



FOURTH PHASE WEARING BLANKET

This textile is a Navajo “Fourth Phase Chief’s Blanket” produced sometime between 1880 and 1890. The title, “Fourth Phase Chief’s Blanket” is a fabrication made up by collectors and traders. The Navajo never had chiefs. The Navajo never referred to these textiles as “Fourth Phase” nor as solely for chiefs. Because they were made of excellent wool and because they were so well made, these blankets were much sought after by the nomadic Plains Indians. They were expensive, so only very successful, important, or high esteemed Native Americans could afford them, hence the blankets became known as “Chiefs” or “important people’s” blankets.

A “Third Phase Chief’s Blanket” is distinguished by black and white bands with stepped triangles on the corners, sides and ends and a stepped diamond in the center. Third Phase blankets employed industrially produced aniline dyes and manufactured yarns.

This “Fourth Phase” blanket looks very much like a “Third Phase” item. It is 56” wide and 63” tall. It retains the black and white stripes from the Third Phase style, but it incorporates a large brown, coral, blue and white serrated diamond at the center and quarter diamonds at the corners. It is characteristic of the “Transition Period (1875 – 1890) because of its emphasis on the diamond patterns, and its use of handspun yarns instead of the machine manufactured yarns that are characterized in Third Phase blankets.