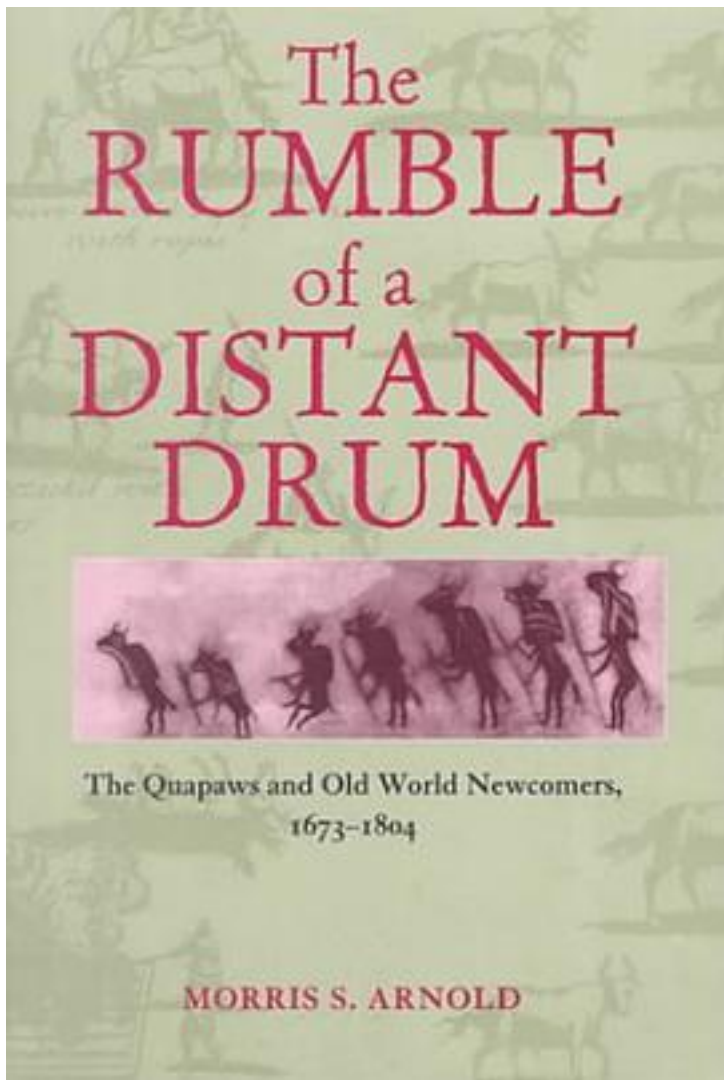


The Rumble of a Distant Drum



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Arkansas Post was founded in 1686 by the French explorer Henri de Tonty, predating St. Louis and New Orleans by decades, and was thus the first European settlement in what would become Jefferson's Louisiana. Enduring until 1934 in one form or another, the settlement's small population and precarious geographical setting on the banks of the lower Arkansas River prevented its development into a major city. Yet, it was important as an outpost where frontier Europeans, particularly the French and the Spanish, formed discernible cooperative relationships with native American peoples, especially the Quapaws. Morris S. Arnold draws on his twenty years of archival research and writing on colonial Arkansas to produce this elegant account of those cultural intersections. With an exceptionally thorough review of primary source material and in fluid prose, he demonstrates that the Quapaws and Frenchmen created a highly symbiotic society in which the two disparate peoples became connected in complex and subtle ways -- through intermarriage, trade, religious practice, and political/military alliances. A detailed interpretation of "manteau aux trois villages" an early eighteenth-century Quapaw buffalo robe housed in the Musee de L'Homme in Paris, enriches the narrative. Arkansas Post emerges as an early American model of coexistence in which dissimilar residents interacted in a manner that was equally beneficial to both and characterized by mutual respect.

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