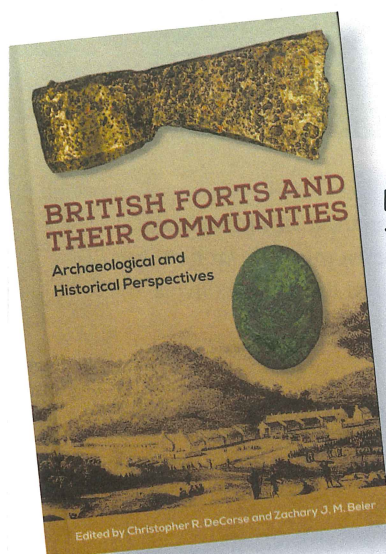




Reviews



British Forts and Their Communities: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives

**Edited by
Christopher R.
Decore and
Zachary J.M. Beier**

*(University Press
of Florida, 2018;*

330 pgs., illus., \$85 cloth; upress.ufl.edu)

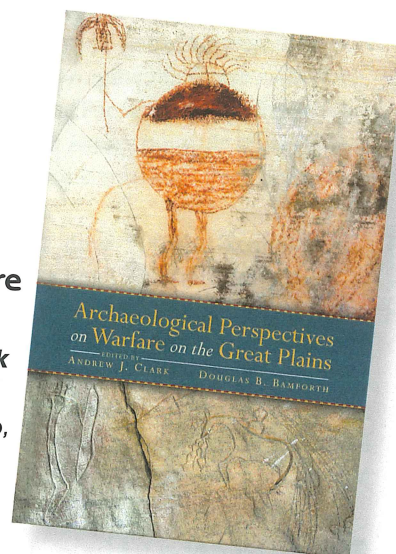
Traditionally, archaeologists interested in various types of forts have focused on their military and defensive features, protective walls, and armaments. This fascinating volume, however, studies the diverse communities that occupied British forts from the mid-1600s to the 1800s. As the British Empire expanded around the globe, they built forts to protect colonial settlements and trading enclaves. The communities that served these forts were as diverse as the landscapes they sought to control.

In this volume ten scholars examine British fort communities in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Forts in New York State, Michigan, the St. Lawrence River, and the Columbia River are included. The fort communities included military garrisons, trading operations, colonial families, slaves, indigenous people, and others. They are extremely diverse and tended to evolve as the fort gave way to larger settlements. Some of their activities are well documented in the historical record, while the presence and activities of the lower classes generally are not. Archaeological research expands and enhances the historical record. The ten case studies represented in this volume demonstrate the complexity of the fort communities, and the role archaeology plays in seeking the whole story.

Archaeological Perspectives on Warfare on the Great Plains

**Edited by Andrew J. Clark
and Douglas B. Bamforth**

*(University Press of Colorado,
2018, 440 pgs.; illus.,
\$99 cloth, \$70 ebook;
www.upcolorado.com)*



Thanks to Hollywood, every American knows that the Great Plains was a very violent place in the nineteenth century as Native Americans took up arms to resist European-American expansion. This fine volume demonstrates that armed conflict was very much a part of life on the Great Plains for much of its 14,000 years of human history, even though archaeological evidence of violence before A.D. 1 is relatively rare. In the introduction, coeditor Douglas Bamforth defines war broadly as community level violence sanctioned by whatever social or political units that exist in a particular time and place, and thus takes a wide variety of forms in non-state societies like those found on the Great Plains. He rejects the notion that all societies are equally warlike and that they engage in warfare in essentially the same way. While often detrimental, even catastrophic, warfare can also be beneficial. Winners can gain land, resources, and control of trade and labor.

In this study, sixteen scholars examine warfare on the Great Plains in the archaeological record. They report on research at a variety of sites from North Dakota to Texas. Archaeological evidence of warfare comes in several forms. There is abundant rock art that depicts weapons and battles. Oral histories tell of long past conflicts. Skeletal remains can show evidence of wounds obtained in battle, including crushed skulls and spear and arrow points embedded in the body. Defensive architecture is also a telltale sign of violent conflict, or at least the threat of battle, and sites with defensive structures and fortifications are fairly common on the Great Plains. Finally, destroyed and/or burned villages leave an archaeological imprint.

The authors not only report on the archaeological evidence of warfare, they also assess how war shaped the societies and the regional balances of various groups. The editors argue that neither war nor peace is inevitable, but rather the result of choices human societies make according to the circumstances.

Warfare is a very important part of the human experience and this volume is a thorough examination of conflict among small scale societies in a wide regional context. As such, it is an important contribution to the growing literature on warfare in prehistoric America.