

# 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

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## 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

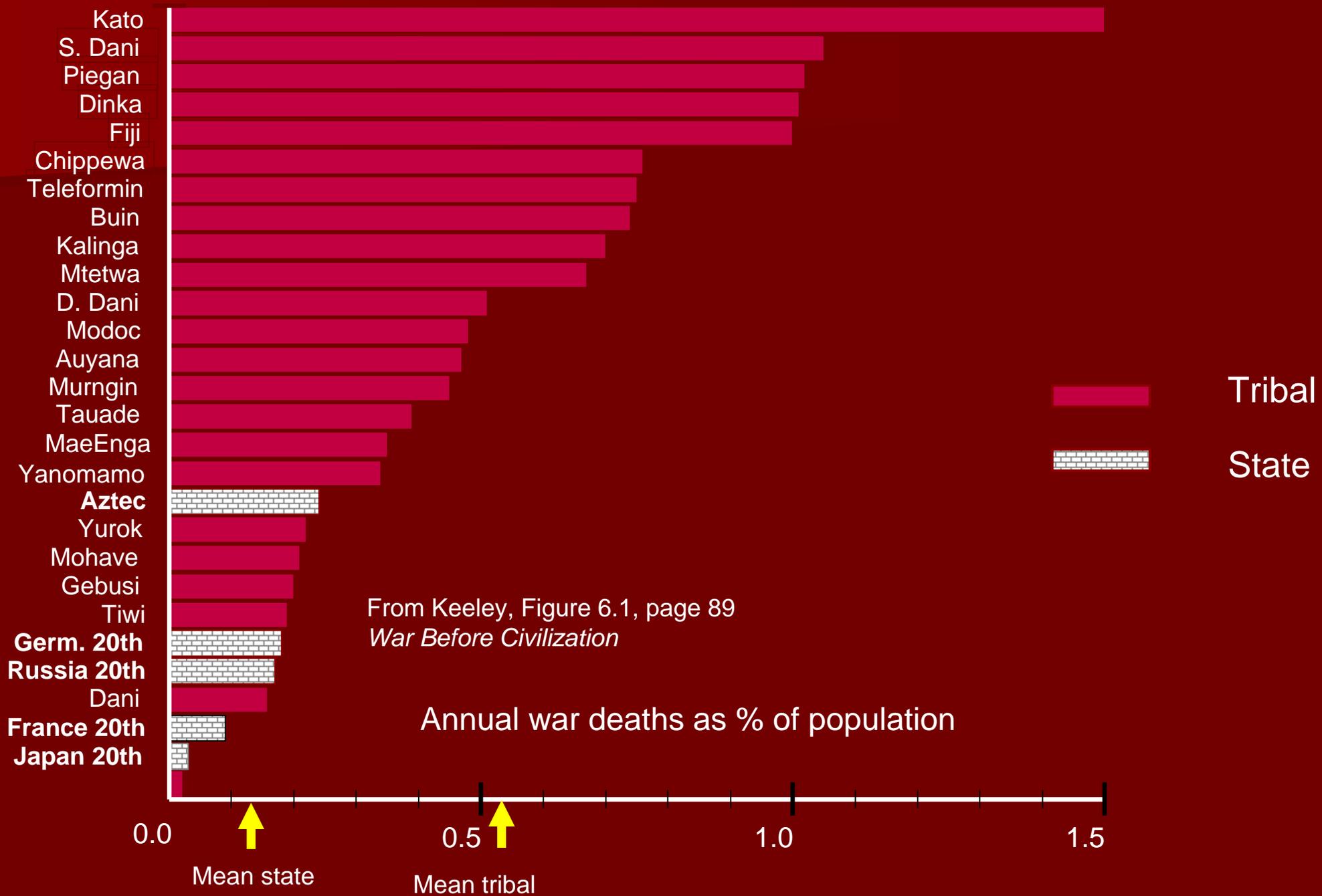
	<b>Primitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
<b>Knowledge of enemy</b>	known	unknown
<b>Personal stake</b>	direct	indirect or absent
<b>Use of coercion</b>	difficult or impossible	standard

Table 2. Homicide Rates (per 100,000 Population) of Selected Societies	time period	homicides per 100,000
<b>Society</b>		
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

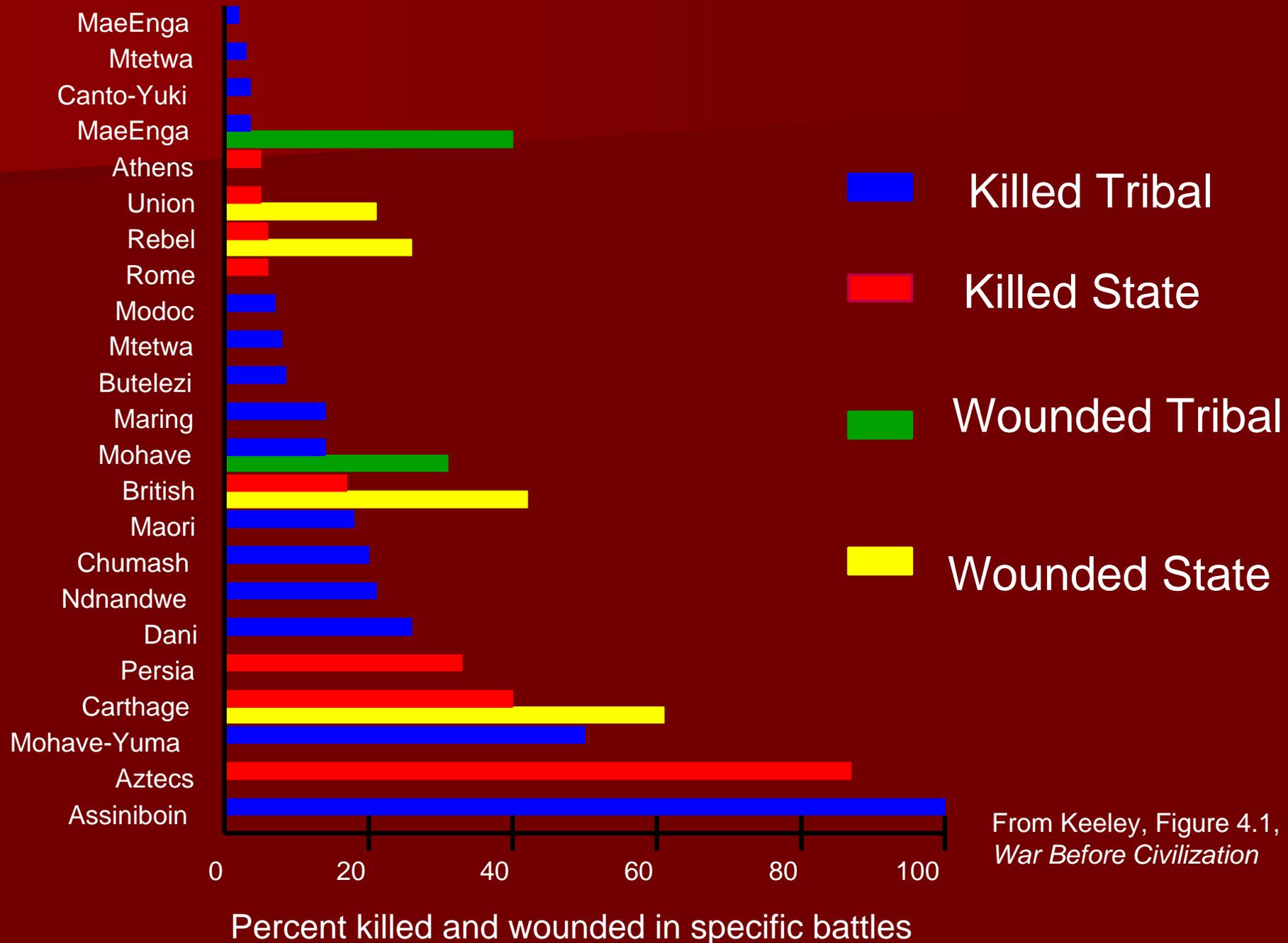
# A note on homicide rates

- 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

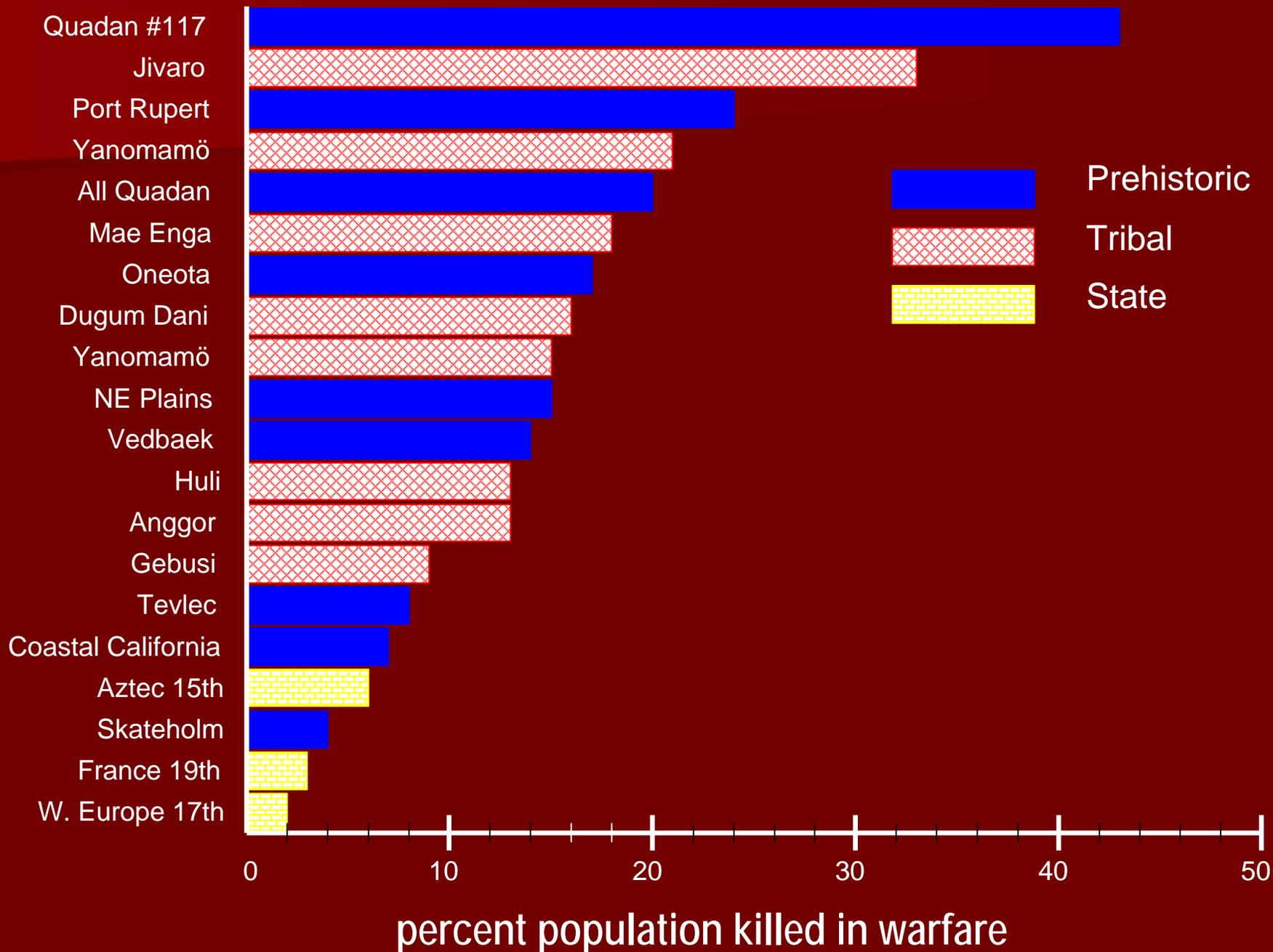


# Percent Killed and Wounded in Specific Battles

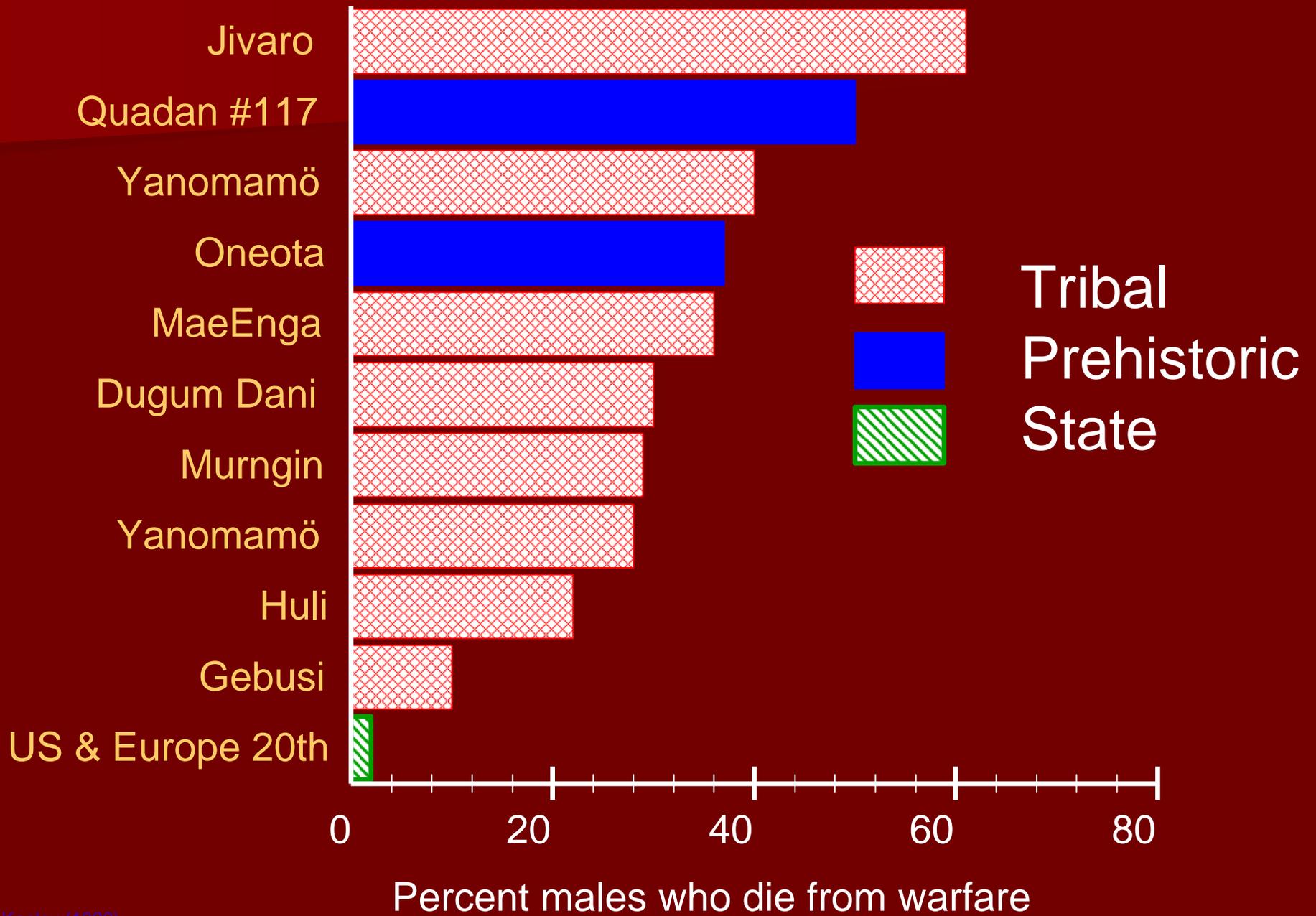


From Keeley, Figure 4.1, page 64  
*War Before Civilization*

# 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