



# WAR

## BEFORE

# CIVILIZATION

THE MYTH OF  
THE PEACEFUL  
SAVAGE

Lawrence H. Keeley

# Resumo de War Before Civilization

For the last fifty years, most popular and scholarly works have agreed that prehistoric warfare was rare, harmless, and unimportant. According to this view, it was little more than a ritualized game, where casualties were limited and the effects of aggression relatively mild.

Lawrence Keeley's groundbreaking *War Before Civilization* offers a devastating rebuttal to such comfortable myths and debunks the notion that warfare was introduced to primitive societies through contact with civilization. Building on much fascinating archeological and historical research and offering an astute comparison of warfare in civilized and prehistoric societies, from modern European states to the Plains Indians of North America, Keeley convincingly demonstrates that prehistoric warfare was in fact more deadly, more frequent, and more ruthless than modern war.

He cites evidence of ancient massacres in many areas of the world, and surveys the prevalence of looting, destruction, and trophy-taking in all kinds of warfare, again finding little moral distinction between ancient warriors and civilized armies.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, he examines the evidence of cannibalism among some preliterate peoples. But Keeley goes beyond grisly facts to address the larger moral and philosophical issues raised by his work.

What are the causes of war? Are human beings inherently violent? How can we ensure peace in our own time? Challenging some of our most dearly held beliefs, Keeley's conclusions are bound to stir controversy.

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