



Nordic TAG 2015 Abstracts: Conflict Archaeology and the Practice Approach

Weapons Burials and the performance of violence in Iron Age Britain

Dr. Melanie Giles, University of Manchester.

The weapons burials of Iron Age Britain have often been unproblematically seen as the graves of elite warriors. Fraser (2005) questioned this assumption, arguing that these burials project the image of the warrior in death, rather than representing any actual expertise or experience of violence, during life. However, this ground-breaking study did not include a consideration of the human remains themselves, nor the biography of associated weaponry. This paper critically evaluates the evidence for the entwined life-histories of people and arms, set against a wider understanding of conflict and violence in Iron Age Britain. In presenting the most recent examples of this rare phenomenon, it argues that whilst some individuals are scarred by actual conflict, most represent the use of martial symbolism to create figures of power. It situates this against the wider context of violence in Iron Age communities, arguing that we can distinguish between regional variations in codes of combat and cultures of violence. Despite these differences, the paper will suggest that this trope of bellicosity as a tool of power relied on memorable performances constructed around the corpse, the weapons themselves, grave mound and landscape context. These performances should therefore feature more strongly in our analysis and interpretation.

Towards an Archaeology of Boarding: Naval Hand-to-Hand Combat Tactics of Northwestern Europe in the 16th Century

Rolf W. Fabricius, Combat Archaeology/University of Copenhagen.

Much research has been undertaken over the years to illuminate the use of naval power in European warfare in the past; yet, there has been surprisingly little written on the subject of naval boarding and hand-to-hand fighting tactics at sea in general. Although a few brilliant exceptions touch upon this aspect of naval warfare, it is evident that naval hand-to-hand combat has sunken into oblivion under the enormous waves of literature on wind gage, cannon fire and lines-of-battles. The research presented in this paper is an attempt to remedy that situation.

Focusing on archaeological and historical lines of evidence from the 16th century, the author explores the extent to which warships of the period were specifically prepared for naval hand-to-hand combat and how these practices were conducted in Denmark and England. The insights gained from a dialectic archaeological-historical approach provide an unparalleled degree of micro-level detail regarding the practice of naval hand-to-hand combat, revealing underlying tactical frameworks that involve complex and comprehensive operational management of technology and soldiers. Moreover, being a cultural performance – and not merely a pragmatic phenomenon contained within a social vacuum and devoid of a social discursive history – the

details uncovered in the investigation are at once reflective and instructive in matters that can be ascribed to general macro-level categories, such as sociopolitical and economic structures. The research underscores the significance of boarding in naval warfare and the need for further studies into this aspect of naval warfare on both a micro and macro scale.

Contexts, Conflicts, Consequences

Dr. Louise Ströbeck, Lund University.

An introductory review of the study of violence and conflict in feminist and gender archaeology in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reveals differentiated views on sex, gender, and body within various feminist and gender perspectives. Attention will be drawn to the ways perspectives asserted themselves and underlined their significance as alternatives to each other, and to traditional research of conflict.

Still, dichotomies such as, enemy - allied, perpetrator - victim, male - female, survivor - casualty have been recurrent themes in previous archaeological research of violence and conflict. Studies have paid little attention to the contexts and consequences of hits and injuries in conflicts.

A case-study illustrates how perceptions of the glorious warrior, the adventurous retinue, and a fascination over the many casualties from big battles in Roman Iron Age Scandinavia have steered scholars away from investigations of fitness for fight and combat, and peoples' differentiated exposure, vulnerability and adaptability in conflict and on-going combat. Furthermore, perceptions have made us forget about the bleeding wounds, fractured bones, scars, physical discomfort, and rehabilitation. A gender approach with integrated analyses of the life-span of social human beings and their changing corporeal characteristics studies these issues.

From the War from the Sea to the War on the Sea

Dr. Francesco Tiboni, Aix-Marseille University.

Notwithstanding the conventional position on the origins of naval warfare, there is much that suggests that the dawn of war on the sea in the Mediterranean region must be placed in the Iron Age and not in the Late Bronze Age. Even though some sea fights seem to have taken place prior to the Iron Age, the archaeological and historical record suggests that the very first appearance of ships properly fitted to fight on the sea should be dated to not prior to the 7th century BC. It is in particular the introduction of the ram, the main naval weapon of the ancient navies, which signals the appearance of proper warships, a development which, based on archaeological remains and iconographic evidence, can be attributed to an Etruscan king of this period.

In this paper, starting from the analysis of iconographic evidences and ancient texts, the author examines some of the key moments of the ancient naval history and, in particular, of naval warfare. Focusing on these important episodes, both of the Late Bronze Age and of the Early Iron Age, the author discusses the theory of the Etruscan origins of the ram, attempting to verify its link to the origin of the proper man-of-war. Moreover, based on the proposed evolutionary development ancient Mediterranean ships, the study presents a brief analysis of the evolution of the sea combat strategies between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age Mediterranean, supported by iconographic evidence.

West goes East. East goes West. The Conflict at Sea 1713-1721 between Sweden and Russia

Assistant Prof. Marcus Hjulhammar, University of Helsinki.

In 1713 Finland, which until 1809 was a part of Sweden, and the island of Åland was occupied by Russia for eight years. This period is known in Finland as *Isoviha* (1713-1721) which was a

part of the Great Northern War 1700-1721. Swedish and Russian historiography does not, of course, give a coherent picture of the war. This ratio increases the maritime archaeological value in relation to written sources. The events have also given rise to extensive folklore, something which is challenging to interpret in this context (Hjulhammar 2014).

The ambition of this project is to study and link together the archaeological physical remnants from the war 1713-1721 in a West-East zone from Stockholm to Hogland in the Gulf of Finland. The intention is to shed light on the war from mental and psychological aspects. The perspective opens up for comparisons with contemporary historical research on general issues concerning war and people (see for example Meinander 2009).

References:

Hjulhammar, Marcus (2014). *Sotasaaliskaleerit Tukholmassa. I: Riilahden Taistelu 1714*. Red. Ilkka Linnakko. Helsingfors
Meinander, Henrik (2009). *Finland 1944. Krig, samhälle, känslolandskap*. Helsingfors.

Traces of war

Rune Pommer, University of Copenhagen.

Given the lack of written sources and the limited iconographic material, it can be rather puzzling to study the combat techniques of prehistoric combatants. In examining this issue as part of a BA project, the author analyzed 113 swords, or parts of swords, from the war booty sacrifices of Nydam and Vimose. To better understand their combative function, it was found necessary to develop a method whereby use-wear analyses could be related to specific actions.

By using an experimental approach, through which the direction of the impact on the blade could be typologically determined, it was possible to relate the different types of use-wear and their placement on the blade to specific actions, including both parries and attacks. The insights gained from this approach provides a good basis from which inferences can be made into the use of the sword and its functionality in combative encounters.

“Olof Larsson told me some fiddle-faddle about the Danes having made inroads into Småland...” (King Erik XIV in his diary on October 31st, 1567)

Claes Pettersson, Jönköpings Läns Museum.

The Nordic Seven Years War, 1563 – 1570, has been described as the first modern war fought in Scandinavia. It was a devastating conflict, with Danish and Swedish forces opposing each other on both land and sea. A war aim for Denmark was to restore the Kalmar Union of 1397 and thus unite the Nordic countries once more. Of greater importance, however, was the struggle for control of the Baltic trade routes. In 1567, this drawn-out conflict had reached a stalemate. The Danish solution was to attack the heartland of the Swedish realm - a swift strike that would force the enemy to surrender.

The *Getaryggen 1567* project is following in the footsteps of this invading army. One of the battlefields has been located and partially excavated, a site where local militia had to face professional Danish soldiers. What tactics were used and how were the opposing forces armed? Could local peasants offer any real resistance to the *Landsknechts* of the 1560s? And what might have happened to the numerous fallen, of whom we have found no traces? Focus is also on the long-term consequences of the conflict. What happened to a population and a region that found itself in harm's way?

Understanding the performance and effect of 17th-century artillery: the Vasa 24-pounder

Prof. Fred Hocker, Vasa Museum/Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Although a great deal of scholarship has looked at the typology and development of early artillery, the operational and performance dimensions of muzzle-loading guns have largely been the province of re-enactors and shooting clubs. In 2014 the Vasa Museum carried out trials of a replica of the main armament carried by Gustav II Adolf's *Vasa* of 1628, a muzzle-loading bronze 24-pounder, a type which saw extensive use in the Thirty Years War. Unlike previous replica projects, the focus of the effort did not lie in creating a spectacular demonstration for a television audience but on performance and operational data. An extensive program of fire was carried out on a fully instrumented, modern proving ground to evaluate range, accuracy, and effect, as well as ergonomic aspects, such as rate of fire and the effect on gun crew. This included firing at an accurate replica of part of the side of the ship. The results provided some surprising conclusions about the tactical possibilities of such artillery. This paper will focus on the operational results of the project, especially ergonomics and human factors, and what it has told us about practice in the conflicts of the 17th century.

Studies in Battlefield Archaeology: Theoretical, practical and methodological consideration in connections with investigations of the Battle of Nyborg (1659)

Jesper Olsen, Nyborg Slot.

In the course of the last few years of investigations into the Battle of Nyborg (1659), certain key issues have arisen regarding the pinpointing of the location of the battlefield and the events that took place on it. The paper will present further considerations towards developing a more precise and systematic analysis of the finds and a new method for interpreting the archaeological distribution maps based on, among other things, analyses of the caliber of the bullets, their type, deformation etc. The objective is to be able to provide a more detailed description and interpretation of the movement of the various army units as well as the course of the battle as a whole based on the finds in relation to the written sources.