

Christian Horn and Kristian Kristiansen, eds. *Warfare in Bronze Age Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 262pp., 72 figs., hbk, ISBN 978-1-107-18556-2)

The fifteen chapters in this edited volume emerged from a conference focusing on Bronze Age warfare held at the University of Gothenburg in December 2012 as part of the Forging Identities EU Marie Curie funded project. The conference aimed to 'situate warfare in its social, demographic, technological, and ideological contexts' (p. ix). The volume, like the editing team, is written by a mix of younger scholars and established figures. The chapters grew out of the conference papers with the exception of the concluding chapter, which was specifically written for the volume by Helle Vandkilde (Ch. 15).

The authors are united by their focus on violence in the Bronze Age and whilst the back cover claims the Bronze Age was marked by the 'global emergence of a militarized society' the book itself focuses on Europe, though there are chapters exploring the Levant (Ch. 7, Klimscha) and the southern Trans Urals (Ch. 8, Pitman & Doonan). The authors cover a range of scales of analysis, from regional case study to pan-Indo-European narrative, and they utilise evidence from a variety of sources, from weapons (Ch. 6, Molloy; Ch. 7, Klimscha; Ch. 9, Gener; Ch. 11, Mörtz; Ch. 13, Bunnefeld; Ch. 14, Anderson), to rock-art (Ch. 4, Horn; Ch. 5, Ling & Toreld), to burials (Ch. 8, Pitman & Doonan; Ch 12, Georganas). Much of the material discussed is broadly familiar to scholars of the European Bronze Age, and many of the chapters make the classic argument for the period being one dominated by unstable chiefly societies and bands of warriors, resulting in warfare. The term warfare itself (as oppose to violence) is not clarified, though the argument for an institutionalised and

militarized society carries through many of the chapters.

The book is a good addition to the growing study of prehistoric violence generally and the nature of violence, combat, and warfare in the European Bronze Age more specifically. The book explores key themes and contains some particularly strong chapters. That said, it is not without weaknesses. This review will draw out two key themes from the book: warrior identity, and the relationship between difference, mobility, and violence.

Bronze Age studies have tacked back and forth between narratives that see the warrior and warfare as part of an ideology rather than a lived reality and those arguing the period saw a real increase in violence. The data invites debate—was the identity in the grave a lived reality? Did depictions in rock art represent experience or ideology? Are swords chiefly symbolic or functional? Does the presence (or absence) of osteological markers of trauma indicate endemic violence or not? Authors from both sides of the argument often call upon the same evidence to support their differing perspectives. The nature of warrior identity in the Bronze Age is a key theme in these debates. This journal recently published a series of response papers (Frieman et al., 2017) to Paul Treherne's (1995) landmark paper exploring Bronze Age masculine identity, 'The Warrior's Beauty'. In her response, Helle Vandkilde (2017: 56–57) notes that Treherne's paper is more often cited and discussed by those who study gender, identity, death, and the body than by those studying warfare, warriors, and weapons, and that warriors were often missing from early studies of Bronze Age violence. The chapters in this book make

a firm connection between warriors and warfare placing the warrior at the heart of Bronze Age warfare with discussions of warrior aristocracies, classes, and heroes in many chapters.

Kristiansen (Ch. 3) presents the familiar argument that warriors were young men whose lack of inheritance forced them into roaming mobile bands ready to be hired by chiefs and merchants to protect their assets (p. 27). Kristiansen's contribution highlights the links between violence and power, wealth, and property arguing that the role of warriors was to control and secure and protect chiefly power bases (p. 31). His model is based upon modernist and capitalist notions of wealth and power and he suggests links and continuities through to the Iron Age and Viking periods. Warfare is glamorised, masculinised, and heroic. Those that question this perspective are often criticised for failing to appreciate the reality of the archaeological evidence (see footnote i in Ch. 3, Kristiansen; Ch. 15, Vandkilde).

Women are largely absent from this book. In the Bronze Age those participating in violence are often assumed to be male and explicit discussion of gender in relation to warfare is rare (but see Ch. 14, Anderson). Women are presented as static in contrast to the mobile warrior men (see, for example, Kristiansen, p. 26) or alternatively discussed as 'Foreign Wives' traded to secure power bases (see, for example, Ch. 1, p. 3; Ch. 3, pp. 32–33). Such analyses have been rightly critiqued as androcentric and problematic (see, for example, Brück, 2017) and interestingly aDNA evidence (Olalde et al., 2018) shows both men and women were mobile at least during the Beaker period. Warfare, warriors, and violence are glamorised and often elevated at the expense of all other identities. Derek Pitman and Roger Doonan (Ch. 8), Tobias Mörtz (Ch. 11), and Kate Anderson (Ch. 14) demonstrate

this need not be so as they call for more explicit critiques and reconsiderations of warrior identities.

In an excellent contribution, Pitman and Doonan (Ch. 8) highlight the ways in which Bronze Age warrior identity often appears isolated from wider society. They re-situate the warrior within a network. Warriors are made by weapons such as swords and spears and to make these weapons one needs ores, miners, traders, craftspeople, and wider social support. Their contribution explores the relationships between charioteers (a form of warrior), craft-specialists, and ritual-specialists at three burial sites and argues that the classic model of a hierarchical chieftdom, supported by warriors who subjugated all others (particularly craftspeople) is not the only way in which to understand the period. Their chapter opens the door to explore more complex warrior identities and the ways in which these are shaped and produced by relations with others.

Anderson's (Ch. 14) contribution compliments that of Pitman and Doonan. Anderson is open about wishing to critique the notion of the warrior but finds that 'in many ways, the modern perceptions of prehistoric warriors appear to be precisely the way Late Bronze Age communities [...] wished to present them' (p. 225). She argues for a difference between idealized warriors and actual fighters in relation to both who occupied the roles and how they came to do so, arguing that as well as elite males others, including perhaps women, may have fought during the Bronze Age and would not have been viewed as 'warriors'. This is arguably complimented by Bunnefeld's (Ch. 13) argument that not all sword bearers were chiefs and warriors, but some may have been free independent 'men'. Anderson and Mörtz (Ch. 11) both argue that British Late Bronze Age weapon hoards may have been a way of laying

violence aside and moving beyond its negative consequences. Mörtz argues that killing is always a delicate matter and has to be socially sanctioned. He considers the role which rites of passage might have played in both separating those involved in violence from the broader community in order to enter a liminal state to take part in combat and then later re-integrating them into the broader community. In chorus with Anderson, he suggests that weapon hoards can be viewed as part of this process. Warrior identity emerges as embedded and supported by, yet separated from, the wider community. The identity is flexible, situational, and not wholly positive.

Trade and movement appear as themes in a number of chapters of the book as authors work to understand violence in the period. Harding (Ch. 2) argues that there is a key link between mobility and violence, asking whether the arrival of new people brought the possibility of conflict (p. 17). Similarly, Kristiansen (Ch. 3) argues that warriors were mobile groups and links their existence to trade and trade routes (p. 31). Horn (Ch. 4) continues this argument building in maritime evidence from the Nordic Bronze Age and arguing that 'warfare and exchange are each other's *sine qua non*' (p. 58). This is further explored by Ling and Toreld (Ch. 5) who also argue that there is a key link between maritime trade and violence in the same period evident in the rock art. Distributions of object types have long been used to map the spread of different groups in the period, and in Chapters 2–5 difference seems to be a key driver of violence: 'war is waged against the "other", people who are somehow different, whether in appearance, language, or simply beliefs' (Harding, p. 20). Molloy (Ch. 6) takes a slightly different tack by looking at differences in form and composition within a single typological

category of sword (Naue II) to identify choices made by 'craftsmen' indicative of local groupings and traditions. He argues that in a standard typological classification these small local differences in tradition are subsumed to emphasise similarity across the region; for him this is indicative of the 'international' movement of people such as traders and warriors across regional localities: warfare and raiding served as a 'mode of connectivity that widely maintained an international weapon package' (p. 96). Chapters 1–6 suggest mobility is key in the Bronze Age both in the creation of widely shared traditions and in the emergence of violence.

This emphasis on difference producing violence needs to be more critically explored. It is not the case that people were not moving around in the Neolithic and we know that they were exchanging over long distances (jadeite axes are just one example). Read together, the chapters in the book leave the question open as to why it is that trade and mobility in a European Bronze Age context are linked to an apparent increase in warfare when that is not the case in other periods and places. This question becomes all the more pressing in the context of ancient DNA research. The conference itself took place before the recent boom in aDNA studies; of particular relevance to this book are papers by Haak et al. (2015) and Olalde et al. (2018). The very recent publication of an article titled: 'Story of most murderous people of all time revealed in ancient DNA' (Barras, 2019) in the *New Scientist* explicitly links the spread of Yamnaya DNA across Europe with the appearance of a warrior class and an upsurge in violence; Kristiansen himself is quoted in the article as stating: 'I've become increasingly convinced there must have been a kind of genocide'. The *New Scientist* article is just one of many news articles that links aDNA studies to narratives of migration

and population replacement with either implicit or explicit violent tones. Yet in the case of the Yamnaya discussed in the *New Scientist* one does not need to use violence as the driver for the genetic changes we observe, it is equally possible that people were making love not war.

The use of the term genocide in the *New Scientist* by Kristiansen is deeply emotive and potentially dangerous. The politics of the present make the themes of this book: migration, identity, difference, and violence. Topics which need to be handled thoughtfully and with the knowledge that archaeology has impact in the present. Whilst some aDNA specialists might argue that they are not studying identity but merely looking at genetic similarity and difference, the arguments that are made about difference and violence in this book highlight the ways in which similarities and differences are used to *construct* (whether through sword types or aDNA) the groups about whom archaeologists write. Arguing that difference, movement, and exchange necessarily produce violence is deeply problematic. Writing narratives that continue to relegate women from discussions of power and leadership is also deeply problematic. What is needed is more subtle, nuanced, and complex discussions of the nature of violence in the period and a move away from stark divisions between those who see the period as dominated by warfare and those who argue for more harmonious narratives. We need a more theoretically nuanced and complex engagement with the character of the warrior and their relationship with violence (something many of the authors in Frieman et al. (2017) call for). The presentation of warrior identity as monolithic across Europe (and sometimes Eurasia) and static through the Bronze Age (and beyond) has to be disrupted and replaced with multiple

nuanced accounts. Again, one does not have to completely reject the notion of the Bronze Age as violent, or the key role played by gender in relation to the depiction of warfare, in order to see that our current models could be improved. Violence is deeply complex, multiple and contradictory and our considerations of the past need to address this.

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