

Connecticut Unscathed: Victory in the Great Narragansett War 1675–1676

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In *Connecticut Unscathed: Victory in the Great Narragansett War 1675–1676*, Jason W. Warren refocuses the typical analysis of King Philip's War and instead turns his attention to the actions of the colony of Connecticut. As his title suggests, Warren asserts that due to several strategic policies, the colony managed to sustain very little overall loss in comparison to its neighboring colonies during this devastating war. These policies included progressive policies toward the Native American peoples within Connecticut's borders, strong alliances with these groups, a reliance on experienced commanders from the earlier Pequot War, and the use of new European fortification designs. This central thesis is clearly articulated and reintroduced frequently in the text. Warren opens his monograph with two vignettes of differing perspectives describing the death of the war's eponymous Philip. The florid style of these vignettes is echoed on occasion within the main text describing battlefield noise, confusion, and horror, lending what can be seen as an overly romanticized tone in some instances. While the author is an historian and relies primarily on historical text for his argument, he also includes several historical anthropological studies and several pertinent excavations. The addition

of these studies provides further evidence to support his argument, but historical archaeologists may be left wanting more analysis.

Warren maintains that renaming the war to the Great Narragansett War more accurately describes the scope of the hostilities and better recognizes the intertribal group tensions that played a critical role in shaping these military activities. The change in the name is Warren's attempt to correct what he contends is the marginalized status of the Narragansetts, the colony of Connecticut, and Connecticut's Native American allies that previous historiography had created. Indeed, Philip himself has a very minor role in Warren's narrative. Warren approaches his analysis from a perspective of leadership, both colonial and indigenous, and the "mutual quest for survival on an untamed, dangerous frontier" (p. 11). He recognizes other perspectives on the war, such as creative resistance and an emerging multicultural society, but states that they are not the direction he seeks to take. Warren's analysis may have benefited from weaving these themes into his analysis; he hints at social anxieties among the indigenous groups of the region, and many of the colonial policies included elements of two societies working in tandem. These two themes may also be more appealing to an archaeological audience. Despite this, Warren's refocus on the war to highlight the Mohegan-Narragansett tensions and disputes is worth noting.

In chapter 1, Warren outlines the intertribal tensions between the Mohegans and Narragansetts. While this tension was not new to the 17th century, the earlier Pequot

War in the 1630s resulted in a shift in the balance of power in the region as the Mohegans replaced the Pequots as the dominant military power in that part of the colony. This chapter relies heavily on anthropological resources, in particular the work of Kevin McBride, to detail the various circumstances, including political alliances, of the native peoples of southern New England in the mid-17th century. Much of the academic debate on particular topics, such as potential food anxieties and shifting power structures, are found in the endnotes rather than in the main body of the text. Archaeologists reading this monograph will want to refer to these notes for brief discussions of these broader debates and to see where archaeologists and historians disagree.

In the second chapter, Warren summarizes the raids and battles that occurred within Connecticut and the colony's participation in hostilities outside of its borders. The title of book is most reflected in this chapter as Warren makes it clear that the losses suffered by Connecticut were not significant. However, readers without a background in 17th-century New England may not see the contrast as greatly as Warren; he does not provide an extensive discussion of the hostilities elsewhere in New England. The contrast between Connecticut and its neighbors is more keenly resonant in the third chapter, in which Warren argues that the colony's policies toward indigenous people were far more ethical than elsewhere. Warren's assertions that Connecticut's policies were meant to "maintain an environment of understanding and cooperation" (p. 78) and "combined security concerns with a sense of justice" (p. 79) may seem a little naïve. However, Warren includes exceptions to these policies, demonstrating that Con-

necticut did not always act in accordance with its own prescribed protocols.

The subsequent three chapters outline the military practices and fortifications of Connecticut, with the primary focus on the European colonists. Here, Warren again includes archaeological evidence for some of the notable fortifications. His discussion of the Narragansett's application of European-like fortification designs is interesting, and dovetails appropriately with his analysis of Connecticut's more successful use of these designs. Warren only briefly mentions that one of these forts was established before contact with Europeans and does not delve into the reasons why this adoption may have happened or the greater changes occurring within these cultures that would have prompted the implementation of this type of architecture. In earlier chapters Warren's footnotes provide more anthropological detail, but he does not include these data in later chapters. As such, archaeologists will likely want more discussion as to why these earlier fortifications may have been significant and what they may have meant for intertribal relations.

Warren's occasional use of archaeological data adds considerably to his argument by providing additional evidence outside of the written record to strengthen his hypotheses. His discussion of the Narragansett fort found in modern Charlestown, Rhode Island, is an example of the effectiveness of the combination of the two resources. However, his treatment of archaeological sources is sometimes uncritical, and the excavations often seem to stand apart from the main body of the analysis instead of being more tightly woven into his argument. Complications, debates, and nuances of the archaeological resources are found in the endnotes,

and the inclusion of these materials in the main text may have enriched the overall argument. Similarly, an archaeological audience may have preferred additional maps or photographs illustrating the excavations, but these materials may not have been available to Warren to publish with his work.

Warren boldly asserts that his perspective on warfare, from the political relationships between native peoples and colonial governments, is a new paradigm in war historiography. While ethnohistorical perspectives of the 17th century are not new and it remains to be seen if this particular

statement comes to fruition, Warren's work serves to highlight the positive results when dialogues between historians and archaeologists are opened. Archaeologists may have different expectations of how archaeological analysis may be integrated into historical writing, but Warren's work demonstrates that this dialogue is productive and should be continued.

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