

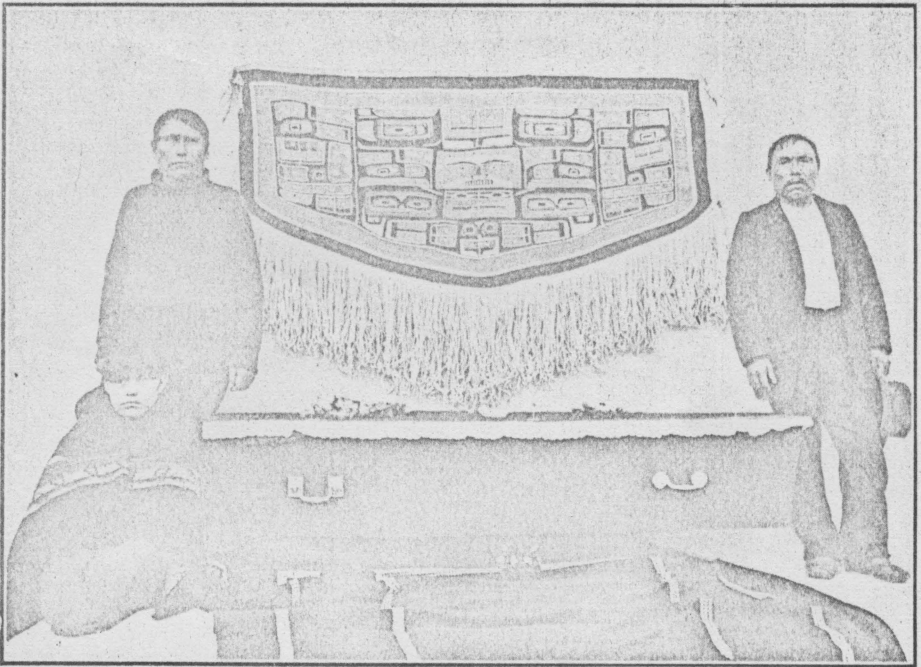
## The Chilkat Blanket

Chilkat is the modern name for the blanket. The first makers of the blankets were the Tsimpsons, but they had long forgotten the art when the first white man came to this country. Then the Chilkat Indians were the chief manufacturers. This explains why the white man gave to the blanket its present name.

The Thlinget name for the blanket is "Nar Kine." The word means fringe about the body.

The Thlingets attribute to the blanket a mythical origin. The legend of the blanket is as follows:

and whispered soft words in her ear. He asked her to marry him and she consented. She went to his home and there she found out that he was a grizzly bear. Soon after she made her escape and ran to the seashore, saw a fisherman in a canoe and asked to be rescued. Before he would rescue her he made her promise to marry him and she consented. The fisherman proved to be the good spirit of the sea, the Konakadet. The spirit, with his new wife, descended to the spirit's house under the sea. He told her that he was already married to the lynx, but that he expected to kill the lynx because she



A CHILKAT BLANKET BY A COFFIN

In the days before the flood animals were more like men. They could take off their skins as if they were blankets. Then some women went out to gather some wild celery. They had gathered what they desired and toward evening had started for home. Among them was the daughter of a chief who slipped into the footprints of a black bear. This caused her to abuse the bear family in general, and, stopping to readjust her pack, she fell behind and so lost sight of her companions. At dusk she heard a footfall. A beautiful young man approached her

was so cruel. He put his new wife in a back room and told her that she should not be frightened at anything she saw. One day she looked through the cracks and she saw the lynx making a beautiful blanket. She watched until she learned how it was made. Sometime after the Konakadet and his new wife were in a cave and were there visited by the Great Raven. They danced for each other and exchanged presents. The Raven received for his present a Chilkat blanket, and the Raven gave the blanket to mortals.

The material of the Chilkat Blanket is

goat's wool, the inner part of the back of the yellow cedar and sinew. The yellow cedar covered with goat's wool is the wrap; goat's wool is the woof, and the ornamental parts are sewed on with sinew.

The frame upon which the blanket is woven is very simple. It consists of two uprights of about four feet high. These uprights are placed in shoes of different weight to keep them erect, and they are connected at the top by a baton about six feet long. Stretched across the top is a narrow piece of skin. From holes at regular intervals in the skin, wrap strings the right length are suspended, and then these

rough, or uneven, like the skin on the back of a frog.

The warp of the blanket is never colored. The three colors used for the woof are black, yellow and bluish green. The coloring of the wool is accomplished after the thread is spun, and for each color in the old days, the women who did the work would fast for a day, which was supposed to give uniformity of color. There were two ways of preparing the black color. One was a preparation from hemlock bark and the other was from black mud near certain springs boiled with the hemlock bark. The yellow is prepared from a lichen known as sehony

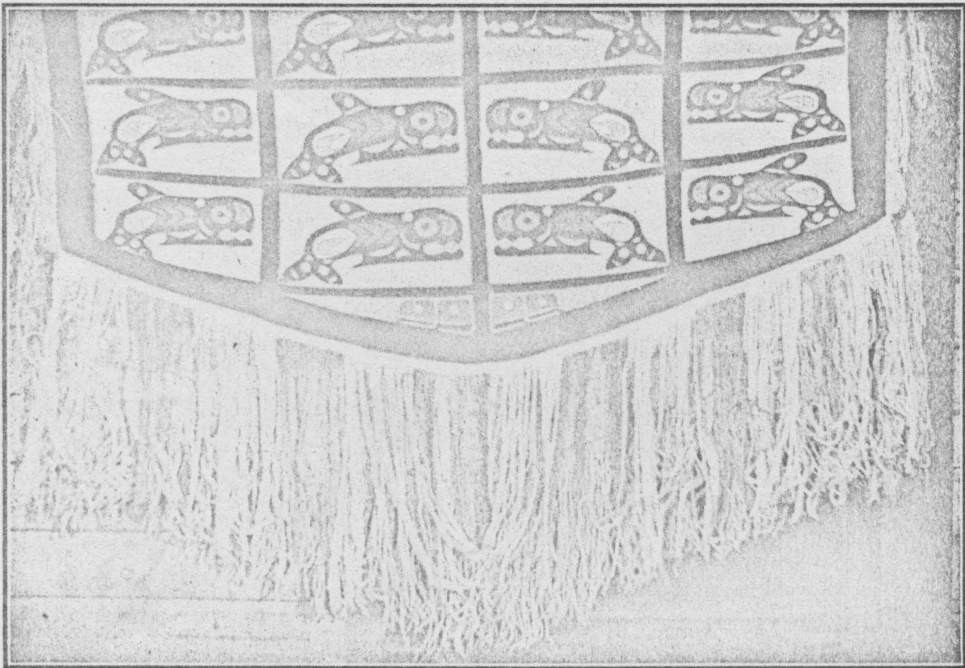


FIGURE II.

wrap strings are bound together by the woof.

It takes the wool of from three to ten mountain goats to make a blanket. The finer blankets only use a part of the wool of each goat. All the weaving is done entirely by hand. Different color fields are united by means of the fine sinew laid alongside of the outside wrap strand, and woven into the selvage of that section by alternately closing it within the twining of a certain number of woof threads, and then leaving it free.

The general weave is the twilled diagonal. It is called Hee-kar-ee. The word means

moss. This moss is found on spruce and hemlock trees growing in very wet places on the mainland. The blue-green is prepared from a copper ore. There is also a blue claystone which produces the same shades. The native colors are soft. The bright colors are not characteristic of the Thlinget Indian, as is sometimes supposed.

The design of a Chilkat blanket is very conventional. The figures are similar to those found on their carved boxes, on their masks and on the great doors which they were accustomed to place before their houses during the time of a great feast or potlatch. The idea of the design is found among the

Indians in the Northwest. The central part of the blanket has the totemistic figure. The eyes, the nose, the mouth, and sometimes the feet, occupy their proper place, while the rest of the body is often lost sight of. Many of the figures at the sides have little or no meaning. They are simply put in to give richness in color effect. The eyes, however, when placed upon an object, usually signifies intelligence. It may be placed on the joints of an animal, and a face may be placed on the forehead. All this signifies the presence of some spiritual power.

other it was interpreted as a Konakadet. Another blanket was interpreted as a whale diving to one and to the other it was explained as a wolf with young.

The Chilkat blanket was used in the ceremonial dances and at funerals. If it were used in a dance it ceased then to be private property. It belonged to the clan. At funerals it was placed over the lower part of the body, and in later times it was hung up by the side of the coffin. The theory was that the friends of the dead who returned to take their departing brother with

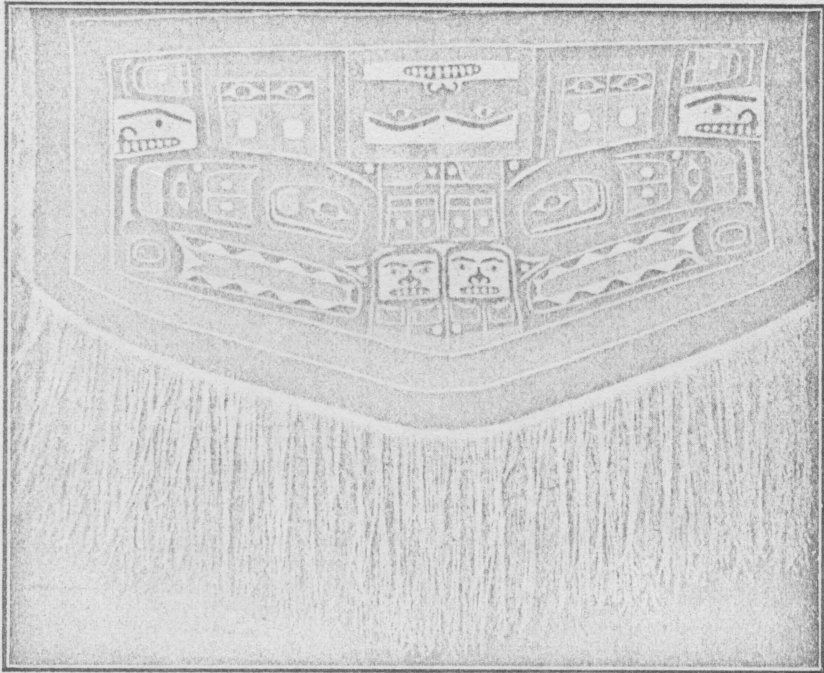


FIGURE III. IS A FEMALE BEAR WITH CUBS, OR ACCORDING TO OTHER TRADITIONS A WHALE DIVING BLANKET

The weaving is always done according to a pattern board, which has been kept for generations in the family. The weaver never varies from the design on the pattern board. Many of these pattern boards have been kept so long that their owners have lost the significance of the figures on them. This is evidenced by the fact that two such students of Indian life as Professor Swanton and Lieutenant Emmons obtained from the Indians two different explanations for the same figures. As, for example, the figure on one blanket was represented as a whale killer to one of these men, while to the

them were made happy by seeing the bright colors of the Chilkat blanket. The blanket in this picture represents a whale diving. The face in the center is the body, and the two eyes above are the fins of the whale. The two end pieces, when brought together as they would be when worn, make another whale. Figure 2 represents whale killers. Figure 3 is a female bear with cubs or a whale diving. The two faces below are the two eyes. The other face is the body. There are many other types of blankets, but these three are most often seen.