

D16

long-standing vendettas common . First impression by whites of Melanesians before imposed authority checked their military enthusiasm, was that each tribe or village was in constant condition of hostility with its neighbours. "sporadic ambushing of solitary wayfarers or small groups of people and occasional burning and looting of villages. But Melanesians recognize differences between times of war and peace. Definite ways of declaring hostilities and bringing them to a close.

"It is generally assumed by the white man that among the backward peoples warfare is an unmixed evil. ...it becomes apparent that no social institution comes into being and continues to flourish unless it has a definite function to fulfil in the culture of which it forms a part... I hope to show from the following analysis of warfare in Melanesia, one of its constant functions is to strengthen the bonds of union between the individuals of the fighting community and make them increasingly conscious that they are members of a single unit."(footnote.p.6 -- policy of certain of the kings of England during . Middle Ages--when dissensions arose at home, arranged for a crusade or a war with France)

Melanesian-speaking peoples of south-east end of New Guinea and the island-chain of the West Pacific.

Social org. differs in various localities. But all alike in lack of strong tribal organization. Division of community into a number of exogamous clans generally characteristic. Where clans exist, is reason to believe that it is the most important unit in society, its solidarity expressed symbolically by the occupation of a single piece of land, own dancing ground and often clubhouse, and in some parts by own headman or chief. Groups which normally friendly with each other and others toward which antagonistic. Three distinct groups of people towards whom behavior socially determined; members of own clan (absolute allegiance); clans within same tribe (certain obligations and friendship); all groups outside own tribe or district, therefore actual or potential foes. Distinctions reflected in warfare. Conflicts between different clans of a district do occur, but their nature is distinct from hostilities with strangers; less vindictive, less destructive and of shorter duration. Among some peoples the relation between neighbouring districts which are not friendly is organized, dividing island into pairs of hostile groups. At one time the Ot went every five years to devastate the Ouauap, and war between them was always war to the death. (Other pairs given as examples--p9.) Examples of two districts being definitely united by the ties of a socially recognized and regulated antagonism.

Wedgwood, Camilla H.,

X

Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia ,

Oceania VI, 1930, S.4 - 33

Fotokopie

Excerpt of Wedgwood, C. H., 1930: „Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia,“ in: Oceania Vol. VI (1930), pp. 4-33.

Property of the Erich Fromm Document Center. For personal use only. Citation or publication of material prohibited without express written permission of the copyright holder.

Eigentum des Erich Fromm Dokumentationszentrums. Nutzung nur für persönliche Zwecke. Veröffentlichungen - auch von Teilen - bedürfen der schriftlichen Erlaubnis des Rechteinhabers.



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930

p. 9—

Conflicts between groups which are normally friendly usually caused by offenses on the part of an individual of one clan or village against an individual in another—ie. adultery, elopement, insults, thefts.

strength of bond between clansmen strong enough to involve whole clan though offense against an individual. Aim to vindicate honor, not necessarily to kill any opponents. ie. SE New Guinea..! any men killed would be left lying where they fell... would not be eaten and their heads would not be taken. " in Tanna "If the dispute... was between villages of the same group, the fighting was done with clubs and was really performed for the sake of appearances with no fatal results." p 10. No formal opening or close.

Conflicts between stranger communities. Any misfortune which a community may suffer usually attributed to the evil machinations of a neighbouring group, and will sooner or later lead to reprisals by means of magic or force of arms. Individual offenses often provide sparks of hatred and suspicion which constantly underly relations. Wars of conquest or acquisition of land uncommon. No dearth of cultivable land.

In some islands, injury sustained exactly balanced by an equal injury inflicted. More often, reprisals, and thus arise never-ending vendettas, whose course is only temporarily suspended by periods of unstable peace.

Another cause of war, esp. ie. in the Solomon Islands, is to take prisoners to sacrifice, or skull of someone recently slain to use in certain ceremonies.

"In New Georgia, according to Ribbe,²⁰ the funeral rite of any man cannot be properly performed without a human victim, and in other parts of the Solomons, the launching of a war-canoes must be accompanied by a human sacrifice." ^{p.12} In Rubania, inauguration of new canoe, canoe house, or completion of any important work requires a head for the canoe-house. Impossible to kill tribesman, so if no slave available, raid sometimes organized for sole purpose of obtaining a "stranger". Elsewhere in Melanesia the head of slain enemy hung prominently to testify to prowess of slayer. But in Western Solomons headhunting is an occupation in itself. In parts of New Georgia practice of acquiring skulls for headhunting has developed into a mania for head-hunting. Go in war canoes, descend unexpectedly upon a coastal village, exterminate the inhabitants and return to Rubiana with thirty to forty heads of men, women and children. p.13.

Some evidence suggests that the practice of cannibalism, (usually an incident

"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
p. 13-

of warfare) has acquired such great importance that it has become a cause of war, specifically to get victims for the oven.

Methods of prosecuting war:

two principal methods in Melanesia. Used according to the nature of the opponents, or the bitterness felt towards them. One treacherous—ambush of a village at early dawn or the cutting down of unsuspecting groups of travellers, gardeners or fishermen, in which many people may be killed and even whole hamlets wiped out. Other more chivalrous, with formal challenge and pitched battle, in which the display of force rather than effective utilization is the aim. Often separate word for each type. In South-east New Guinea sometimes surrounded whole hamlet-group capturing and killing as many people as could, and damaging houses, crops and livestock as much as possible. Cunning and treachery commended.

Even in this form of warfare, certain rules of behaviour observed. In San Cristoval people climbing trees or fishing on the sea are not attacked—consider fighting "in the air" and "on the sea" too cruel. Fighting at night not allowed. Chief of opposing party must never be killed.

In Efate, S. New Hebrides when war declared, certain paths arranged to be neutral ground, the rest of the country dangerous.

Not always easy to distinguish between this form of war; cunning, treachery, and rudimentary rules which limit destructive activity, and the highly regulated form. Account by Romily of a fight on the coast of New Ireland, Enemy allowed to land canoe. Then speeches. Then first spear thrown, and others followed suit. When someone badly injured or killed, combatants closed in with sharp wooden swords and fought hand to hand for the possession of the corpse. Finally invaders driven off, leaving behind a considerable number of dead. p. 15.

Parkinson describes wars in New Britain as short feuds involving little bloodshed. If man of rank killed, one of equal rank must be slain from the opposite side. but for death of commoners compensation is merely paid at peace-making ceremony. In Admiralty Islands, sea-fights in canoes, in which chiefs meet first in single combat with lances and only afterwards do the other warriors join in. Women always left unmolested, and pass freely between the contending camps.

Probably with more information would find that these battles more highly regulated than appears at present.



"some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930

p. 16-

Rules vary, yet in general include formal declaration of hostilities, use of pre-arranged fighting ground, restrictions on weapon types and manner of use, and formal peace-making. No clear record as to occasions on which this type of war as opposed to more usual ambushing variety is used. In Trobriands, all fighting apparently restricted to traditionally opposed pairs with rules. Strained relations always exist between the pair.

Slight provocation would incite informal brawl. This followed by settlement or formal declaration of war. Circular arena midway between villages cleared for battle. Two parties ranged up opposite each other at thirty to fifty yards, men armed with spears and shields only; women behind with refreshments and encouragement. Combat continued till one party broke line of other. Then onrush of victors. Killed who could, destroyed villages and laid waste to gardens. Vanquished fled to neighboring district. Usually all but defenceless ones would escape. Later return, rebuild and settle—with loss of prestige but no serious loss of life. Similar in San Cristoval (17). Account also of regularized warfare on Buin in Bougainville, (17). Which occasionally changes into more serious guerilla warfare when feeling runs very high.

In New Hebrides also pitched battles of same kind fought after formal challenge. Chief decided to go to war. Send people to damage opponents premises. These insults led at once to battle. If fought in open and chief killed, his people allowed to carry off body and wail over it. Both parties drew off for a while. When mourning over, fight again. These successions of wars often lasted months, contending parties going back to work plantations every now and again. Very few people killed, though many wounded. Few prisoners, kill outright. If man killed on one side, another must be killed on other before suspension of hostilities could be considered, though truce could be made for gardening or performing funeral rites of chief. Similar in New Britain for district chiefs, but village chiefs and headmen retained and eaten if possible.

Two distinct accounts of the almost ceremonious nature of war as carried on by the two sides of the island. Mrs. Hadfield—No matter how grave the quarrel, several days notice always given. Arrangements made by two or three special men. Never injured. If no settlement made after allotted days, each party started out fully armed, and fell upon first man they met of opposite side. Women and children not molested. Battles seldom lasted



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
p. 19

more than one day. Casualties low--loss for vanquished ten to twelve, for victorious only four or five. Cheyn, 1852--different account. King of aggrieved party sends formal declaration of war to aggressor's party, and appoints certain place and day for armies to meet. Assemble on clear spot of ground between the tribes and form in line abreast of each other about 100 yards apart. Both sides throw spears, catch and throw back. Then two lines charge, meet exchange blows with clubs in passing and again halt at about same distance having changed positions. Continue till one party gets beaten. Guerilla warfare, in which men killed and women and children taken captive. Ray's evidence showed ambushing the more common method.

The Warriors and their allies.

Size and composition of the forces engaged in conflicts varies. In Buin, thirty to eighty on each side. Avenging expeditions from Malaita said to be from two to three hundred. In general, seems number not too great, though in expeditions of old, traditions says they contained two or three thousand warriors. In Malaita, said that "most chiefs have a few fighting men--professionals --who do the work(and get well paid for it) while the others do the accompanying." p. 20. Usually all adult males capable of bearing arms are potential combatants, and often women are camp followers.

Fighting units in raids and ambushes varies in composition. Especially if death of chief or man of note that is being avenged, all warriors of village will set out; other times only immediate kindred are involved.

Though most disputes primarily between two districts others may become involved. Some islands a regular system by which allies can be acquired and rules concerning their treatment by the principal parties. In New Caledonia, when tribe needs help, sends purse of shell money symbolically indicating they kind of help needed. If chief agrees; rouses tribe. At peace feast, paid compensation for damage suffered and help given, in food and valuables by chief who sought aid. In Tanna, six or ten villages unite and form league for mutual protection. But fickle and faithless. When contemplating an attack, chief sends banyan branch to those with whom friendly to seek help, in secret. Petition discussed by all adult men of village. Not always responded to favorably. Any individual in a village



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
P. 22

which does agree to give help is at liberty to withdraw from it without incurring any social stigma if he is unwilling to go on the expedition because of a friend in the enemy's camp. May even warn friend of impending danger. After conflict, victorious party will press into the country of the vanquished and loot villages—but houses and land of defeated's allies always left inviolate. Several other examples where common to call on allies—drum telegraphy in San Cristoval—Malaita, tribes which usually hostile unite to fight inland tribes. South East Solomons.

Unusual feature, hiring mercenaries in Malaita and Florida. In Sa'a chief will put price on a man's head instead of going after it himself. In Florida "If one village had... a grievance against another, a large sum of money would be contributed by its inhabitants and set aside as a reward for whomso should avenge them. The news of it was widely circulated; and thenceforward the threatened village knew not who among its familiar visitors might be tempted by the bribe and turn traitor." p.22. Similar in Uru Bay, Malaita. All villages in district pool reward which goes to village that distinguishes itself most in the attack upon the first vessel that comes along.

In Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain, system whereby if in a quarrel, one party feels itself too weak to avenge the wrong, it damages the property of some third party, and by this means lays obligation on the latter to take up the quarrel on its behalf. In a dispute, man can always count on kin for help, and assistance or neutrality could always be purchased. In Buin, the forming of alliances appears to have attained the highest degree of social importance. Foundations of political organization are alliances between chiefs. Three grades of chiefs. Alliances made between middle chiefs and with high chiefs. Bond is individualized. Essential feature being the duty of revenge which the chiefs so allied owe to each other. When son of chiefs comes of age, father holds a feast, the aim of which is to unite the boy with another chief through gift exchange. Number of such unions depends on wealth of father. In any large district, all the middle chiefs ("chiefs of a hundred" are bound to each other and to the high chief. Not clear if high chiefs also ally themselves, with each other in the same way. Some indications that they do. Kinship important in these transactions. Alliances entered on both paternal and maternal lines, safe guarded on both sides. Thus, through the persons of the chiefs, the smaller local (and kinship) groups are bound to each other and to the larger



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930

p. 24

local group.

PEACE*MAKING

Clearly defined rules of peace-making. Sometimes third party intervenes. Usually, party desirous of peace sends neutral emissary with some object of value. The Malekulan practice seems to be for warriors to approach opponents carrying green branches as a sign that they desire peace.

Ceremonies where peace is ratified vary somewhat from tribe to tribe, and information scanty. But seem nearly always to fall into two distinct categories; the making of compensation for injuries inflicted during the fighting; and the performance of some ceremonial, ie. exchange of gifts or food, which symbolically unites the opponents. Not confined to termination of a war which was begun with formal declaration. May be held to bring any type of hostility to a close. Often peace short, but not merely a truce, for ritual clearly shows that the antagonism was supposed to end. Interesting, that in Lifu, vanquished party receives gift from the victors. Unlike European practice. But from sociological point of view both right and proper. To bring opposing forces into relations of peace and harmony, must first do away with causes of ill-will. Both parties compensate each other for losses, and that which suffered most must receive the greater compensation.

In accounts from certain islands, it is shown that in the ritual of peace-making scope is given to give vent to feelings of anger, without these causing a fresh outbreak of armed hostilities. In San Cristoval, when peace is made, neutral friend sent and there is preliminary payment of money called "walking across the war"^{p.25}, after which fighting ceases. Then day and place fixed, and the two parties meet, fully decorated and armed for war and engage in sham fighting. Sometimes ends in actual fighting, very like the real thing. Payment made for many things on each side. The most important are: 1) men killed, 2) men wounded 3) Pigs killed, 4) water fouled by passing urine in it, 5) insults uttered openly about particular men. Coombe's account adds that when the fighting is over, terms concluded, add a formal peace-making takes place at fixed rendezvous. Rivals assemble, still armed, each side in turn squats tranquilly on the ground while the enemy of yesterday charges up to within three or four yards of them. One of tribe, chosen as orator runs backwards and forwards incessantly, He is making harangue about the war and those who were killed in it. Then he



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
p.26

produces a sum of money which the opposing chief accepts. Then he and his men go through a similar performance. The mock fight is important, because it represents each side in turn receiving the "attack" of its opponents passively. Account also of sham fight in Port Sandwich, Malekula, in which the village which is going to pay pigs is defeated.

In peace-making rites of the Andaman islanders, those who suffered the last act of hostility approach the members of the other party in hostile guise and shake them soundly. " 'The purpose of the ceremony,' writes Radcliffe-Brown, 'is clearly to produce a change in the feelings of the two parties towards one another....It depends for its effect on the fact that anger and similar aggressive feelings may be appeased by being freely expressed. Its social function is to restore the condition of solidarity between two local groups that has been destroyed by some act of offense.'" p. 27. Difference between the Andaman and Melanesian practices described is that among the former the mock combat is one-sided, in the latter both play active part. In Andamans the last act of aggression is ritually avenged before the peace is sealed by exchange of gifts; in San Cristoval and Malekula the antagonism is appeased through its ceremonial expression. The Malekulan 'combat' is interesting because the pigs are paid by the party defeated in it. Probably, therefore, it was the victors who were defeated in mock combat and then had to pay pigs. If so, then resembles Andamans; Those defeated in real war are able in mock combat to satisfy desire to avenge.

Payment of 'wergeld' in peace-making is common. This shell "money" of east New Britain, Duke of York Islands and the adjacent mainland of South New Ireland is very important in lives of the people. Has subjective worth alien to Westerners. More than economic transaction. When war carried on, no peace can be made til friends of the killed, and wounded themselves have received compensation from the enemy. Each side must pay other for damage. Side which was wronged originally receives a mutually agreed upon sum, in addition to damage incurred during battle. Money paid not out of public fund, but by the parties principally concerned. While so much as a single wound unatoned for, peace can't be considered. Two points: 1)



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
p. 29

the payment made for the original injury inflicted by the aggressor, which removes the "casus belli"(p. 29) and so makes peace possible. 2) the personal nature of the payments. Not simply payment by the victors for the excess killed by them. Rather, payments are made from one man to the relatives of the man killed or injured.. Had both sides suffered equal losses, payments would still be made. Ceremony probably calculated to do away with the anger of one man against another, and bring into harmony by a process similar in function to an exchange of gifts. In Buin, method the same.

some evidence that in other parts of Melanesia 'wergeld' paid in valuables other than shell money. Arm-shells, pigs, occasionally a human being handed over. Brenchley states that in Efate, to stop a war, the party desiring
** peace kills one of its own men and offers the body to the opposing force who accept or reject it "according as the corpse is in a more or less tempting condition" p.29. From knowledge of Melanesian customs, this seems unusual, "and it may be doubted whether Brenchley's evidence is wholly reliable." Somerville records that ^{he was} told of one peace-making in Uripiv, Malekula, at which pigs not given, but small boy sent to the victors. Gillan, who gave info. concluded the child was eaten, but possible by "analogy with other countries, that the boy was given to take the place of a man who had been killed, just as prisoners were sometimes adopted by the captors to replace the dead." 29.

When bitterness allayed, second phase of peacemaking is entered upon. Binding of groups together, through eating together, dancing, exchanging gifts and other recognized ways of creating unity in a ceremonial manner. Several examples of particular customs ie. chewing betel nut together, feast, set up stone to commemorate, and in Erromanga the party attacked will invite aggressors. Interesting rite from Mare of the loyalties, but account not very full and significance not absolutely clear. After war, the vanquished give certain valuables to victors in acknowledgement of defeat. Gifts are a necessary guarantee of peace on the part of the conquered if presented and on part of the conquerors if accepted. On one occasion, and according to custom the tribes could not return to lands til taken back by the victors.



"Some Aspects of Warfare in Melanesia" by C. Wedgwood; Oceania VI; 1930
p.31

PRIMITIVE INTERNATIONAL LAW

Wherever solidarity within the group, members distinguish between fellow members and "strangers". Opposition occasionally express self in hostile acts and war will ensue. To preserve existence, fighting must be kept within certain bounds; due to risk of exhaustion, annihilation, and sometimes economic interdependence. Rules regulating hostilities part of general adaptation to environment, which enable them to live side by side without losing individuality. Difference between international laws of Europe and of Melanesia in complexity, not in kind. Functions of both are the same.

FUNCTIONS OF WAR

Question whether more satisfactory method of adjusting relations of neighboring communities would be prohibition of war. One ~~thesis~~ ^{basis} of function is to increase the social solidarity. ie. within village, clan is important and must stick by its members though they disapprove of actions. At same time, certain bounds to any behavior within larger group. Wider unity never wholly lost sight of, while strength of kinship bonds intensified. Considering conflicts between people normally hostile, unifying forces more apparant. Ritual preliminaries to war. Make all fighting men conscious of their common interest in a single enterprise. For those left behind, tabus, etc. which unite combatants and non-combatants. Sense of common danger, which has power to submerge individual antagonisms. If successful, sense of well-being creates amity within group. Even defeated, unless losses very severe feel bond. Before introduction of fire-arms, evidence shows that mortality arising from wars was not great. With gun, casualties great, became disintegrating rather than unifying force.

In earlier times, the fact of fighting rendered people more aware of selves as members of group. Wars entered when community had suffered and needed some other people on whom to vent anger for the injury received. Expression of anger in fighting, relieved it. Discomfort and irritation disquieting ^{is} community brought to an end, and sense of well-being restored. Thus ^{gives} expression to anger caused by disturbance of internal harmony, and reaffirms ties.

