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'Smoke in the Hills, Gunfire in the Valley': War and Peace in Western Highlands, PNG.

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*"There's smoke in the hills
Gunfire in the valley
A woman is wailing
A loved one is killed
My heart is aching
My heart is aching"*

(Verse from a song written by
Magdaline Wilson lamenting the
war in the Nebilyer Valley,
Western Highlands, PNG)

Abstract

The paper discusses accounts of recent tribal fighting and peacemaking processes in the Nebilyer Valley, Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea. My analysis is based on interviews conducted in January 2000 with Ganiga, and other peoples, who featured in Connolly and Anderson's film 'Black Harvest'. I examine different strategies of peacemaking and peacekeeping employed in relation to the Nebilyer war, particularly the efforts of local Christian church representatives. I also explore how people in the Nebilyer Valley, construct particular events as significant, and the relevance of these constructions in processes of peace making.

The film *Black Harvest* (1992), documents an outbreak of 'tribal fighting' in the Nebilyer Valley, Western Highlands of PNG, in the early 1990s. The film introduces the conflict as follows:

The Ganiga were gathered on their tribal border contemplating an attack on the village of their traditional enemies. Warfare had erupted between two neighbouring tribes. And although the Ganiga were not directly involved, they'd been asked, as was customary, to join in.

The two neighbouring tribes are not named in the film. However, the 'traditional enemies' on whose village the narrator announced the Ganiga were contemplating an attack were the Poi Penambe. Poi Penambe are allies of the

Kulka, major enemies of the Ulka, of which the Ganiga comprise a segment¹. The Ulka and the Kulka, are large tribes with many levels of internal segmentation². The raid on the Poi Penambe in January 1990 and some of the violence that followed, and its consequences for Ganiga and their relationship with plantation owner, Joe Leahy, in the coffee business, is vividly documented in *Black Harvest*.

The conflict died down briefly before another event (or series of events) a few months later (in June 1990) re-ignited fighting between Ganiga and Poi Penambe. Fighting between these enemy groups occurred intermittently until in 1992, after an incident on Joe Leahy's Kilima plantation, the situation escalated into a major war between the Ulka and the Kulka that was to continue for many years before a peace accord was signed between the protagonists at a place called Tega in 1997 (see map in Rumsey 2000:143). Tega was a bare piece of grassland considered neutral ground because it had earlier been the location of an administrative centre. However, during the war, all the buildings (including the police station and the school) were destroyed. According to Ganiga informants, the Ulka and Kulka have always been major enemies (see also Nakinch 1977; Rumsey 2000:146). Although they might live in a state of uneasy peace for many years, open conflict can erupt at any time.

The key questions I am concerned with in this paper are the nature of contemporary peacemaking and peacekeeping practices in the Nebilyer and

how people interpret particular events associated with outbreaks of violence. Merlan and Rumsey (1991) have inquired into indigenous notions of ‘event’ in the Nebilyer Valley. I have found their analysis very helpful in my attempts to understand how Ganiga construct the meanings of events leading to tribal war, and the relevance such constructions might have in contemporary peace-making processes.

Peacemaking

According to Ganiga informants, peace in the Nebilyer does not begin and end with the event at Tega when the ‘everlasting peace’ accord was signed³. Peacemaking is a long-term process involving a number of other strategies, which I discuss below, as well as an intricate network of exchanges (various rounds of compensation payments to allies for injuries and deaths suffered during the fighting) that can take many years⁴.

There is some debate about whether it is misleading to refer to such exchanges as expressions of peacemaking. According to Marilyn Strathern (1985:122) ‘wealth exchanges (compensation) cannot simply be put into the slot of non-violent solutions which restore relationships and mend torn social fabric’. Although such transactions appear to provide a means for peaceful resolution of conflict they also ‘afford a facility for the [future] mobilisation of allies in warfare’ (M. Strathern 1985:123).

Like a number of other prominent anthropologists who have attempted to understand the nature and meaning of violence in Melanesian societies, Marilyn Strathern (1985) provides a critique of Hobbsian theories of human sociality, which assume that violence represents a breakdown of social order⁵. Strathern's position is that violence in Melanesia is an expression of thoroughly social relations. She argues that acts of violence and wealth exchange are but part and parcel of the same phenomenon. Warfare and wealth exchanges are interchangeable expressions of inter-group relations.

Yet, as Rumsey (1999:321) cautions, although the two kinds of transactions may be interpreted as interchangeable (or 'interconvertible'), they should not be assumed to be of the same order. He writes:

While "either exchange or warfare can turn into its alternative", in our experience most Ku Waru people most of the time place a higher moral value on exchange, and show a greater interest (in both senses of the word) in converting hostile relations into peaceful ones than vice versa (Merlan and Rumsey 1991:152-154, 196). (Rumsey 1999:321)

Moreover, as Rumsey notes, although Highlanders often say that it is proper to compensate people for their grief and anger, they also say that no amount of wealth can pay for the life of a person.

Rumsey (1999) also reminds his readers that the groups that oppose each other in warfare are not usually the same ones who exchange wealth objects. This was confirmed by our Ganiga research participants who stressed that traditionally there would be no war payments between major enemies such as

Ulka and Kulka. Moreover, there was no way that Kulka and Ulka could possibly compensate one another given the scale of the conflict and the number of deaths and injuries they had caused one another⁶. The compensation payments that Ganiga had already made, and were preparing to make, were to their allies, other Ulka groups who had assisted them against the Kulka. The Ganiga Councillor, Joseph Wagaba, explained it as follows:

We have not completed our own internal compensation payments, you know, like our allies...You know it started off like this. Ok, I was the clan that was entirely involved in that incident and it all started from my clan and up. So then another clan joined in to support me in the fighting. The next one came in, and the next one came in. The whole tribe became involved. So in the process there were people killed, you know. So we are responsible. But I will be only responsible for the first clan that supported me ...We paid the pigs already and now we've got to give them the money. So, if I have to pay that clan, then that clan is responsible for the next one...So I pay the first one, which is an easy thing...If I were to take over the whole lot then it's very impossible you know. We're a small clan. I just can't pay the whole lot. This has been a traditional thing...It's still in process at the moment with money...the pigs have already been paid...so now I think this year, probably May or June we'll pay out the money...For one life, roughly the lowest is 10,000 kina, the lowest. The highest we can go is 20,000. (interview 13 Jan 2000)⁷

The Councillor added:

...so while we are doing that one on our side, it's also happening across the other side. What they're doing is their problem, we don't want to know. They are our enemies...

Thus, like the Ulka, the Kulka are in the process of making compensation payments among themselves. That is, their payments are not to their major enemies, but to their allies in the war. These recruits may be both long-standing allies and minor enemies. The transactions are a means of compensating allied groups for death and injury suffered, as well as for 'transforming' relations of

hostility among minor enemies into ones of alliance (Rumsey 2003:89)⁸. Nevertheless, in order to enable these transactions to begin, a state of peace, or non-violence, had first to be effected between the major enemies, the Ulka and the Kulka. Various agents did much work to creatively harness all the resources that they could to facilitate this state of peace.

The Peacemakers: Women, Priests, and Politicians

The role of women as peacemakers in the Western Highlands has been considered by a number of writers, in particular Merlan and Rumsey (1991) and Rumsey (2000a) whose analysis I discuss in more detail below, as well as Andrew Strathern and Marilyn Strathern in various works. ‘Women-in-between’ is the title of Marilyn Strathern’s (1972) ethnography. Her title translates a phrase used by Highlanders themselves. Strathern (1972: 138-139) explains it as a Highlander comment about the way marriages link groups and individuals in exchange relations, and the role of women as go-betweens in the case of disputes between groups.

It is generally assumed that women are opposed to male acts of aggression and that they are simply passive by-standers in games of war. In answer to my question about the role of women, one of the Ganiga fight leaders gave this dismissive response: “Their contribution is to make sure their men are fed”, and another added, “Our women don’t go onto the battlefield”.

Yet, Merlan and Rumsey (1991:234) record an account of a woman who mounted a surprise attack upon an enemy near her garden by felling him with stones and Magdaline Wilson, a Western Highlands woman who is a cousin of Joe Leahy, argues (pers. comm):

...I think the women play a crucial role. They either aggravate the men to fight or they can calm them down too... the women do go near the fighting place and they go into the gardens of their enemy tribe and they loot the place. Some women want to keep peace and calm the men down but others really hate the enemy tribe, particularly ones that have lost sons or brothers or husbands. They play a crucial role in instigating the fighting indirectly by spurring their men on, spitting at the men who don't go and fight, taunting them and refusing to feed them.

Rumsey (2000a; see also Merlan and Rumsey 1991) discusses an interesting, and apparently novel, attempt at peacemaking in the Nebilyer Valley in 1982, in which women intervened publicly to stop a tribal fight. The group of women walked into the middle of a battlefield between opposing sides, carrying the national flag. They planted the flag on the battlefield and offered the men payments of foodstuff, money, cigarettes and soft drink to lay down their arms. The women were members of a women's club (the Kulka women's club)⁹. Rumsey (2000a) argues that the women were successful in their peacemaking efforts because they were able to harness the cultural construct of women as 'in-between' to other powerful constructs. As a government sponsored club they were associated with 'government law' and with business, which were then seen as impartial yet powerful forces. They were also associated with a strong tribe (the Kulka) that was neutral with respect to the particular conflict in which they intervened. In other words, the women were able to transcend the segmentary identities that lie at the foundation inter-group relations.

Nevertheless, a significant factor in the success of their actions was the fact that that the women acted as if their group was of the same *order* as the segments that were at war. They offered payments to the protagonists to persuade them to cease fighting and this was later repaid, as part of the sequence of compensation payments that were made among the segmentary groups that participated in the fighting. Rumsey (2000a:146) notes that at these events, for the first time that anyone could remember, women gave speeches, ‘in a hybrid style that drew on some of the conventions of traditional male oratory, even including the use of the “segmentary” first person singular’ (Merlan and Rumsey 1991:160-97).

In the light of Rumsey’s analysis of the actions of the Kulka women’s group in 1982, I want to now consider the peacemaking efforts in 1994 during the Nebilyer war of a pastor from the Melpa Lutheran Church, Pastor Peanga. The pastor (significantly, an outsider from Baiyer River) personally intervened in the fighting. Here I provide a summary translation of his account of one incident:

One time the tribe from here [Ganiga] captured two enemies...They called out and said ‘We are bringing two enemy here to kill’...I ran out on to the road to stop the crowd and asked ‘Where are the two enemy people’, and they showed them to me. I said, ‘Those enemies you fight on the battlefield and kill that is acceptable, but when you bring them here it’s unacceptable. Bringing them here is a new way, this attitude is new and it’s not on’. I offered them two big pigs to spare their lives. They were determined to kill the two enemy men and refused. I brought some of my Church members too. The Christians surrounded one of the enemy men and they took him away. The other one I tried to hold and they chopped me as well as the guy. They separated us and I said, ‘If you kill him, kill me too’... I threw myself on the body and some people dragged me away. I’m happy that God helped me and

heard my prayers because if I wasn't there both of them would have died. At least I saved one life'. (Peanga, interview 18 Jan 2000)

In offering to pay the Ganiga pigs if they spared the enemy, the pastor and his Christian followers, like the Kulka women's group, were acting in harmony with Highlander cultural logic and practices. The Christian group attempted to engage in transactions to convert relations of hostility into ones of alliance as if it were just another group within the segmentary system. At the same time they harnessed to their cause symbolic capital associated with new ways of being and new modalities of power, associated with Church and State.

In 1994 Pastor Peanga wrote letters to all the other Lutheran pastors in the Western Highlands asking for support to stop the war. The following is a paraphrase of his account:

Many pastors came and good Christian leaders from other tribes came and gathered on a particular day. After they all arrived, they fasted and prayed. They went three by three, or four by four, to each council area. They went out on to the battlefields at 3 am in the morning to be there before the people arrived to fight. They placed decorated crosses and church flags in the middle of the battlefields, in order too mark that these were no longer fighting places. When the people turned up at 6am to fight they saw the churches there ... The churches continued to occupy these areas for almost 3 months and the people had to try and find new fighting places. This was in 1994. The church representatives would remain on the battlefields from 3am to 11am, when it was too hot to fight. They would then visit the fight leaders to try and convince them to stop the fight. (Pastor Peanga, interview 18 Jan 2000)

There are many resonances between the actions of the pastors and the intervention of the women's group in the 1982 conflict documented by Rumsey and Merlan (1991). In both cases, the peacemakers went out directly on to the

battle field and “planted” symbols of an alternative world¹⁰. In both cases the peacemakers were associated with powerful neutral and mediatory forces that transcended segmentary oppositions and allegiances, while operating as if they were groups of the same order as the fighting groups (ie segmentary social groups). In both cases, it was the battlefield itself that was operated upon so as to effect its transformation from a space of violence to a space of peace. It is as if, in order for place based segmentary politics to be transcended, place itself must be infused, or made fertile, with new meaning. Place itself must be worked and “planted” with new symbolic substance¹¹.

A number of Ganiga and other Western highlanders agreed that the Christian pastors had played a central role in bringing about peace in the Nebilyer. They argued that although state politicians had facilitated the signing of the official peace treaty, they were really only able to do this after the Ulka and Kulka *themselves* had decided to put down arms, in part due to groundwork laid by the Christian Churches. The churches also played a significant role in the organisation of the ceremonial performance surrounding the signing of the official peace treaty at Tega. The Catholic Bishop, Robert Lak, who later became the Governor of the Western Highlands Province, officiated over a Mass. During the service, crosses and Bibles were exchanged between Ulka and Kulka. One of the Ganiga research participants pointed out to us that the politicians had come in and tried to steal the limelight, by holding a big feast in Mt Hagen for the tribal leaders to negotiate peace. However, it rained heavily

that day and the food was raw when it was taken out of the ground oven. He suggested that this was a sign that the politicians were claiming false glory or ‘stolen blessings’¹².

Clearly, Nebilyer people have been deploying a range of agents, or ‘people-in-between’, such as women, pastors, and state politicians, as well as a variety of creative strategies in their attempts to make peace in the Valley. They have also been working out innovative strategies for *maintaining* peace and confirming the peace treaty. For example, in the Nebilyer many of the main fight leaders were elected as Councillors in the first local and provincial elections following the peace treaty.

...now in this latest election, all those guys who used to go and motivate young guys and train them to lead in the fight and all that, we elected these guys to be councillors...Now we look at them and criticise them if they want to go and fight. They think twice...This is one thing I’ve realised we’re trying to do now. The government did not come in you know. We said that’s enough. Ok, what can we do now? We could get these guys who were leaders in fighting and all that and give them job opportunities, like Councillors and Magistrates and then they’ll be able to control the younger ones. (Ganiga Thomas Taim interview 13 Jan. 2000)

Another example of Nebilyer creativity in devising ways to maintain peace concerns a proposed means by which major enemies might be transformed into peaceable neighbours. As mentioned above, compensation payments are traditionally only made to minor enemies (Merlan and Rumsey 1991:207). Andrew Strathern (1971: 88-92) discusses the distinction between major and minor enemies among the Melpa and makes a distinction between ‘reparation’

(compensation to groups who have acted as an ally) and direct compensation (compensation to a minor enemy group). He notes that his informants ‘maintained that in the past no war payments were made to major enemies, only to minor enemies, with whom it was expected that peace could be made and who might be one’s allies in a different sequence of fights later’¹³. Marilyn Strathern (1985:129) stresses that ‘enemies cannot be transformed into peaceable neighbours...enemies are always enemies’. As noted above, Ganiga confirmed that this is normally the case between Ulka and Kulka but they added that this time, in order to maintain the ‘everlasting peace’ treaty, they had been thinking about how they might adapt customary practice by extending war payments to the Kulka.

...when it comes to making peace, in the end we will have to ask them to give us three of the whole batch, three bodies, I mean three dead men...Name them and say ‘For *these* three we want you to compensate’. So they can give us a demand and we’ll take it and then we’ll do the same. We’ll give them three and then on top of that put the demand...So that will confirm our everlasting peace treaty. We will do that. We’re only discussing. We can’t move on. It’s already peace, but to confirm. We’re talking about it so I don’t know how successful it will come to be. It’s only in the initial stages of discussion. (Ganiga Joseph Wagaba interview 13 Jan 2000)

This discussion about ways to confirm the peace treaty is an expression of how Highlanders today, even in relation to major enemies, actively seek to engage as agents in a process of ‘creative creolisation of modes of non-violence’ (Jolly 2000:318)¹⁴.

Events and the disclosure of new significance

Integral to the transactions associated with the conversion of a state of violence to one of non-violence is much public talk about the events that are considered to have triggered the outbreak of fighting in the first place. These events are mined for new significance while various interpretations compete for supremacy in the quest for peace, or ‘transformative justice’ (Rumsey 2003). Identifying events, or event sequences, which stand out as contributing to the ‘root’ cause of an outbreak of fighting is an important part of wealth transactions and peacemaking processes. Merlan and Rumsey (1991:221) examine the ‘significance indigenously attributed to “events” as occurrences which stand out from the ordinary flow of life-as-usual’. They argue that Nebilyer people have a concept of event that is ‘strongly oriented towards the discovery or disclosure of new significance’ because it is assumed that all events (including talk) have a hidden dimension (1991:221). Such disclosure occurs in the course of speech events at public meetings. In their speeches men can subtly reveal, but also conceal meanings through the use of ‘veiled speech’ (*parable tok*). This notion of talk as a means of disguising the inner layers of meaning of any given act has been discussed by a number of writers (eg A. Strathern 1975; Rappaport 1979; Weiner 1991; Li Puma 2001). As Li Puma (2001:166) puts it in relation to the Maring, ‘the words, intonations, and gestures of a good orator weave a cloak of enchantment over the hierarchy of intentions inscribed in an action’¹⁵. Thus, dispute mediators are thought to be particularly skilled if they are able to suggest interpretations of social action that reveal otherwise concealed significance.

What must be revealed for the purposes of compensation payments following tribal warfare is the origin of a person's death or injury in another so as to identify the key 'cause', or the 'principal "owner", "cause", "base" (*pul*) of the fight' (Rumsey 2003:80). However, much talk goes on first behind the scenes. The process of revelation begins in the flow of everyday talk and whispered asides that occur among women, among men and between women and men. Such talk feeds back into and informs the public speeches of male orators and dispute mediators.

According to the Ganiga and other Nebilyer people we interviewed in 2000, the war between Ulka and Kulka was due to an incident that occurred on Joe Leahy's plantation in June 1992. In the process of stealing some coffee, members of another segment of the Ulkas (Ulka Kundulge), who are Ganiga allies, shot a Ganiga security guard employed by Joe Leahy. Some informants included in their account of the 'root' and the war, the theft of a pig belonging to the filmmakers Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson. This is how Joe Leahy explained the events that lead to the killing of his security guard:

One day Madang stole that pig and they took it out. They went and killed it at Ulka Kundulges' place, because Madang went and told these Ulka Kundulges: "You come and steal this big pig, because I look after it and all these people are gone, so *yupela* come". So they came and stole that pig. They took it out. They *mumu'd* that pig in the night and that pig was *so* healthy and *full* of fat and all that and they said, "Well we've got to get some beer". So these blokes came down and they said, "Ok, we're going to steal some coffee and we're going sell the coffee and get the money and go and buy beer". (interview 20 Jan 2000)

In his book *Making Black Harvest*, Bob Connolly (2005: 279-80) wrestles with the implications the theft of this pig, concerned that the theft may have ‘set in motion one of the most ruinous tribal conflicts in the post-Independence history of the PNG Highlands’.

The thieves who had shot dead the security guard tried to cover their tracks by running away in the direction of enemy territory so that people would think it was the enemy who had killed the security guard. When Ganiga found out that one of their own clansmen had been shot dead they immediately retaliated by attacking one of the enemy, George Pintabia, a Poi Penambe working for Joe Leahy at his coffee factory who was interviewed, after narrowly surviving the attack, by Connolly and Anderson for their film ‘Black Harvest’ (see also Connolly 2005:228-9). A Ganiga fight leader described the situation as follows:

Actually the true story is this. The Ulkas killed us and they knew it. They knew that they did it but they didn’t want us to know because if we had known at that time we could have had a war against that clan within ourselves, but they kept it to themselves, so we actually fought the innocent. I mean though they were our traditional enemies, they never did anything. And then it all started from there. The Kulkas were victims for nothing. We know, *now* we know. We lost a lot of lives. And then some wise people in the community said: ‘There is something wrong, people will have to confess’. And then one finally got up and said, ‘Well I’m sorry’, but that was too late. They told us very late. We were not in a position to do anything because so many lives had already been lost. We started out with bows and arrows and finally we had to look around for guns. (interview 13 Jan 2000)

Another Ganiga described the events as follows:

The fight started on the plantation. One of our security guards was shot dead by one of our own people here, but we didn’t know that. We were suspecting one of our enemies. So we suspected one of our enemies done it and we went and chopped George Pintabia...George Pintabia’s

line [Poi Penambe] said to the Ganigas : “You’re suspicious of us for the wrong that you Ganigas yourself caused and are blaming us for, and retaliating”. So we thought that they were denying; so we took our bows and arrows; and when the first person was killed out came the guns. (Ganiga interview 13 Jan 2000)

According to the Councillor, it was the Poi Penambe wives of Ganiga men who first sowed the seeds of doubt about the veracity of the initial account of the event upon which the Ganiga acted by attacking the Poi Penambe. The women carried the message back that Poi Penambe were not responsible for shooting the Ganiga security guard. Ganiga began to speculate that something was not right and new meaning was sought in the chain of events that lead up to outbreak of fighting. Various interpretations began circulating in the private realm, to be sifted through the screen of male public oratory. In this way, particular interpretations of events were granted legitimacy while others were dismissed, and the ‘true’ or ‘root’ causes of particular outbreaks of fighting were determined for the purposes of deciding segmentary group action, including peacemaking transactions.

Implications of the revelations for the peacemaking process

As described above, while the Ulkas have been making compensation payments among themselves, the Kulkas have been engaged in a similar round of transactions. It was a Poi Penambe who was axed by the Ganiga, in response to the killing of their man on the plantation. The Kulkas joined the fight in support of the Poi Penambe, who are their allies. Now they require the Poi Penambe to compensate them for their losses.

According to George Pintabia:

The Kulkas are putting the pressure on me and my tribe you see, because I was axed. I was axed and the fight started. Probably about 30 or 40 men were killed, Kulkas. And the pressure is on me now, my father and my small tribe, Poi Penambes, you know. They've been given pigs and money and all that thing, and then they're still putting pressure on us today. I feel like, you know, escaping to somewhere else, but where could I go? They are still demanding money from us now, to compensate them. We gave them, I think two times we gave them pigs. We gave them about 40 each time, so I think we gave them about 80. They want cash now. I have to initiate that by putting in a couple of grand, which I haven't got. They [Kulka] sort of feel that because they [Ganiga (Ulka)] chopped you and we supported you and we lost our men in the fight and then you're still alive, we should be compensated by you for our men. They, the Kulkas, continually put pressure on us, because I was axed; continually asking, every day. They came and grabbed two pigs of mine worth about 1000 kina each, just before December. I couldn't say anything. They said, 'You were cause of all this trouble and all that and so we have the right to get the pigs off you'. You completely feel hopeless. (interview 28 Jan 2000)

On the other side, having discovered that it was their Ulka allies, the Ulka Kundulge, who had killed the Ganiga security guard, and not the Kulka, the Ganiga have demanded compensation from the Ulka Kundulge for having been the cause of the fight in the first place. According to one of the Ganiga leaders, the Ulka Kundulge had by January 2000 paid the Ganiga over 100 pigs and some 20,000 kina. However, the Ulka Kundulge had pointed out that they were not entirely at fault because Ganiga Madang¹⁶ had incited them to go on the coffee stealing expedition that had led to the shooting of the Ganiga security guard. In other words, the Ulka Kundulge located the root cause of the war back with the Ganiga. It is through such revelatory processes of event deconstruction that liability is determined for the purpose of reparation and reconciliation payments and that peace processes take form.

What generates events classifiable as root causes (or what is it that feeds the root cause)?

Although Ganiga tend to identify particular incidents as ‘root’ causes of an outbreak of fighting and particular named persons and clan groups as being the ‘root’ or *pul* of the fight, in order to fully explain violent conflict, the larger processes operating within the *dynamics* of these particular events need to be understood. Contemporary Nebilyer war and peace transactions are part of a total social situation which includes tensions generated by the impact of cash-cropping and the vagaries of a world-market economy. Events that are designated root causes by Nebilyer people need to be interpreted as a part of this total social situation, as indeed Nebilyer people themselves attempt to do.

A number of Ganiga explained the theft of coffee from Joe Leahy’s plantation, as having been due to jealousy; in other words they saw jealousy as lying at the root of the root cause, or as having fed the root cause. Ganiga argued that their neighbours, including their allies, Ulge Kundulge and others, were jealous of their relationship with plantation owner Joe Leahy and the money they were potentially going to make out of their joint coffee business.

As the Ganiga Councillor put it:

First year was good production, second year was good production, third year was very, very good production, and then the outside community got jealous of what we were doing. The neighbouring tribe they were jealous and they came in tried to steal the coffee from the plantation. They were making an attempt to steal coffee. One guy who had a homemade gun, he shot him [the Ganiga security guard] at close range. And that’s how everything started, the war. The jealousy came in at that

time; ok, then everything started, the fighting started. The jealousy was within the Ulka tribe, but not knowing that the incident was done by the Ulkas we went and attacked our enemies. (Ganiga Joseph Wagaba 13 Jan 2000)

Similarly, the Ganiga Magistrate said:

Our fathers had plenty of land so when Joe came he planted coffee. Because of the plantation and there was a lot of money some people got jealous and they came in and killed one of our clansmen. (13 Jan 2000)

Strathern & Stewart (1998:213) have noted that in the Western Highlands the term *jelas* (jealous) 'had entered into local discourse as a way of describing the ordinary tenor of intra-clan relationships as well as inter-clan relationships' by 1994. I suggest that jealousy is a concept that people use to express an awareness of being caught up in structural processes that are leading to increasingly unequal access to the means of wealth transaction. According to Strathern & Stewart (1998) the introduction of cash crops has intensified competition for land in the Highlands. Coffee growing has produced tensions because the land set aside for it is 'semi-permanently removed from the traditional cultivation cycle and thus made unsuitable for subsistence use' (Strathern & Stewart 1998:213). Whereas in the past, people had relatively equal access to land for subsistence crops and for the production of food and pigs required for exchange relations, land for cash-cropping is not available to all. There is, thus, growing differential access to land as the means of transaction. According to Strathern and Stewart (1998) after the introduction of cash-crops such as coffee, people continued to transform land into exchange value by growing coffee on their land, selling it for money and channelling this

money into indigenous local politics such as bridewealth and compensation payments. Increasingly, however, land which was once available to be ‘transformed into exchange’, has itself become exchangeable (Strathern and Stewart 1998:220)¹⁷.

Highlanders are only too aware that if they turn over too much of their land to coffee they put themselves in a position where they are at the mercy of fluctuating global markets and dependent on store bought foods because they no longer have enough garden land to sustain themselves. As Strathern & Stewart (1998:213) note ‘tensions over inequality, perceived or genuine, in land resources nowadays translate easily into quarrels and accusations between members of local groups’. For the Ganiga and their neighbours, experience of the inequities generated within this social field is all the more immediate because of their relationship with Joe Leahy and the history of their business ventures with him in the coffee industry. While the Ganiga and their neighbours continue to seek the root causes of violence within the segmentary system, so as to effect transformations of relations of hostility into relations of alliance, such ‘causes’ conceal as much as they reveal to both themselves and to social analysts (including filmmakers and anthropologists). The key point here is that event analysis, whether it is insider or outsider, must be articulated with structural analysis for a better understanding of the complexities of war and peace in Melanesia. A focus on the particularities of causative events should not distract from the significance of the dialectical relationship between segmentary

politics and emerging class interests in outbreaks of violent conflict and peacemaking processes.

Conclusion

Many prominent anthropologists have attempted to understand the nature and meaning of violence in Melanesian societies. Some of these (e.g. Harrison 1989, 1993; Knauff 1990; and Strathern 1985) have used their interpretations of how and why violence manifests itself in Melanesia as a means of critique against Western theories of human sociality, which take violence as a natural human condition, and the emergence of the state as the means by which violence is regulated. While such theories assume that violence represents a breakdown of social order, Harrison (1989; 1993), Weiner et al (2002), Marilyn Strathern (1985), among others, argue that for Melanesians violence is an expression of thoroughly social relations. Nevertheless, this does not mean that violence is necessarily celebrated as something positive. As the words of Maggie Wilson's song indicate, in the Western Highlands hearts ache over outbreaks of violence. New actors, including agents of the church and the state, have entered the arena of segmentary local politics and play crucial roles in the transformative relations between war and peace in this uncertain and unpredictable world. The Ganiga and their neighbours of the Nebilyer Valley creatively experiment with different modes of non-violence. Yet, at the same time as they assert agency and ingenuity in fashioning peace, they are

increasingly and inexorably caught up in structures and processes that may ultimately be beyond their control.

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Joe Leahy's Neighbours. 1989. A film by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson 1989. Ronin Films.

Black Harvest. 1992 A film by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson. Film Australia Ltd.

NOTES

¹ Rumsey and Merlan (1991) transcribe the name Ganiga as Kulanika, since /g/ and /k/ are interchangeable in the Tembuka language spoken by Ganiga and neighbouring peoples of the Nebilyer Valley.

² The Ulka tribe numbers at least 5000 people (Rumsey 2000: 140). According to the Ganiga Councillor, Joseph Wagaba (interview 13 Jan 2000) Ulka numbered then about 7000 and Kulka 3000.

³ It was one of the Ganiga research participants who referred to the accord as 'everlasting peace' (Taim, interview 13 Jan 2000).

⁴ Marilyn Strathern (1972:229) notes that Hageners make a terminological distinction between two types of compensation payments: restitutory and reconciliatory. Some payments are meant to retribute for material loss and others are seen as a means of repairing damage to a relationship. This is mainly in relation to property disputes. According to Strathern (1972:229), 'Quarrels, homicide and sexual offences involve damage which can never be rectified with an equivalent gift, and payments have an overall reconciliatory character, intended to "make good the feelings" of the injured party'.

⁵ See Roscoe (1996) and Knauff (1990) for reviews of these debates concerning the nature and meaning of violence in Melanesia.

⁶ One figure cited was 150 people.

⁷ Note the use here of what Merlan and Rumsey (1991:160-97) refer to as 'the segmentary first person singular', which is a convention of male oratory and is a way that the speaker marks the conflation of his individual and his segmentary identity. See Rumsey (2000b) for a discussion of the notion of segmentary first person in relation to tensions between Sahlins's model of 'heroic history' (the idea that chiefs encompass within their own person the lives of many) and Strathern's model of the partible person (ie the Melanesian person as constituted in terms of relation between parts).

⁸ Rumsey (2003) questions the applicability of the Western ideal of 'restorative justice' in the Western Highlands and argues that 'the established logic of peacemaking in this area is one of "conversion" rather than of "restoration"' (p.90).

⁹ See Sexton (1982; 1993) for an analysis of such women's clubs in the Eastern Highlands (known as the *Wok Meri* movement)

¹⁰ This metaphorical use of the verb 'to plant' is of cultural significance to Highlanders themselves. See also Wardlow (2002) on 'planting' cheese-pops.

¹¹ That it was *flags* that were planted by the churches in this case and by the Kulka women's group in the Ku Waru case described by Merlan and Rumsey (1991) is significant in that this symbolic action evokes an established practice during colonial times of kiaps planting the national flag and staying on the battlefield threatening to arrest and shoot the protagonists unless they dispersed.

¹² See Merlan and Rumsey (1991:228) for an interesting discussion of the omens (*temal*) and the idea of the weather as being an indicator of the condition of segmentary group relations.

¹³ Nevertheless, as Strathern (1971:91) points out, there had been in recent years extensions of payments to groups that were traditionally major enemies. Strathern explains this as being due to the agency of particular big-men who wished to extend their ceremonial exchange networks. He does not interpret it as a new peacekeeping strategy.

¹⁴ See Rumsey (2003) for an account of this process in the Ku Waru region, in which he includes extracts from a funerary speech by a young councillor, John Ongka, who addresses

Ulka and Kulka people at the funeral to the effect that if they had an alliance of councils in the Nebilyer area like the *faipela* councils in his area, they would be at peace Rumsay (2003:88).

¹⁵ To illustrate his point Li Puma (2000:164) includes the following comment from one of his informants: “When people talk, we listen with only one ear, we look with only one eye. The other ear is to hear what they have said to others privately (e.g., gossip); the other eye is to see/know the root of the gift. Talk is like the flowers/leaves of a plant; it captures the eye and is pleasing but there is also much that lies below the ground...” See also Robbins (2001a, 2001b).

¹⁶ Ganiga Madang features in ‘Joe Leahy’s Neighbours’ and ‘Black Harvest’. His wife is an Ulka Kundulge woman.

¹⁷ According to Strathern and Stewart (1998) Mokei people requested some Kawelka land as compensation for a killing. ‘This novel request stepped outside of the customary settlement modes’ (p.215). The Mokei were proposing a novel shift in practice: ‘the equation of a life with a stretch of land rather than wealth produced from the land...’ (p.216). They proposed a ‘transformation of exchange into land’ (p.220).