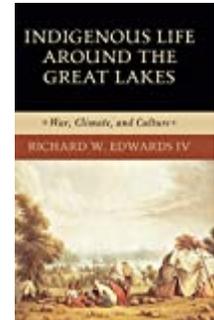


**Richard W. Edwards IV.** *Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes: War, Climate, and Culture.* Midwest Archaeological Perspectives Series. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. 302 pp. \$27.99, e-book, ISBN 978-0-268-10819-9.



**Reviewed by** Jennifer McCutchen (University of Southern Maine)

**Published on** H-War (September, 2021)

**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

*Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes: War, Climate, and Culture* by Richard W. Edwards IV explores how Native peoples of the western Great Lakes reacted to the various social, environmental, and physical changes that affected their communities beginning around AD 1000. Edwards, a principal investigator for the Archaeological Research Laboratory Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, places maize at the center of the narrative to reveal that these societies were far more agricultural than previously thought. By focusing on maize agriculture, Edwards aims to refute common misconceptions found in studies of Oneota groups, “an Upper Mississippian material culture manifestation” present in the eastern Plains and western Great Lakes regions from around AD 900 to AD 1650 (p. 13). Edwards argues that Oneota peoples did not incorporate small amounts of maize into their diets as previous archaeological studies have suggested but that members of these societies were actually large-scale agriculturalists who consumed as much maize as their Middle Mississippian counterparts. This con-

clusion is significant as it carries social and political implications. The expansion of agriculture and the widespread adoption of maize by Oneota societies resulted in larger populations, new cultural practices, and improved methods for securing necessities. These shifts lead to more pronounced social inequalities, as well as the formation of centralized or hierarchical political systems. Agricultural growth and societal aggregation also shaped how Oneota peoples protected their communities from external threats. Pushing back against established ideas regarding maize and agricultural practices in Oneota communities, Edwards uncovers a more comprehensive understanding of local-level Indigenous life during a period of significant change for Upper Mississippian peoples.

Edwards focuses his study on the Koshkonong Locality, an Oneota culture situated in present-day southeastern Wisconsin. Using the Koshkonong Locality as a case study for broader regional analysis, Edwards outlines three primary research goals. First, the author wants to better understand the significance of maize within Upper Mississip-

pian societies. Second, he aims to determine the relationship between agricultural expansion and social hierarchies within Oneota communities. Third, he examines how and why maize agriculture became widely incorporated into Upper Mississippian subsistence structures. In setting forth these goals, Edwards seeks to establish what Oneota groups gained by incorporating maize into their diets despite the large-scale social, political, and economic changes it caused, as well as how they responded to the cultural and environmental shifts that occurred as a result of these changes.

*Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes* is divided into eleven chapters with a separate introduction. H-War readers will be interested in Edwards's discussion of risk management practices, particularly the connections between exchange, mobility, and warfare. These topics are explored in the book's second chapter, which devotes a section to analyzing the relationship between population movements and external threats, such as intergroup violence and trade instability. Chapter 9 continues this discussion by identifying sources of risk in the Koshkonong Locality and using agricultural evidence to analyze the impact of these risks on Oneota economies. Edwards determines that residents of the Koshkonong Locality felt the threat of an enemy attack was greater than threats posed by environmental factors, evidenced by their isolation and lack of mobility in comparison to other Oneota groups. This isolation encouraged autonomous, hierarchical political systems as well as population aggregation to protect against raids and external violence. Data suggests that this violence escalated over time and that shifts in subsistence patterns in the Koshkonong Locality may correlate to periods of increased hostility. Edwards also posits that changes to subsistence patterns may have affected household economies and gender dynamics. As agriculture gained economic importance, the status of women within the Koshkonong Locality likely increased. Though Edwards acknowledges that it is difficult to conclusively determine the roles of men and women in

the Koshkonong Locality, he reminds readers that "subsistence patterns did not operate in a vacuum. They would have affected and in turn been affected by intragroup power dynamics" (p. 200).

Edwards uses innovative methodological approaches that are outlined in chapter 3. He analyzes macrobotanical remains, namely, seeds and nuts, in conjunction with dietary isotopes from dog skeletons to investigate the role of maize in Upper Mississippian diets. This "canine surrogacy approach" provides Edwards with necessary information about maize consumption levels in the region while ensuring the preservation of human remains. This methodological approach is important because it allows for archaeologists to gather data while respecting Native cultural beliefs. *Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes* is the first study to apply the canine surrogacy approach to Oneota groups and demonstrates its utility for future studies of other precontact Indigenous societies.

*Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes* is a thoroughly researched and clearly written academic text that graduate students and scholars will find useful. Edwards's choice to use the Koshkonong Locality as a case study works well in conjunction with the author's goals, allowing him to thoroughly analyze the long-term impact of social, environmental, and physical shifts at local and regional levels. Edwards makes a strong case for the use of inventive methodologies over archaeological excavation due to their potential to alleviate tensions between scholars and Indigenous communities without compromising research goals. *Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes* is an insightful, nuanced study that is a welcome contribution to the fields of archaeology, anthropology, and ethnohistory.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-war>

**Citation:** Jennifer McCutchen. Review of Edwards IV, Richard W. *Indigenous Life around the Great Lakes: War, Climate, and Culture*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. September, 2021.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=55918>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.