction of about 20 percent of the stock of each owner on First Mesa, 22 percent on Second Mesa, and 44 percent on Third Mesa. Thus again Third Mesa was hardest hit, indeed over twice as hard as First Mesa. Whereas the First and Second Mesa groups accepted the program and appointed local committees to carry it out, the Third Mesa stockmen, incited by off-reservation cattle interests, created some disturbance. When economic pressures from outside were reduced, however, the Third Mesa group was persuaded to accept reduction.

Adjustment of livestock to range carrying capacity should start a rehabilitation of the range which may be expected to respond more rapidly in First and Second Mesa areas than in the more critically eroded Third Mesa area.⁴² But the drastic reduction has engendered a good deal of bitterness, especially among Third Mesa leaders. As one of the Oraibians angrily exclaimed in a meeting with the Indian Com-

⁴⁰ Hopi Agency 1944, 45.

⁴¹ The reduced stock was distributed as follows:

Stock	1942
1,000 Cattle	4,000
1,200 Horses	6,000
1,000 Goats	1,000
12,627 Sheep	12,627

Total

23,627

⁴² Hopi Agency 1944, 21-22.

missioner, "Tell me, how can I raise five children on nine cows?" The program was resented both because of immediate losses in economic assets and because, by limiting the number of stock permitted any one owner, it put a lid on the new trend toward upward mobility through individual ownership of livestock and prevented a concentration of

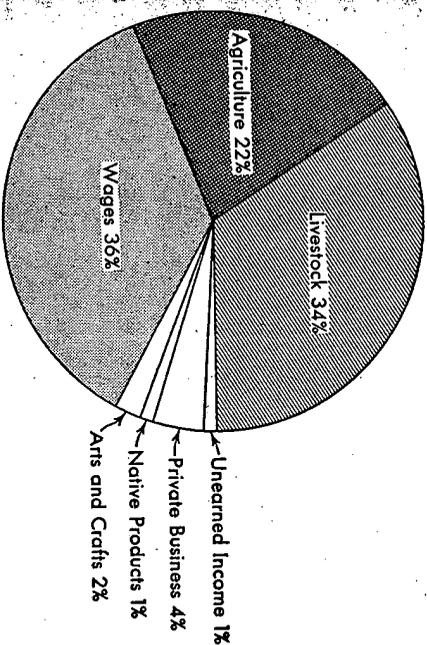


Figure 2. Hopi Income Source, 1942. (From Hopi Agency 1944, 31.)

individually owned wealth, in the form of stock, in the hands of a few relatively prosperous owners.

Flow Income

Some idea of the economic importance that their land base and natural resources have for the Hopi may be gained from a glance at the tribal income sources (Figure 2). In 1942, a year which for our purposes may be regarded as normal, farming provided 22 percent of the Hopi income while grazing was responsible for 34 percent. Thirty-six percent came from wages, largely for federal government jobs.⁴³ The mean income per family in 1942 was \$439.82, but more than half of the Hopi families earned less than \$300 a year, only five families

⁴³ Hopi Agency 1944.

earning \$2000 or over (Table 2). At the same time it should be noted that only 1.4 percent of the Hopi income was derived from government allotments and relief, an extremely low percentage compared to the all-reservation Indian average.

TABLE 2. Hopi Family Income, 1942^a

Total Number of Families	645
Income Class	
Under \$100	107
\$100-199	175
\$200-299	102
\$300-399	72
\$400-499	60
\$500-749	49
\$750-999	37
\$1000-1499	22
\$1500-1999	16
\$2000 plus	5

^a *Ibid.*

The Hopi are an unusually industrious and thrifty people who solicit neither charity nor financial credit. They prefer to do business on a cash basis and in general use only a small fraction of the credit funds available to them through the new Indian Service policy. They still make a practice of storing up food from the good years to tide over the lean, and each house has its storage room where ears of dried corn are carefully placed row on row, frequently to the height of the ceiling. Such low income figures, despite outstanding habits of industry and foresightedness, point up the hazardous nature of life in Hopi-land and the diminishing natural resources of the tribe.

After 1942 the tribal income shot up because of the substantial increase in wages which came with World War II. Many Hopi left the reservation to join the armed services or to become industrial workers, with the result that most Hopi families had an unprecedented amount of cash. With higher incomes came more material goods—food, cloth-

ing, and "gadgets" that could be bought from reservation traders. But this short period of relative prosperity for the Hopi has already come to an end. Veterans and industrial workers have returned. Family incomes are shrinking. And the Hopi are entering an era of readjustment made particularly difficult by the contrast between life on the jurisdiction and life on the battlefronts and in factory towns where so many young Hopi spent the war years.

The Herding Industry

The Hopi jurisdiction now contains about 624,064 acres of range land⁴⁴ divided between the three mesa groups as shown in Table 1. Out of a total of 645 Hopi families a little more than half own sheep or cattle. While grazing is usually subsidiary to farming, in some households, especially at First Mesa, the men spend much of their time in sheep camps away from home and derive most of their income from herding. The custom is for a number of owners to pool their sheep, taking turns at shepherding the flock.⁴⁵ Since the entire range is in use there is little moving about of herds, a situation which, correlated with successive drought years, has brought about excessive overgrazing.

Besides the stock-reduction program, attempts have been made by the Indian Service to foster sound stock management. These attempts include branding, sheep dipping, breed improvement through pure-bred Rambouillet rams and registered Herefords, ram segregation, fodder raising, corral construction, improvement of stock water supply, and the organization of stock cooperatives. By means of government credits, the Hopi have developed three cooperative stock associations.⁴⁶ However, herding, in that it demands a certain mobility, does not fit well into the sedentary life of the pueblo dwellers. The

⁴⁴ The Hopi range is classified as follows (Hopi Agency 1944):

Grasslands	208,134 acres
Sagebrush	5,639
Browse	309,062
Pinyon and juniper	78,411
Waste	22,818

⁴⁵ Thompson and Joseph 1944, 24.

⁴⁶ Thompson and Joseph 1944, 24-25.