

Anthropology of War

- What is war and how does it differ from capital punishment?
- How common was warfare in the past compared to the present?
- How deadly was warfare in the past and present?
- Why are there so few women warriors?

Standard Definitions for War or Collective Aggression

War

Any sort of inter-group fighting between socially organized and recognized. Thus, it is distinguished from simple murder or assault.

- ❖ **Feuding** - fights among members of the same political community.
- ❖ **Internal Warfare:** fights between members of different political communities of the same culture or society.
- ❖ **External warfare:** fights between political communities of different societies. In these cases there may not be technological parity and there may be organizational differences

An Alternative Definition of War: Social Substitutability

- Capital Punishment and War are the same **except** the last criterion is only true for war
 - Collective armed conflict (variable)
 - Approved by the community
 - Morally justified
 - Participants esteemed by their community
 - Entails organized, planned, and premeditated attacks (variable)
 - Serves identifiable instrumental objectives (revenge, defense, appropriation, or excision)
 - **Social substitution governs the targeting of individuals for lethal violence**

The transition to war

- The shift from capital punishment to warfare occurs when we move from an individual homicide followed by the execution of the killer by the victim's aggrieved kin **to**
- War in which an unsuspecting relative or co-resident of the perpetrator of an initial homicide is killed in blood vengeance by the homicide victim's aggrieved next of kin or co-residents leading to a cycle of revenge
- The key innovation is **social substitutability**. Kin or co-residents of the perpetrator are legitimate targets of retribution.

Modified Definition of War

- A form of intergroup fighting done by socially organized combat teams coupled with the notion of “social substitutability” whereby any member of the enemy group is a legitimate target.
- Social substitutability distinguishes feud from true war.

Some Peaceful Societies

- No warfare but some lethal violence
 - Semai
 - !Kung
 - Copper Eskimo
- No warfare and no lethal violence
 - Mbuti Pygmy
 - Siriono
 - Hutterites
 - Tristan da Cunha

Some **general** contrasts between “primitive” and modern warfare

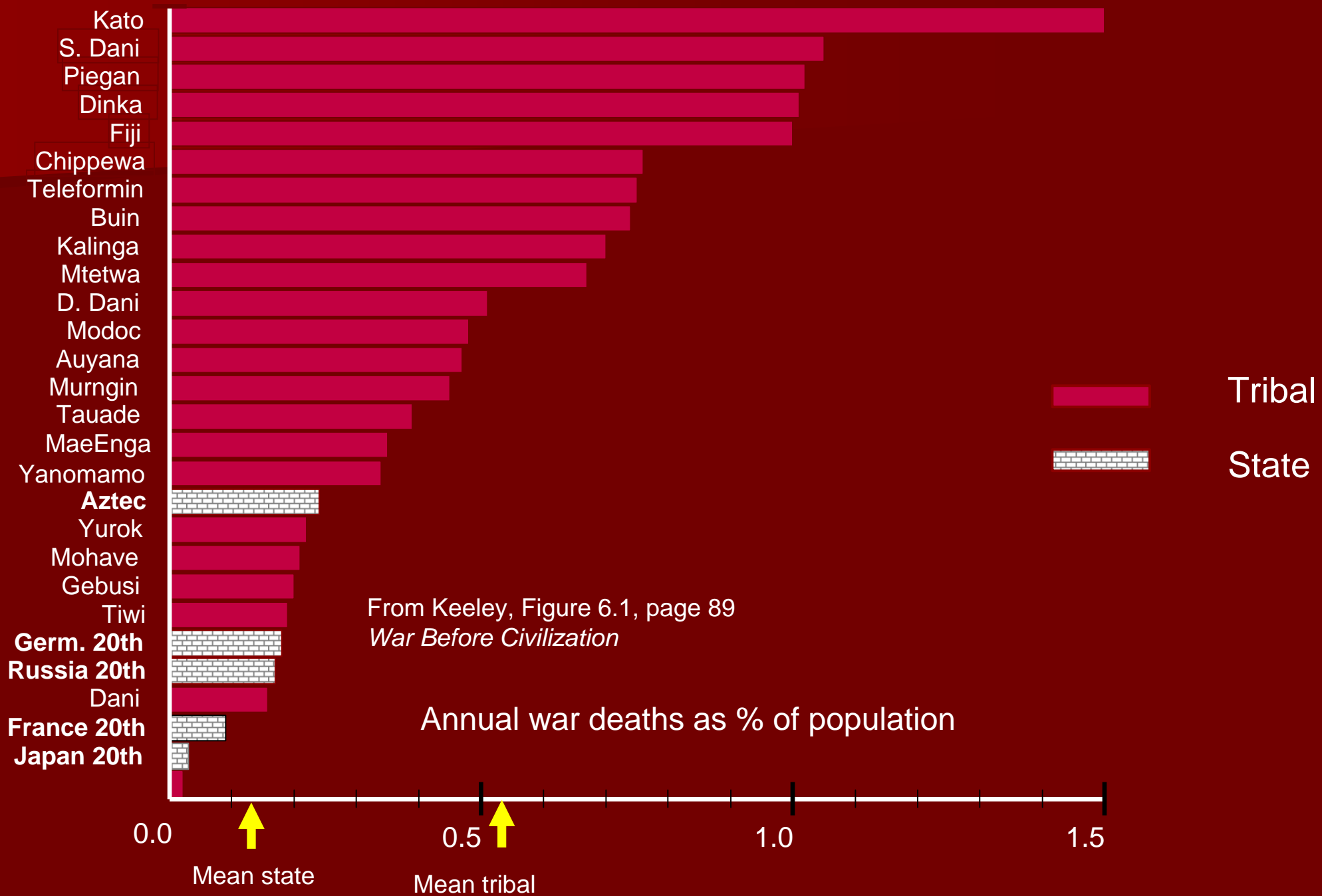
	Primitive	Modern
Knowledge of enemy	known	unknown
Personal stake	direct	indirect or absent
Use of coercion	difficult or impossible	standard

Table 2. Homicide Rates (per 100,000 Population) of Selected Societies	time period	homicides per 100,000
Society		
Britain	1959	0.5
Japan	1951-56	2.2
Basoga (Uganda)	1952-54	4.0
United States	1953	4.8
Sri Lanka	1957	5.9
Middlesex, England	1580-1603	6.3
Samoa (Western and American)	1977	9.9
United States	1980	10.7
Miami	1948-52	15.1
Kent, England	13th century	15.1
Colombia	1960	34.0
!Kung	1920-55	41.9
Detroit	1985	58.2
Tepoztlan, Mexico	1920-55	ca. 59.0
Yanomamö	1970-74	165.9
Mexican mestizo village	1961-65	251.2
Casiguran Agta*	1977-84	326.0
Murngin (Australia)	1906-26	ca. 330.0
Goilala (New Guinea)	1896-1946	533.0
Gebusi (New Guinea)	1963-82	419.0
Gebusi (New Guinea)	1940-62	683.0
Newa (New Guinea)	1959-68	778.0
*While the Agta figure was obtained during a period of intense socio-demographic stress and alcohol use, the author's supporting information (pp. 388-97, 537-43) suggests that a high rate of homicide, perhaps a third to half of that reported at present.		Source: Knauft, <i>Current Anthropology</i> 28(4) 1987

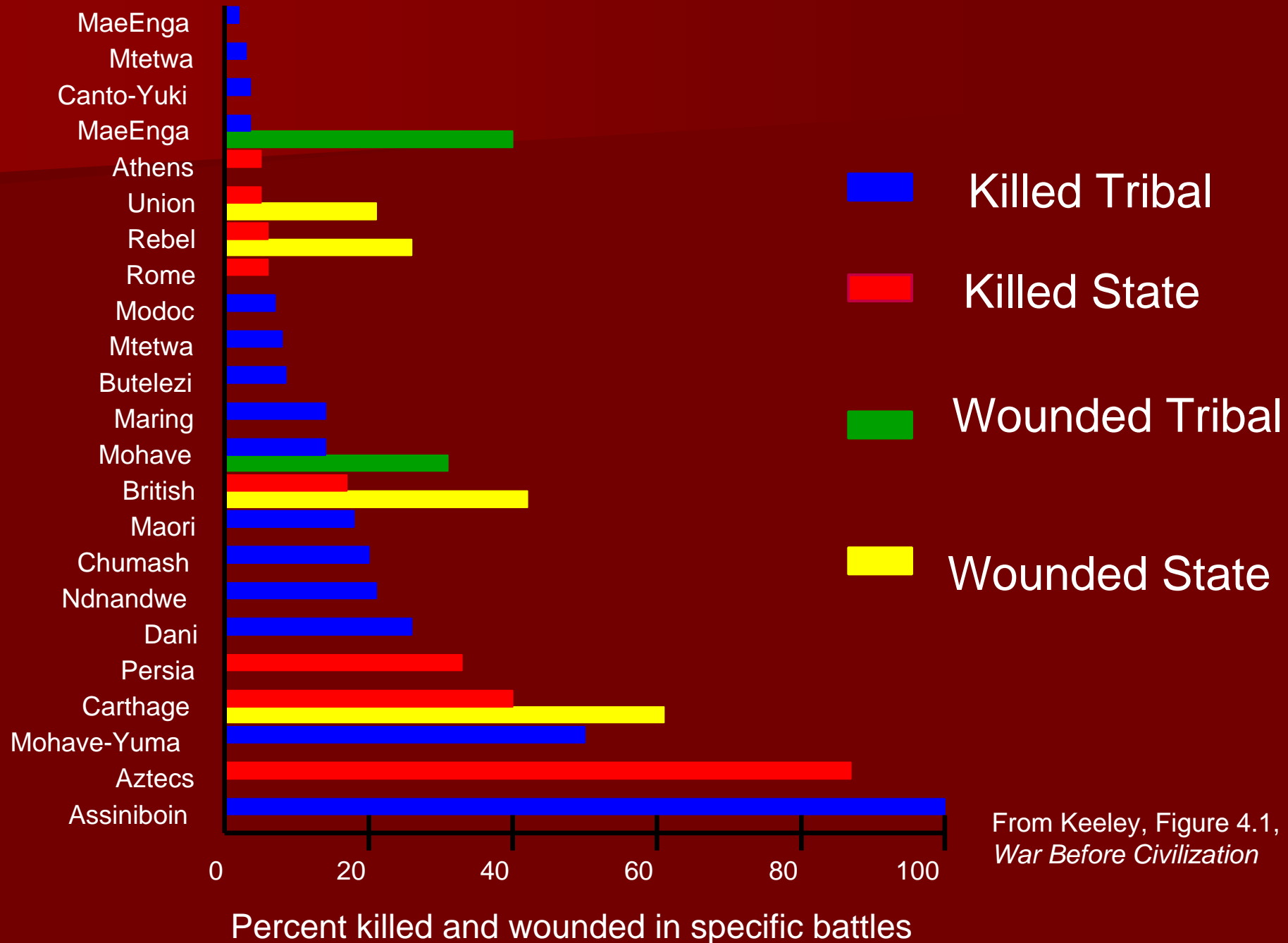
A note on homicide rates

- Only one homicide every 15-20 years in a society of 150 yields a homicide rate of 33.3 to 44.4 per 100,000 per annum.
- Consequently, such societies appear to be relatively peaceful even though these rates are on a par with a large American city.

Percentage of population killed yearly in tribal and state societies

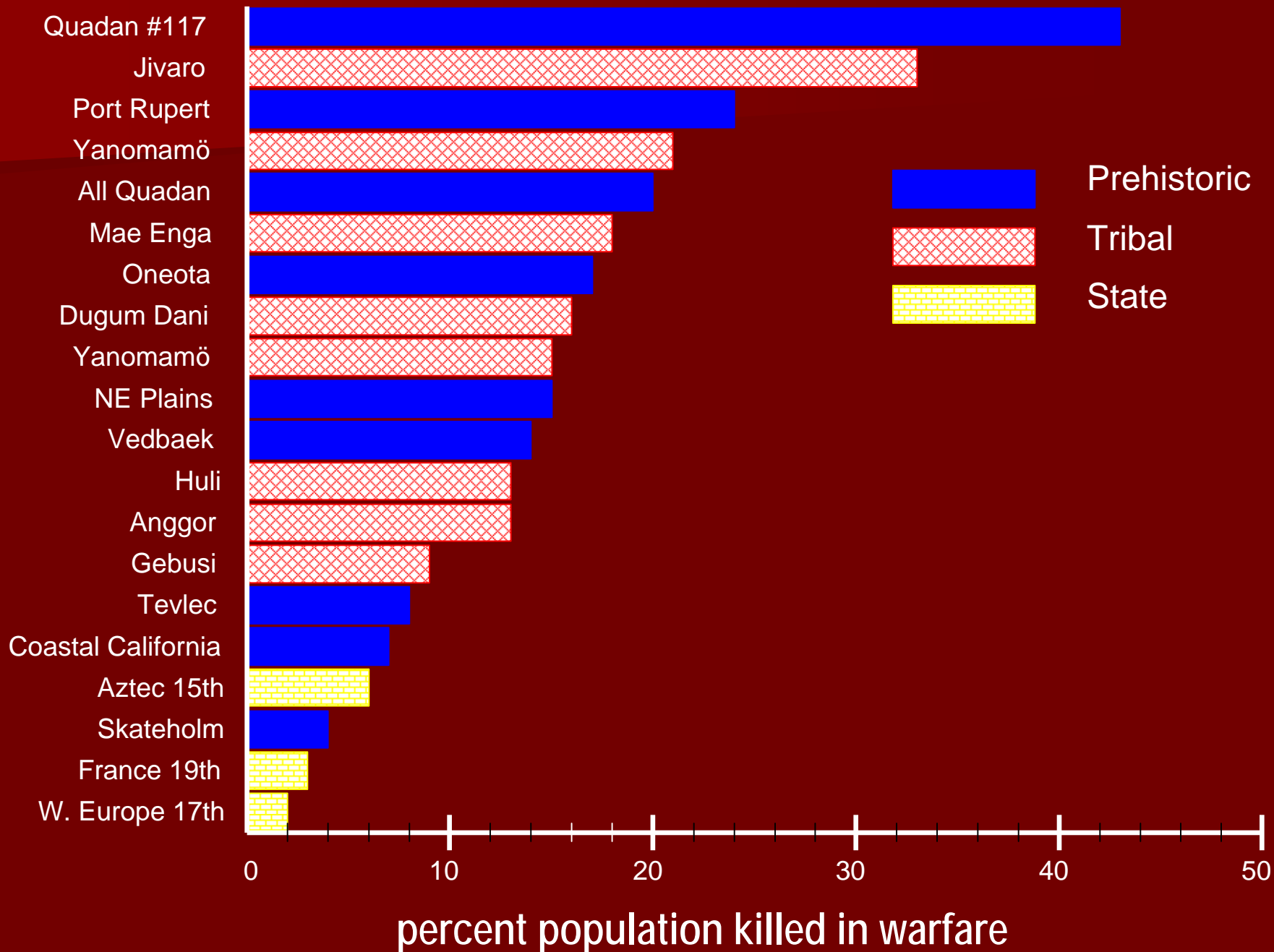


Percent Killed and Wounded in Specific Battles

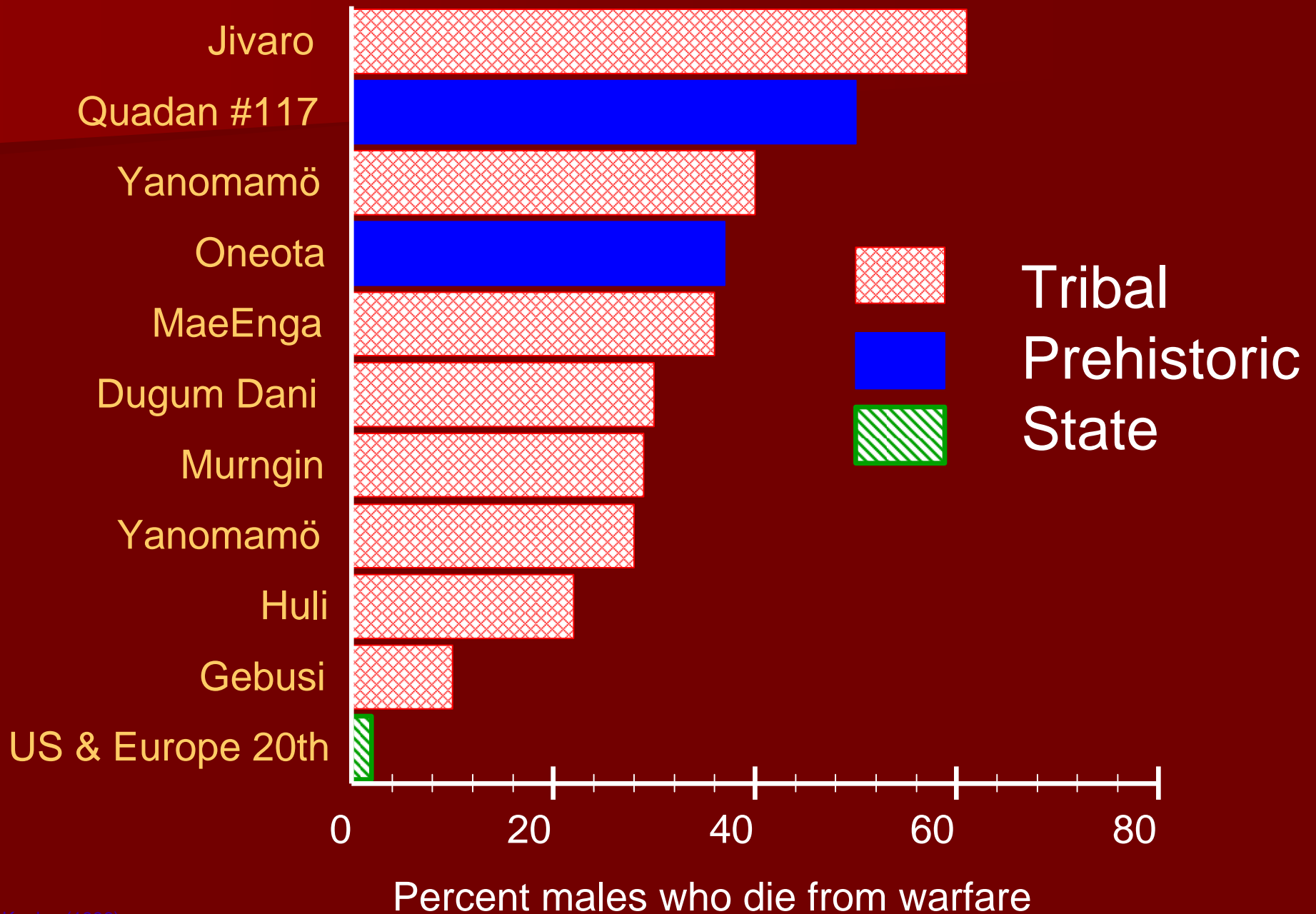


From Keeley, Figure 4.1, page 64
War Before Civilization

Deaths in warfare as a percentage of all deaths



Male Deaths in Warfare



Why are There So Few Women Warriors?

	Women Warriors Present	Women Warriors Absent
Endogamy and/or exclusive external war	9	24
Some community exogamy and some internal war including feuding	0	34

Nine of the 67 societies surveyed had women warriors and all were found in societies with community endogamy and/or exclusive external war.

Groups with women warriors:

Comanche

Crow

Delaware

FOX

Gros Ventre

Maori

Majuro

Navaho

Orokaiva