



Robe of the Three Villages



left: battle between
Quapaw and
Chickasaw
warriors
right: scalp dance



The Quapaw of the Three Villages

This bison robe, measuring 7 1/2 feet tall by 5 1/2 feet wide, was originally painted by a Quapaw artist around 1740 or 1750. This incredible artwork is tangible evidence of cooperation between the early French settlers of Arkansas Post and the Quapaw. It depicts the three Quapaw villages of Kappa, Tourima and Osotouy, as well as the small French settlement of Arkansas Post. Fittingly, the Quapaw were frequently known as “the Quapaw of the three villages”.

The robe depicts a fourth village, seemingly some distance from the Quapaw establishment. It is likely a Chickasaw village on the east bank of the Mississippi river, and appears to be the location of a battle between the two tribes from which the Quapaw emerged victorious. Opposite from the battle, there is a depiction of a scalp dance at the location of the Quapaw villages. More than art, this bison robe is a map and a pictorial history of Arkansas Post’s early days.

Description of the Arkansas Post Settlement

The images of the Quapaw villages depict round houses, likely covered with bark. One structure in the Kappa village is larger, with an open doorway, probably a tribal council structure. This is in agreement with what we know today of how the Quapaw villages were constructed. They contrast with the small, square buildings in the lower right corner of the robe. These four buildings are constructed of vertical logs with crosses decorating the roofs in the

French style of colonial Louisiana. In 1732, Pierre Petit de Coulange rebuilt the French garrison at Arkansas Post. A description of the Post written in 1734 counted four buildings, including a soldier’s barracks, a jail, a powder magazine and a house complete with a fireplace for the Commandant, all built of vertical log construction. This description matches precisely with the painting. Today, this buffalo robe is in the collection of the Musee de l’Homme, in Paris, France.

For Further Information

For more information on this and other topics, please contact the park:
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<http://www.nps.gov/arpo/>

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above: Arkansas Post
below: Quapaw village of Kappa



For Further Reading:

Arnold, Morris S. The Rumble of a Distant Drum. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2000.

Capture, George P. Horse. Robes of Splendor: Native American Painted Buffalo Hides. New York: New York Press, 1993.

