



***Lords of Battle: The World of the Celtic Warrior.* Stephen Allen. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007. Hardcover, 127 pages. ISBN: 1841769487. \$29.95.**

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This lavishly illustrated volume of 224 pages contains eleven chapters divided into four parts: Part I: *Out of the Mist*; Part II: *The Warrior and his World*; Part III: *The Eagle and the Raven*; and Part IV: *Twilight*. With a combination of color pictures and maps adorning nearly every page this is perhaps one of the most handsome recent publications on the Celtic World, albeit with more focused attention on the role and lifestyle of Celtic warriors. The writing style is lively and provides just enough detail to appeal to scholars of Celtic studies while at the same time engaging with a more general audience of readers.

In Chapter One, the author briefly discusses the primary sources of historical evidence for the Celts, such as Herodotus, Livy and other classical writers, the vernacular literature of the post-Roman period, and an overview of the relationship of Celtic languages with the Indo-European language family. The author also provides a very useful two-page chronology, which details some of the key sites, events, and known historical figures connected with the Celtic world—ranging from the emergence of the Hallstatt culture in the eighth to fifth centuries BC to the construction of Hadrian's Wall and associated settlements and fortresses in AD 122-138.

Part One: *Out of the Mist*, consists of the first three chapters of the book and briefly charts the rise of the peoples called 'Celts' by the Greeks and Romans. The initial focus is on the transition from the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age. The relationship between the Hallstatt communities of transalpine Europe, their elites, and the Mediterranean region are explored through a description of the Vix and Hochdorf tombs and their furnishings. Next, the author examines the emergence of the La Tène culture in the context of the Hallstatt collapse and the artifact categories most notable for the new La Tène art style.

In Chapter Two, the focus is on processes of large-scale migration connected with Celtic peoples in the fourth and third centuries BC, with movements into northern Italy, southeastern Europe and Anatolia being discussed. While there is ample archaeological evidence to indicate large-scale movement into the Po River Valley of Italy, the actual scale and frequency of migration into southeastern Europe and Asia Minor continues to be a topic of ardent debate among scholars.

Part II: *The Warrior and his World*, includes Chapters Three, Four and Five of the book, which provide the important social, cultural and economic contexts surrounding the emergence of Celtic warriors. Chapter Three: *The Bonds of Society*, summarizes some of the important characteristics of Celtic societies. Significantly, the author sets the tone of this chapter by first discussing the rapid rate of social and cultural change between the fifth and first centuries BC as Iron Age communities increasingly came into contact with, fought against, and were subsumed within the greater Roman advance into temperate Europe. This chapter also provides interesting discussions on clientage and fostering and its connection to status within Celtic societies. The significance of feasting and its role in commensal politics is also described with eyewitness accounts from classical authors providing rich details of these vibrant socio-political events. In addition to a brief treatment of status and warfare a discussion of the high status of women within Celtic societies is also presented and a general overview of the rise of urban landscapes connected with the *oppida* and the appearance of coinage in some areas.

Brief, but obligatory, discussions of the Druids and Celtic sacrifice are provided in Chapter Four: *Shadows - Illusive Images of the Celtic Gods*, as well as an overview of enigmatic objects such as the Gundestrup cauldron and the Coligny calendar—all of which portray key characteristics of the religious and ritualistic side of Celtic societies. Chapter Five: *The Way of the Warrior*, emphasizes the arms, dress (and undress!), and other aspects of the materiality of Celtic warriors. It is in this chapter, more specifically, that the book's theme really takes shape as the author focuses on the martial world of the Iron Age and the ethos that infused warriorhood. An overview of combat tactics, including cavalry and chariot battle, is also provided and again draws on textual evidence from classical authors in addition to recovered archaeological artifacts.

Part III: *The Eagle and the Raven*, comprises three chapters detailing Celtic developments in Iberia, Gaul and Britain. As the author states at the beginning of Chapter Six: *The Celtiberians - Rome's Spanish Ulcer*, Celtic societies in Iberia have received much less attention by scholars, except in very recent years, than other regions of temperate Europe. In any case, this chapter provides a discussion on the general nature of 'Celtic culture' in the region and then outlines the Lusitanian War and the battle at Numantia.

Chapter Seven: *The Battle for Gaul*, details Rome's conquest of Gaul with a particular focus on the events surrounding Vercingetorix and his revolt against Caesar. Chapter Eight: *Beyond the Ocean*, again focuses on important campaigns into Britain by the Romans under Caesar and Claudius and advances made under Vespasian and Agricola in the region. This provides the historical setting for the emergence of Boudica and her well-known and effective revolt against the Roman forces under Agricola. Textual accounts from Tacitus and Cassius Dio provide historical narratives of these events.

Part IV: *Twilight*, consists of three short chapters. Chapters nine and ten round out the final stages of Celtic tribal activity in the Alps, Germany and Britain that represented final independent Celtic activities prior to absorption by other Iron Age groups such as Germanic and Thracian tribes. Chapter Eleven: *Romance and Reality*, provides an important concluding section to the book that highlights the significance of Celtic history through contemporary nationalism and identity. It is here that the author emphasizes how the 'rediscovery' of the Celts has provided an important heritage to draw upon for various socio-political movements—such as the story of

Cúchulainn and its relationship to 'Irishness'. This discussion provides an appropriate and necessary perspective on the complex relationships that exists between the past and present and the ongoing construction of national and ethnic identities.

The theme of this volume, particularly in the context of broader Celtic studies, is timely as our appreciation of the complexity surrounding Celtic warriors and mercenary activities are in need of re-evaluation. Recent works by several scholars have addressed the significance of both Bronze and Iron Age processes in Europe that lead to the emergence of warriors within societies (e.g. Arnold 2005; Wells 2001) and the social construction of warrior identity and the ethos surrounding conflict and violence (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Treherne 1995). Such approaches highlight the vibrant nature of social and cultural change that occurs during episodes of "tribalization" (see Ferguson and Whitehead 1991 for anthropological discussion of this process), internecine warfare, and state and non-state contact.

This volume, therefore, offers an excellent overview of both the materiality of Iron Age warriors in temperate Europe and the social and economic contexts that supported such developments. The rich corpus of material artifacts (i.e. weaponry, cult objects, armor), which are brilliantly displayed throughout the chapters, and the use of historical descriptions of warriors projects a vivid picture of the legacy of the Celtic world. The volume also offers an important contemporary perspective on the relationship between the heritages of the past with the socio-politics of the present. It achieves a successful synthesis between recent academic discussions in Celtic studies and better-known popular accounts of Celtic history and should be a welcome addition to everyone's personal libraries.

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