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Robert W. Jones. *Bloodied Banners: Martial Display on the Medieval Battlefield.* Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010. Illustrations. x + 205 pp. $90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84383-561-5.

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Raises Important Points, But Does Not Realize Its Ambitious Goals

Robert W. Jones is a visiting research fellow at the Institute for Medieval Studies and senior lecturer in English at the University of Leeds, and *Bloodied Banners* is his first book. Jones makes a commendable effort to encourage and incorporate multidisciplinary perspectives into the study of medieval warfare as it was enacted and reflected in its visual symbols, such as banners, heraldry, and other devices. In a press release for his book, Jones states that his book's purpose is to examine the practical, biological, psychological, and cultural components of medieval military display while blurring the distinction between social history and military history.[1] While he raises many significant points toward these ambitious goals, unfortunately the scope of the work is so broad–not only seeking to blur social and military histories and pursuing his four-fold examination, but also covering the entirety of Europe and the Latin East from 1000 to 1400 CE–that it presents difficulties in organization, depth of content, and competing or contradictory information to the reader.

Jones makes an impassioned and convincing case for augmenting the military-historical and archaeological approaches to medieval military displays by means of biological and anthropological analysis. Unfortunately, he neglects to draw on combat veterans' experiences in making some of his assertions, a weakness that may cost him among the military historian audience. Further, he neglects to consider the effect of the Black Death on his subject, as well as the change from chain to plate armor, medieval historian Andrew Ayton's mid-fourteenth-century decline in emphasis on horse, and the rise of the bowman, essential omissions from his argument against a military "revolution" in this era. Jones also does not clearly define some periods; for example, he refers to one period as "proto-heraldic." Finally, the book does not deal so much with Europe and the Latin East as it focuses primarily on English and French examples, and it tends toward the later medieval period; he does not make clear whether this is a limitation imposed by the sources or some other reason. Essentially, Jones tries to do too much in such a short volume, causing an uneven presentation that overshadows what is a scholarly work of merit. In sum, this book is a preliminary contribution, and it is to be hoped that others shall soon elaborate and refine Jones's multidisciplinary approach.

The first three chapters may have been better presented in order of size and date, that is from early banners, to shields, and finally to late medieval badges. Chapter 1 begins strongly with convincing discussion of the modern aversion to glorifying war, the false divorce of military from social motivations in display, the need to look beyond mere function toward the integration of symbolic and psychological uses, and the herald as a display professional. Oddly, however, Jones does not address the investment of resources in display as an economic motivator for the display's form over its function. Thereafter the chapter makes interesting but contradictory arguments about the use of heraldry. First, Jones asserts that heraldry's purpose was identification from a distance, but then he discusses discarding one's heraldry as symbolic non-identification, minutely codifying heraldry for in-group recognition such that it could not possibly be distinguished from a distance, and finally using heraldry as misidentification. Jones finds firmer ground when covering heraldry as signifier of lineage, collective identification, "social colouring," and more generally a

sociocultural tool (p. 126). Military historians may question his assertion that medieval armies marched "shoulder to shoulder and knee to knee," rather characteristic of a practiced force like a retinue than a force raised by peasant levy (p. 14). The chapter closes with information about banners that may have been placed more appropriately in chapter 2.

Chapter 2 does not begin with that most famous of medieval banners, the Oriflamme, which appears later in the chapter but perhaps fits better in the beginning chronologically. Jones makes the dubious assertion that "medieval armies were fragile things, their morale and cohesion easily broken" (p. 34). In discussing the Bayeux Tapestry banner, Jones could greatly have helped his argument by noting that the banner flows opposite to the direction that would be expected from its bearer's direction of travel–it is unclear why this artistic emphasis was not noted. The fact that knights bannerets needed permission to display their banners deserved more discussion. Overall this is a solid chapter.

The following chapter suffers from issues with organization and depth of discussion–it tries to cover everything about four centuries of property-marking badges to uniformity of military dress, then extends the discussion past 1400 CE. The reader feels hurled headlong down centuries and escorted brusquely across topical borders. The author states that English Crusaders' crosses were white but does not note the later change to red, and he misses the opportunity to discuss the sociocultural function of Crusaders' crosses. Jones, at last, defines the "proto-heraldic period" as the years up to 1160 CE–the periodization belonged in the introduction (p. 62). The confraternal and guild heraldry discussion deserved its own chapter so that it could be analyzed fully. Plainly the author is not a military man, and his statements about the modern military uniform as "abnegation of self" are not helpful to the discussion, nor is it clear how wearing a regimental badge is so different from wearing a Crusader's cross (pp. 66-67).

Chapter 4 begins with further evidence of the author's lack of military experience. Battle sounds are disorienting to the novice but even war animals can become accustomed to the sounds through training. Jones offers no evidence showing why battle noise affected medieval warriors more than modern warriors. He also shows inexperience in the discussion of nonprofessional marching, asserting that medieval troops did not have the time to invest in drills that would produce skillful results, an argument that any American high school band can disprove. Like in his previous chapters, Jones tries to cover too much ground; for example, he even introduces naval battles. Returning to land, he fails to distinguish between drill marching and route marching, an omission that voids his arguments. Three miles per hour is an easy marching pace and one can certainly sing at that pace if one lacks instruments; medieval forces marched while singing, as shown by Crusader songs, like "Chanterai pour mon courage," that refer to singing and even to specific paces of march like the quick-march. The chapter finds firmer ground with Jones's examination of the unifying effect (where singing and the psychology of mass participation would have supported his argument); the anthropological function of the scaring-off display; and the psychological effect of silence in warfare. Most unfortunately, however, the author writes that the medieval nobility were "a degenerate military elite for whom war was merely a game" (p. 82). Why then would Jones bother to study a population for whom he holds such moral contempt?

At this point, the book includes several illustrations that helpfully show various stages and silhouettes of armor. For example, plate 3 is an excellent illustration showing that the torso is always protected before the extremities, and usually the arms before the legs. Chapter 5, an excellent chapter, provides a good review of current scholarship and understanding about armor. The author deftly covers source issues, archaeological problems, task versus climate concerns in armament, and technology and culture.

In chapter 6, Jones discusses plate more than chain armor. He does well describing fashions in armor, although he should have offered more discussion of the silhouette in the anthropological context, especially regarding signaling. The psychological effect on an enemy of individuals versus groups in armor as a signal of professionalism could have benefited from further explication. Jones's argument about dehumanization is dated. He does well to point out the wearing and not wearing of armor as symbolic. His discussion of hearing and vision restriction in armor is also helpful, but his argument about tunnel vision and dislocation of perception is not effective considering the psychological basis for these in battle; this discussion seems to concern only the full or enclosed helm rather than the cap or helmet type. The symbolic behavior argument serves nicely, whereas the de-individuation argument is not strictly necessary and again betrays some modern political bias against the study. This chapter deals almost exclusively with English and French sources, offering little German informa-

tion, which may have helped avert the speculation about stonemasons' carving ability and supported other of the author's points. His examination of the Courtrai Chest is useful, but his look at personal heraldry items belongs in the heraldry chapter. Jones mentions painted and colored armor, but does not discuss them; he forgets that both plate and chain armor were covered by heraldic surcôtes. The discussion of armor and harness as identifiers deserves as much attention as the discussion of them as signallers, which was excellent. Most troubling is that the author seems determined not to mention Radolphus Niger's work, nor the Black Death; also, given the chapter's title "The Psychological Role of Armour on the Battlefield," there is little psychological content.

Jones's interesting argument about the tapestry as bacula in chapter 7 is noteworthy, but it interrupts the discussion about swords within which it appears. Unfortunately, the author misses an opportunity to examine the personalization of the sword by inscription, as well as the symbolism of unsheathing the sword. His analysis of the horse is solid but it neglects to consider its mid-fourteenth-century decline. This chapter's conclusion would have been better placed in chapter 6. Finally, an examination of the offices of the standard-bearer and the lance-bearer would have further enhanced this chapter.

Chapter 8 is most uneven. Niger at last makes his appearance, but Jones skips past the early Crusades era straight to the military orders; then neglects the seashell as Crusader symbol; leaps several centuries to the *carroccio*, a large wheeled conveyance for an Italian city's standard with its religious banners and relics; dashes back to individual crosses; and winds up with a discussion of phrases, swords, and decoration inside of shields. The author makes the strange assertion that one's shield was a "throwaway item" (p. 158). This chapter needed to be divided into threatening symbols and protective symbols at least, and to include a psychology and anthropology discussion in keeping with the book's purpose.

The final chapter runs straight into the "military revolution" debate, in which this reviewer sides with John Childs, and Jones correctly concludes that there was not one in this subject. He at last makes his important argument, which belongs in the introduction, that "the study of martial display provides another avenue of approach for the study of military history." Unfortunately, his work does not demonstrate the utility of "display as a means of charting developments" in military history, except in terms of changing fashions (p. 162). The author then argues that display played "a role in many of the aspects highlighted as undergoing revolutionary changes" (p. 167). With this he associates three areas: command and control (no changes); recruitment and service (changing, but not in a revolutionary way); and arms (changing, but not in a revolutionary way). He posits three reasons for these findings: first, the function of a military display as not culturally specific in the context of medieval Europe; second, the effects of civilian culture and fashions; and third, the continuity of military culture in the period examined. These key conclusions may have been placed better in the conclusion of the entire book.

Here the reader must keep in mind that Jones does not take into consideration the Black Death. There is little differentiating between martial display for war and chivalric display for tournament or court. One must also consider the rise of archers in England, and the transition from chain to plate armor. If the author wished to argue that these circumstances caused no or little change in his subject then he needed to address these. Unfortunately, again he offers minimal psychological and anthropological information, no innovative work, and examples that are nearly exclusively English and French in origin.

Chapter 9 contains some irregularities. For example, this reviewer wonders if some material about the Marching Watch of London was edited from the book, as it is first mentioned on page 168 in a way that seems to imply prior discussions were omitted. The Jean Froissart quote is incompletely translated without notation (p. 169n39). Finally, an interesting discussion of mercenary heraldry on page 171 is misplaced.

The conclusion is too brief and without a consistent message. Jones again shows his lack of military experience by stating that armor provided a sense of invulnerability: The idea of armor is to turn a blow that succeeds in passing one's defenses; the armor itself is not to be relied on except in case of last resort. The author concludes that the heraldry of the medieval warrior "proclaimed his identity every bit as clearly as his challenge" in offense yet is "protective social colouring" in defeat (p. 63). The conclusion offers some interesting insight but is too brief.

Note

[1]. Press release for Robert W. Jones, *Bloodied Banners*, `http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/content/docs/Questionnaire_Robert_Jones_Bloodied_Banners.pdf`.

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