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**Review of *Skeletal Biology in the Great Plains: Migration, Warfare, Health and Subsistence* by Douglas W. Owsley and Richard L. Jantz**

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**Skeletal Biology in the Great Plains: Migration, Warfare, Health and Subsistence.** Douglas W. Owsley and Richard L. Jantz, eds. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994. xii+415 pp. Tables, photos, graphs, maps, and references. \$45.00 cloth (ISBN 1-56098-093-1).

This volume reports the results of studies on skeletal remains throughout the Great Plains from early to recent times. Skeletons from the W. H. Over Museum Collection in South Dakota, excavated by Over, William Bass, and W. R. Hurt, form the volume's analytic core, with other collections providing necessary context. Portions of the Over skeletal collection have been reported on previously. When the collection was mandated for reburial in 1985, however, Owsley and Jantz arranged for comprehensive osteological analysis by numerous specialists, resulting in this volume.

Thirty-two chapters by 39 authors are offered on the topics of Great Plains disease and mortality, population variation indicated by morphometric characteristics, subsistence strategies revealed through bone chemistry, and warfare. An introductory section presents an overview of burial contexts. Here, Blakeslee places individual archaeological sites within a cultural-historical framework that will serve as a reference for years to come. Summaries of Southern Plains cultural history (Brooks) and ethnohistorically documented mortuary practices of Northern Plains groups (Snortland) are also included.

The concluding chapter by Douglas Ubelaker draws out threads common among the papers. He notes, as have others, that without the stimulus of repatriation and reburial, our current knowledge of these skeletal remains would be considerably less. At the same time, however, the reburial of these and other skeletal collections will make obtaining new information about Plains Native populations extremely difficult.

Scholars of Great Plains prehistory will find this book indispensable for its syntheses of important topics, especially the chapters by Tiezen on bone chemistry and diet, Robarchek on Plains warfare, and Ewers on the role of females in warfare. Other chapters provide important case study details on the traumatic treatment of individuals at specific sites (and how that relates to warfare), the morphology of specific bones in a mortuary population (and how that relates to activity patterns), and the manifestation of specific diseases (with implications for disease ecology and evolution). Key's analysis of population configurations on the Northern Plains through time is also thought provoking.

Over the last two decades an interest in prehistoric gender roles has emerged, about which the archaeological record is very ambiguous. Studies like those reported here, however, offer strong definitions of general, gender-specific activities, sometimes with surprising results. In addition to subsistence, migration, and warfare, this is an area where skeletal biology gives us significant information about the past.

*Skeletal Biology in the Great Plains* is important in two conflicting ways. From one point of view prominent among Native Americans, the volume may be among the last of the insensitive assaults on the belief system of Native Americans by members of the anthropological community. At the same time, the scientific community will see it as a *tour de force* in contemporary, technology-assisted skeletal biology, for which Owsley and Jantz merit praise. **LuAnn Wandsnider**, *Department of Anthropology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.