Honour and violence is a major theme in the anthropology of the Middle East, yet – apart from political violence – most studies approach violence from the perspective of honour. By contrast, this important study examines the meanings of lethal conflict in a little studied tribal society in Pakistan’s unruly North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and offers a new perspective on its causes. Based on an in-depth study of local conflicts, the book challenges stereotyped images of a region and people miscast as extremist and militant.

Being grounded in local ethnography enables the book to shed light on the complexities of violence, not only at the structural or systemic level, but also as experienced by the men involved in lethal conflict. In this way, the book provides a subjective and experiential approach to violence that is applicable beyond the field locality and relevant for advancing the study of violence in the Middle East and South Asia. The book is the first ethnographic study of this region since renowned anthropologist Fredrik Barth’s pioneering study in 1954.

‘The material itself is extremely interesting, dealing as it does with an exotic locale, and with an intractable problem of endemic violence. … Dr. Knudsen draws this conflictual situation very well, and adds a great deal to the present-day study of violence, putting what is often seen as primordial in the context of modern conditions.’

– Professor Charles Lindholm, Boston University

We should make the best possible use of this analysis: for its daring perspectives, extreme empirical findings, and wide relevance. It deserves a very careful reading for its contributions to so many aspects of our understanding of honour, politics and human society.

– Fredrik Barth, Professor emeritus, Boston University and University of Oslo

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Cover illustration: A Palas elder displaying his early-19th-century muzzle-loading rifle and bandoleer.

ARE KNUDSEN
with a foreword by Fredrik Barth