



# Language of The Robe: American Indian Trade Blankets

*Robert W Kapoun, Charles J. Lohrmann*

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For all Native American cultures, from the Plains and Southwest people to the tribes of the Northwest Coast, the blanket makes a visual statement of "Indianness." Language of the Robe explains a living tradition among the Native American people. Today, trade blankets are collectibles, especially those that were made prior to World War II. Language of the Robe identifies, classifies, and presents the history of the trade blanket. Within the tribe or pueblo, the blanket is a statement of an individual's bond to the older, traditional ways, to roots that run deep. As a gift, the blanket is an important acknowledgement of friendship, gratitude and respect. Bright colors and intricately woven patterns are the hallmarks of the American Indian trade blankets. Even though the blankets were commercially produced by companies such as the famous Pendleton Woolen Mills, they were embraced by Native American peoples across the country and became an integral part of their culture and ceremonies. Robert W. Kapoun and his wife, Marianne, collect and document trade blankets. Bob has lectured extensively on the subject and has curated a traveling exhibition. He and his family live in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and are owner of The Rainbow Man. Charles J. Lohrmann was founding editor of Four Winds magazine, a journal of Native American art, culture and history. He is a freelance writer who lives in Austin, Texas.

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