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Christopher Knüsel and Martin J. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Bioarchaeology of Human Conflict*, 2013, Routledge, 752 p., ISBN: 978-0-415-84219-8 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-315-88336-6.

The Routledge Handbook of the Bioarchaeology of Human Conflict is a volume edited by Christopher Knüsel and Martin J. Smith, which incorporates a series of 34 articles divided in 5 parts according to the geographical area and time they are dealing with. These studies offer new interpretations to past events, based on the trauma traces identified on different parts of the skeletons discovered in older or newer excavations.

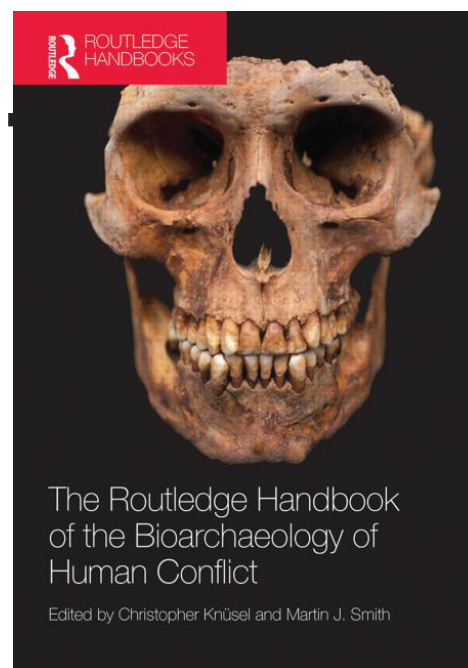
The introduction, as well as the first chapter, are represented by the arguments of the authors concerning the importance of editing a volume with such a theme. They also present a series of several writings that dealt with the topic of injuries presented by the human bone remains and the importance they have in reconstructing the violent social events in the past. The wounds reflected on certain parts of the skeleton talk about the type of conflict in which a person took place, the type of weapons and protection equipment they used. They are a proof of the fact that bioarchaeology gain an important role in distinguishing the violent social events both in domestic behavior as well as at a larger scale as in the conflicts between social groups. They also present the methodology applied in order to identify the injuries and the way in which they were inflicted.

The first part of the volume is in fact an introduction concerning the problematic of bioarchaeology of conflict. In the first chapter there is presented the importance of studying the human conflict based on human bone remains and the improvements that bioarchaeology can bring in such a study. Then, it continues with the most important writings related to trauma interpretation, the different types of wounds and the differences that appear between injuries caused ante-mortem, peri-mortem or post-mortem. In *Sticks and stones: exploring the nature and significance of child trauma in the past*, Mary E. Lewis presents the trauma that can be encountered on a child's skeleton. It brings examples from all over the world from different historical ages and makes medical comparisons with the fractures encountered at children nowadays. The second and the third chapters can be read as a comparison between the injuries that can be traced on the skeletons of the adults on the one hand and on the other hand those that appear on the skeletons of children, completing each other in means of interpreting traces of skeletal trauma.

The second part of the book is focused upon the matters of violence in the prehistory, starting with the Middle Paleolithic and ending with the Iron Age. The studies in this part bring to light several violent situations from prehistory through the analysis of human bone remains, together with the examples offered by cultural anthropology. They put the stress upon the importance of revising the human bone remains from the archaeological excavations and analyzing them with the new techniques and through modern approaches in order to obtain new data concerning cultural aspects about the past societies. An important aspect that such analyses can reveal is the way in which certain categories of people were treated in different times or in certain

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regions, as the example offered by the articles concerning the violence upon children. Chapter 4: *Trauma in the Krapina Neandertals: Violence in the Middle Paleolithic?*, deals with cranial trauma, analyzed from several perspectives together with arguments that imply analyses for healed wounds and cut marks made before deposition. The study made on a Neolithic site was compared with anthropological researches of more recent hunter-gatherer groups. The chapter *Representing Violence in Anatolia and the Near East during the transition to agriculture: readings from contextualized human skeletal remains* by Bonnie Glencross and Başak Boz, brings an interesting insight upon the perspective according to which the neolithisation and the fact that people were dealing with agriculture meant a peaceful period and that the social relations were not violent ones. The big number of human bone remains that present traces of trauma found in the Neolithic settlements in Orient represent a proof that contradicts this theory, widely exposed by now. Chapter 6 is also a discussion built on the several interpretations brought to the Neolithic long barrow burial from Great Britain. The conclusion in *The war to begin all wars? Contextualizing violence in Neolithic Britain?* written by Martin J. Smith, is that according to the injuries present at the level of the skull of several skeletons, the Neolithic populations in this area were engaging in conflict. Chapter 7: *Misplaced childhood? Interpersonal violence and children in Neolithic Europe* by Lidia Fibiger deals with the matter of children in Neolithic and it reveals the way in which they were treated, according to the injuries present at the level of their skeletons. The author considered important to present the situation of the children, as they were excluded from the majority of the studies. The next chapter, *Human remains from a Bronze Age site in the Tollense Valley: victims of a battle?*, describes the situation of human bone remains found in the Bronze Age site, which, according to the authors, are the proof of an armed conflict. They reached this conclusion based on the distribution of the human bone remains, the type of injuries they presented and upon the fact that the radiocarbon dating revealed the same time frame. Chapter 9 continues with the same idea of conflict at a larger scale but in the Great Britain Iron Age and, on the basis of the trauma on human bone remains it proves the importance of building hill forts and their defensive significance, deconstructing the theories according to which they had a ritual purpose. It also discusses the matter of gender in the case of Iron Age warriors. Chapter 10: *Socialized violence: contextualizing violence through mortuary behavior in Iron Age Britain* by Sarah S. King discusses the same problem, the author presenting a warrior Iron Age society on the basis of the skeletal trauma from the skeletons found at the sites at East Yorkshire and Hampshire, in addition to the rest of the elements that prove this: fortifications, weapons.

The third part analyses the violence and the ways in which it occurs in the hierarchically built societies, as the Roman World or the Middle Ages. *A bioarchaeological study of violence in the Roman World* is an insight to the violence provoked by the Roman army, as a means to achieve power in an organized way, which becomes a social reality of those times. In chapter 12, Katie Tucker deals with the cases of decapitation in the Romano-British world, and makes a series of comparisons between the *pri-mortem* decapitations

with the *post-mortem* ones, both of these cases being identified in sites belonging to this period. Chapter 13: *Interpreting violence: a bioarchaeological perspective of violence from medieval central Sweden*, presents the violence in the Viking world during the ninth-eleventh centuries, as a social accepted phenomenon as it was implemented by the laws and the different means of violence that occurred upon women and men at different ages. In chapter 14: *Violence and the crusades: warfare, injuries and torture in the medieval Middle East*, Piers D. Mitchell presents a comparative analysis between the archaeological data and the written one concerning the medieval crusades and the ways in which violence was present in the society as a means of religious legitimacy. Chapter 15 also concerns the Middle Ages, Christopher Knüsel discussing in *Courteous knights and cruel avengers: a consideration of the changing social context of medieval warfare from the perspective of human remains*, which are the result of battles. The injuries present on these skeletons are the proof of using certain weapons and battle techniques and tactics. These considerations, together with the written sources during this period that talk about the possible wounds that can be made during a battle and the ways in which people were buried according to their social status, make a complete view of the violence in battle during the Middle Ages.

The fourth part of the book includes studies concerning the American territory in a wide timeframe and is structured in a way in which there can be seen the development of human violence on that continent through time, from prehistory to modern times. *Violence and warfare in the prehistoric San Francisco Bay area: regional and temporal variations in conflict* presents the types of violence that occurred during this period, based on the trauma detected at the level of the skeletons discovered, while the missing of certain bones is interpreted as a sign of trophy taken as the result of interpersonal violence. Chapter 17: *Violent injury and death in a prehistoric farming community of southwestern Colorado: the osteological evidence from Sleeping Ute Mountain* deals also with the human bone remains from a prehistorically site from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it analyses the violence traces on the skeletons and compares the *peri-mortem* lesions suffered by the women with those of the men, concluding that, considering the fact that it was about a village of farmers they must have had conflicts in the interior of their community. Chapter 18: *Gender-based violence in the Wari and post-Wari era of the Andes*, illustrates the traces of violence that appear to Wari and post-Wari population and makes a comparison between the traumas present on the skeletons from the two periods according to the biological gender, together with the interpretation of what kind of conflict could lead to such injuries. Chapter 19: *Many faces of death: warfare, human sacrifice and mortuary practices of the elite in late pre-Hispanic northern Peru* by John W. Verano has a widely discussed subject in the archaeological literature, the human sacrifices from Peru, Moche civilization. It presents the violent treatment applied to the human body both before and after the death. According to the drawings preserved and to the traces on the human bone remains, all these treatments were performed according to certain rituals that had the purpose to legitimate the power of the Moche among the other populations. Chapter 20 is also based on the human

remains of a Peru population, but from the sixteenth century, *“Place of strong men”: skeletal trauma and the (re)construction of Chachapoya identity*, presented in literature as a warrior population. Chapter 21: *A history of violence in the Lambayeque valley: conflict and death from the late pre-Hispanic apogee to European colonization of Peru (AD 900-1750)*, by Haagen Klaus, is a discussion about violence in the history of pre-Hispanic Peru, viewed as a means of social practice, performed according to certain rituals. Different sacrificial practices can be distinguished according to the types of trauma discovered on the bone remains. These discoveries tell a wide range of information about ritual, the persons who were preferred for sacrifice, the means of killing. Chapter 22: *Conflict on the northern Northwest Coast: 2,000 years plus bioarchaeological evidence*, confirms through the means of bioarchaeology the existence of conflict on the American Northwestern coast, as presented by the ethnographic sources.

The fifth part offers an insight of the modern world violence, through the complexity of interpreting human bone injuries due to the variety of weapons and battle tactics. In this part we have a wider perspective upon the human conflict as, in what concerns the modern world, we benefit from the information provided by historical data together with the scientific interpretation of the trauma on the bone remains. These last studies of the present volume reconstruct past events on the basis of the injuries of the skeletons found in mass graves (chapter 23, *The Alkmaar mass graves: a multidisciplinary approach to war victims and gunshot trauma*, chapter 26: *Paleopathological study of Napoleonic mass graves discovered in Russia*) or cemeteries (chapter 31: *Paleopathology of German military hospital remains from 1915-18*), confirming or infirming the known facts about a series of events in history or social violent practices (chapter 24: *Indirect evidence of hanging: lesions of traumatic violence in eighteenth-century execution victims from south-west Germany*) which are known from written sources.

Both the first and the last chapters belong to the editors of this volume. While the first one is an introduction in the bioarchaeology of human bone remains that illustrates

the importance of editing a volume to include such articles, the final one is the perspective of the editors upon the scientific achievements made through such studies. At the same time, they offer a general presentation of these articles.

As a general view, this volume presents different methods of investigating different types of trauma, applied on a diversity of contexts. It also shows an evolution through time of the violence and of the means by which it was inflicted together with the impact upon the society. The biological data provided to the archaeologist makes it to achieve a complete archaeological interpretation concerning the social and cultural aspects to which the deceased participated.

The bioarchaeological approach, which is the main subject of this volume, includes the funerary discovery in a social, cultural and political frame. These articles present in fact a correlation between the archaeological information, the anthropological and forensic analyses made on skeletons and, in some cases, where it was possible, with the written (e.g.: the documents and the writings from the modern times) or artistic sources (e.g.: the Moche culture drawings). They can be viewed as a comparison between the trauma that occurs during organized conflicts, both at a small or large scale and the injuries that are provoked in the cases of domestic violence or as a result of accidents, as the children did not took part to wars. This is the proof of the fact that using bioarchaeology in the analysis of the human bone remains from archaeological features we can find not only the stories that were behind the death of that person, but also facts concerning the social behavior of people in a certain society or in a specific period. It answers questions that could be raised concerning the conflicts between different social groups, conflicts that appear between the members of the same group, violence as a domestic behavior against the opposite biological gender or children, or as a means of religious or political legitimacy.

All in all, I find this volume a good study to read for people who are dealing with diverse domains as it provides an archaeological insight, a historical and an anthropological one in a variety of times.