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Anthony Clayton, *Warfare in Woods and Forests*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2012. Pp. xviii, 145. ISBN 978-0-253-35688-8.

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In June 2005, a four-person SEAL team was ambushed in dense woods in the Hindu Kush Mountains of northeastern Afghanistan. Three team members died in the engagement; the fourth was critically wounded. While attempting to rescue them, a Special Operations Quick Reaction Force helicopter was shot down; the crash killed all on board. This remains the single largest US combat loss in Afghanistan. British military historian Anthony Clayton notes in his book's first sentence that "Army commanders at any level from general to lieutenants do not like woods or forests" (1). In his preface, he writes: "I quickly came to appreciate that in practice such fighting was exceedingly difficult, and any commanders who thought it simple were likely to kill a great many of their own men" (xv). *Warfare in Woods and Forests* addresses this neglected but perilous microcosm of combat in which soldiers must sometimes serve.

Clayton, a retired official of the British colonial government of Kenya, has taught at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and other academic institutions and has written fifteen books.¹ His specialties are the French army and African military history. The premise of his most recent book is that "the theoretical writing on forest warfare over time has sometimes developed into doctrine. The first genuinely clear analysis and instructions appeared in the eighteenth century, with others following in the nineteenth century. Yet, with regard to Europe and North America, little theoretical writing emerged in the twentieth century, primarily because the rapid advance of air and armor technology bypassed the need for theory, just as tanks and aircraft can sweep by or over wooded areas" (4-5). Clayton means to outline this branch of tactical doctrine and show its pertinence on today's battlefields. He repeatedly stresses the historical deficiencies in forest warfare training; he quotes, for example, Colin Hughes on a British army unit at the Battle of the Somme (1916): "When the division ... went into battle, it was faced with a large, heavily defended wood, but woodland fighting, despite the wooded nature of the Somme countryside, had not been included in the training programme"² (131).

The purview here extends over two millennia of European combat experience—from the pre-firearm era to the early modern warfare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the flintlock muskets and lineal tactics of the eighteenth century, the myriad technological advances of the nineteenth century, the industrialized wars of the twentieth century, and the conflicts of the present day.

Unfortunately, the presentation of events in North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contains many serious errors. A few examples: in 1755, British General Edward Braddock's two regiments of foot were strengthened not by Virginia militiamen, but by provincial forces. Further, George Washington became Braddock's aide-de-camp as a private citizen in 1755; he did not become "the commanding officer of one of the line regiments" till 1756 (33, 36). Clayton claims that "Some hills were so steep that the light American draught horses were not equal to the task, and a system of block and tackle was needed for hauling guns" (34), but cites no sources for such a statement. Braddock maintained adequate security throughout his approach to Fort Duquesne, and there were no skirmishes or engagements; this is well documented in the primary sources and other histories of the expedition. Clayton seems to have confused Braddock's campaign of 1755 with that of General John Forbes in 1758 (35). Braddock also took specific

1. His previous books have generally been well received, although some reviewers have criticized them for insufficient research. E.g., Gary Sheffield writes of Clayton's *The British Officer* (NY: Pearson Longman, 2006) that his "research seems to be confined entirely to published sources, and is marred by the fact that he neglects some of the most important recent work into the British Army of officer," identifying "a gaping hole" in his scholarship—*American Historical Review* 111 (2006) 1593-94.

2. *Mametz: Lloyd George's Welsh Army at the Battle of the Somme* (Norwich, UK: Gliddon, 1990) 60.

measures to adapt the uniforms and equipment of his British regulars for the peculiar conditions of the western Virginia wilderness (35). French officer Daniel de Beaujeu was not the commander at Fort Duquesne—an odd error for an expert on the French military (35–36). The map of the battle of Monongahela (34) omits Turtle Creek, Fraser’s cabin, Braddock’s Road, and the prominent high ground to the right of the battlefield, all of which figured significantly in the action. Finally, Clayton seems unaware that the battle on 8 July 1755 was actually a meeting engagement, not a classic French and Indian ambush (35).

The Royal American regiment (60th Regiment of Foot) wore red, not brown, regimentals; Clayton confuses its uniforms with the distinctive brown waistcoats and leather caps of Colonel Thomas Gage’s 80th Regiment of foot, also known as Gage’s Light Infantry (39). Unfortunately, there is no detailed discussion of this unit; its men served as Rangers between 1757 and 1763 and were equipped with shortened carbines and accouterments and uniforms designed for operations in the woods and hills of North America. More attention to this would have strengthened Clayton’s argument that forested terrain dictated the use of specialized weapons and equipment.

Clayton also fails to draw on the recent scholarship on General Forbes’s campaign against Fort Duquesne in 1758. Forbes, not Henry Bouquet, devised new formations and tactics so that his army could operate in the wilderness during its final trek toward Fort Duquesne. Bouquet subsequently refined and improved on these innovations in putting down Pontiac’s rebellion in 1763–64 (41). Thus, such tactical developments were not, as Clayton asserts (39–41), exclusively Bouquet’s idea.³

We read further that during the Seven Years’ War in North America “the major engagements were not fought in thick forested areas...” (42). This ignores such actions as the massacre at Fort William Henry in August 1757, Grant’s defeat before Fort Duquesne in September 1758, the failed assault on the Heights of Carillon at Ticonderoga in July 1758, and Sir William Johnson’s defeat of the French relief column near Fort Niagara in July 1759—all fought in dense woods and thickets. Clayton barely mentions that the partisan Rogers Rangers fought in virgin wilderness between the Hudson River and Lake Champlain from 1755 to 1760. This famous unit, raised by Major Robert Rogers of New Hampshire, was not “informally formed,” except perhaps at its very inception in 1755 (42). By 1756, it comprised regularly established companies of provincials organized according to British Army rules and regulations. During Bouquet’s penultimate movement to relieve Fort Pitt in August 1763, his column consisted of not only the 42nd Royal Highlanders, but a similarly large contingent of the 77th Montgomery’s Highlanders. In fact, very few men of the Royal American Regiment fought at Bushy Run (42), which actually took place on Edge Hill, several miles east of the small western Pennsylvania watercourse that lent its name to the battle. Clayton’s account of Bouquet’s subsequent movements against the Indians is chronologically flawed (43). Bouquet died in 1765 not from exhaustion but from yellow fever; this is well documented in his papers and several biographies (43).

Clayton’s coverage of the American War of Independence is similarly flawed. The Saratoga Campaign occurred in 1777, not 1772 (43). And to say that “the nature of the battle of [Kings Mountain] highlighted the obvious unsuitability of the Brown Bess [musket]” (44) is not borne out by either American or British experience, particularly during the Southern Campaign of 1780–81. There is no discussion of the battles of Hubbardton, Fort Anne, Fraser’s Farm, and Barber’s Wheatfield during the Saratoga campaign; also omitted are Newtown (1779) and Guilford Courthouse (1781). All were fought predominantly in wooded terrain. Inclusion of General John Sullivan’s 1779 campaign against the Iroquois nation in the wilderness of western New York and northern Pennsylvania would have helped confirm Clayton’s argument. Finally, the crucial Continental Army operations that halted Burgoyne’s Army at Saratoga, between the battles of Freeman’s Farm (mid-September) and Barber’s Wheatfield (early October), were conducted exclusively in woodlands.

The narrative of the American Civil War is likewise replete with problems. For example, semaphores (used for short-distance communication) are confused with telegrams (used over long distances) (53). Furthermore, Union and Confederate armies employed mostly rifled muskets and fought in double-line lineal

3. He depends here on a single primary source of dubious reliability: William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition against the Ohio Indians in the Year 1764 under the Command of Henry Boquet* (Philadelphia 1765; often reprinted); the Reverend Smith did not accompany Bouquet in this expedition.

formations or skirmish lines (53). A critically important innovation of the war was the rifled cannon, such as the Parrott ten-pounder rifle and the three-inch ordnance rifle, which played a vital part in nearly every engagement of the war. By 1864, rifled cannons had supplemented or superseded the smoothbore gun that Clayton calls “the basic artillery weapon [of the war]” (53). Further, artillery regularly supported infantry attacks, as any visitor to the site of Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg can attest (53). To write that “wooded areas were sparse and did not have the effect on battle as in earlier years” (54) disregards the venues of such major battles as Shiloh; Port Gibson, Raymond, and Champion Hill during the Vicksburg campaign; Chickamauga and Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga; and practically all of the Corinth and Atlanta campaigns. Finally, after the bitter Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, General U.S. Grant most certainly did not “march on to Richmond without incident” (58). There were bloody engagements at Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and North Anna throughout the remainder of May and June.

Clayton’s unfamiliarity with Civil War artillery and cavalry tactics is also apparent: canister rounds did not explode, they simply burst upon firing; and both Union and Confederate cavalry used sabers, revolvers, and carbines, not muskets, which were carried mostly by infantrymen (59). A single short paragraph introduces Confederate guerrilla activity, predominantly in the southern theater (60). Regrettably, Clayton fails to note that the guerrillas typically operated only during seasons when vegetation and foliage provided cover. Here, too, some consideration of the extensive recent research on Confederate guerrilla and partisan activities would have bolstered Clayton’s thesis.

Even relatively insignificant errors taken collectively detract from the effect of this book. In its early chapters, more damaging mistakes stem from inadequate research into the Seven Years’ War, the American Revolution, and the Civil War.⁴ Such shortcomings afflict the treatment of modern warfare, too. There is, for instance, little discussion of the (well-documented) crushing defeat of the US Army’s 28th Infantry Division (Pennsylvania National Guard) in the Hürtgen Forest in November 1944 (120), a debacle that unfolded in dense and tangled woods over difficult ground. Furthermore, the Battle of the Bulge, fought in the Ardennes Forest in December 1944 and January 1945, merits only a single sentence (114). The final (and best) chapter, “Post-1945 and Conclusion,” examines the Russian experience in both the urban terrain and the woods, hills, and forests of Chechnya since 1994 (125–28).

One of Clayton’s conclusions is that “the surprise value of an attack made from concealment in a woods or forest may have gone by the wayside with the introduction and use of radar and heat detection infra-red equipment in aircraft drones or armored vehicles.... Poisonous defoliants in long-range, rocket-assisted projectiles launched from ships or aircraft can destroy a forest and any tracks within it. Other chemicals, such as napalm, despite its short life, can wipe out defenders in green forest areas” (129–30). Although this sounds reasonable, the US Army and Air Force, trying to stop movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail during the Vietnam War, found that even high-technology sensors were regularly confounded by low-tech deception measures and camouflage.

The nature of operations and tactics in woods and forests has often been passed over in military history. While Anthony Clayton’s effort to rectify this is both commendable and sorely needed, *Warfare in Woods and Forests* provides too cursory a treatment of the many actions chosen for analysis, a drawback compounded by factual errors and poor research. This is most disappointing, since, as the experience of coalition forces operating in the rugged environment of northeast Afghanistan continues to show, the subject of this book remains urgently relevant.

4. Clayton cites only a handful of readily available secondary sources (132–33) and one relatively weak primary source (see note 3 above) for these conflicts, ignoring such resources as the papers of Bouquet, Nathanael Greene, and Sir William Johnson. Nor does he make any use of the readily available *Journal of Robert Rogers* (NY: Public Library, 1933) for the experience of guerrilla warfare in woods and forests; he also overlooks the many fine secondary sources on Rogers Rangers and, stunningly, the indispensable *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. (Washington: Gov. Print. Off., 1880–1901).