Warriors of the plains: the arts of plains Indian warfare


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Abstract

*Warriors of the plains* explores the art of North American Plains Indian warriors - weapons, amulets, clothing and ceremonial objects - with particular emphasis on their ritual use and symbolic meanings. Unlike most books on Plains Indians, which have a purely historical focus, this title examines continuity and change between historic warrior societies and contemporary Native American military associations. Originally set up as clubs to organise war raids and to police seasonal cycles of nomadic hunting, warrior societies today maintain much of the Plains Indians' ethos, vigorously reinforcing their cultural, national and ethnic identity. With a new approach to the subject the author reveals how specific items and symbols - objects of "ritual and honour" - such as the American flag, eagle feathers and medicine bundles have been used over the last 200 years, as well as exploring the introduction of new elements in modern ceremonial practices such as powwow dance competitions and war veterans' celebrations. Lavishly illustrated with objects from the British Museum's important collections, as well as archival material, this book features previously unpublished material. Max Carocci has been conducting research on Plains Indians since 1989. Since 2006 he has been researching and collecting in this area for the British Museum and is the curator of the touring exhibition "Warriors of the Plains: 200 years of Native North American honour and ritual". He lectures on Indigenous American Arts at Birkbeck College, University of London and is editor of the Anthropological Index Online run by the Royal Anthropological Institute. 160p, 150 col illus (British Museum Press, 2012)

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"Warfare was our highest art, but Plains Indian warfare was not about killing. It was about intelligence, leadership, and honor," Medicine Crow wrote in his 2006 book "Counting Coup." Soon after returning from the European front, Medicine Crow was designated tribal historian by the Crow Tribal Council. With his prodigious memory, Medicine Crow could accurately recall decades later the names, dates and exploits from the oral history he was exposed to as a child, Viola said. Those included tales told by four of the six Crow scouts who were at Custer's side at Little Bigh Plains Indians or Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains and Canadian Prairies are the Native American tribes and First Nation band governments who have historically lived on the Great Plains and the Canadian Prairies (also called the Interior Plains) in North America. While hunting-farming cultures have lived on the Great Plains for centuries prior to European contact, the region is known for the horse cultures that flourished from the 17th century through the late 19th century. Their historic The Plains Wars were neither solely the product of U.S. encroachment on native lands nor the result of Native American aggression; rather, they were fueled in large measure by both sides' understanding of military action as a legitimate means of securing policy goals. Indians typically sought to engage in battle only when conditions seemed most favourable to success with minimal losses. The Plains Wars have remained a source of controversy in the American historical memory. Meanwhile, the long years of unconventional frontier warfare had relatively little impact on the manner in which the U.S. military waged war. Indeed, lessons learned during counterinsurgency operations against the Indians would have to be relearned in the international conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries.