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Book Review: Battles of the Red River War: Archeological Perspectives on the Indian Campaign of 1874 By J. Brett Cruse, with contributions by Martha Doty Freeman and Douglas D. Scott

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imposed boundaries” are meaningless: while hunting in the Panhandle, the Indians were fully within their rights. The Medicine Lodge treaty also barred non-Indians from residing in the Panhandle. So to argue that the army was protecting the buffalo hunters from renegade Indians is doubly incorrect.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with research methods, both field and laboratory and archival and historiographic. In chapter 4, Martha Doty Freeman discusses several new documentary sources she has uncovered at the National Archives.

The discussion of Indian battle tactics in chapter 5 suffers from reliance on outdated analyses of generalized Plains warfare as emphasizing the “rewarding individual exploits at the expense of teamwork.” Inclusion of the fight at the Adobe Walls, which initiated the War, would have belied that assertion.

Chapters 6 through 11 individually discuss the six battlefields chosen for investigation. For each, the battle site was surveyed with metal detectors, and artifacts were plotted via GPS systems. These data were then transferred to computer-generated maps of artifact distribution. Unfortunately, for several of the sites several different base maps are presented, and it is often difficult to align the different maps one to another. These surveys, however, did produce some revisions to the military history of the campaigns.

Chapter 12 summarizes the results of these surveys and provides an overview of local museums with Red River War collections. The book closes with eight appendices of varying apparent relevancy and immediacy.

This book provides an improvable model; while the use of recent technology in the investigation of archaeological sites is laudable, the failure to integrate recent research on the wars of the Great Plains leaves much to be desired. Thomas W. Kavanagh, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Seton Hall University.


The Red River War of 1874-75—also known as the Buffalo War after its principal cause, the invasion of the Southern Plains by non-Indian buffalo hunters—was the final phase in the military subjugation of the Comanches, Kiowas, and Southern Arapahos and Cheyennes. This book examines six of the 20-some battlefields and skirmish sites; as most of those sites are on private property, the selection of which sites to examine was based as much on access as on importance.

The book is divided into 12 chapters of varying lengths. Following a short introduction, chapter 2 gives a superficial historical overview of the Southern Plains, unfortunately based on outdated sources. While the author discusses at some length the 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, he (and Martha Doty Freeman in chapter 4 only indirectly) does not mention at all the preceding 1865 Treaty of the Little Arkansas; the latter is important as it reserved the entire Texas Panhandle for the signatory tribes. While the Medicine Lodge Treaty reduced the size of the reservation, the Indians’ hunting rights in the Panhandle were retained. Thus sentences such as “within a year, the majority of the reservation Indians had gone back to hunting on the plains, paying no attention to their...