

Arrow belt

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Collections / arrow belt



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L'Assomption" style arrow belt, with lightning bolt motifs, made of 14 corridors. Made of red, black, green, yellow and white wool, colored with natural dyes.

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Date 1880 an

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Measurements 15 x 190 cm

Historical context

Arrow belts were developed by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century. Initially symbols of social prestige, they became identity markers, and were associated with French-Canadian nationalism in the early 20th century.

The Assomption belt standard, like this one, was established in the early 19th century in the eponymous village, where a strong merchant community was forming. The standard, which represents the culmination of the fléché technique, includes a red heart and lightning bolt motifs. The first 6 corridors must correspond to a color sequence, and the following ones may differ.

This belt is thought to have been made during the “grande époque” between 1830 and 1880, when dartmakers produced belts for fur-trading companies. Sent to the trading posts, these pieces served as objects of exchange and agreement with the natives. As a result of this trade and the many encounters of travelers, certain aboriginal and Métis nations adopted belts as symbols of their identity.

The natural dyes used here are probably of plant origin (indigo, madder), but may also be of animal origin (cochineal). The wools used at the time came mainly from England, where they were dyed.

Long debated, the attribution of arrow belts should not obscure their multicultural dimension: their use by different social groups gives them a rich cultural identity and historical importance. Although difficult to date, they provide us with information on the cultural history of several territories and the socio-economic relationships that bind them together.



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