A Cultural Mechanism to Sustain Peace: How the Asabano Made and Ended War

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Abstract: Peaceful coexistence has replaced endemic warfare among the Asabano and other Om-Fu River peoples in Papua New Guinea. An Australian patrol making first contact in the 1960s curtailed warfare through threats. A decade later, Christian missionaries successfully communicated a ban on fighting and a mechanism for dispersing the vengeful feelings that had maintained payback cycles through prayer. Institutions forbidding raiding and a ritual engaging a supernatural agent who demands exclusive rights to revenge have defused local warfare for 50 years. This case suggests that peace can be indefinitely sustained through enculturating appropriate beliefs and scripts that are tailored for particular cultural contexts.

Keywords: pacification, peace, religion, Melanesia, war, world peace

Résumé : La coexistence pacifique a remplacé la guerre larvée chez les Abasanos et d'autres peuples de la rivière Om-Fu de Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée. Une patrouille australienne qui fit les premiers contacts avec ces peuples dans les années 1960 mit fin à la guerre au moyen de menaces. Une décennie plus tard, des missionnaires chrétiens réussirent à interdire les combats et mettre en place un mécanisme pour désamorcer, par la prière, les sentiments vindicatifs qui nourrissaient les cycles de représailles. Des institutions interdisant les raids et un rituel invoquant un agent surnaturel qui exige le droit exclusif d'exercer une vengeance ont inhibé les guerres locales depuis 50 ans. Ce cas suggère qu'il est possible de maintenir indéfiniment la paix en inscrivant dans la culture des croyances et des scénarios appropriés, conçus pour un contexte culturel spécifique.

Mots-clés : pacification, paix, religion, Mélanésie, guerre, paix

Introduction: A Bad Thing

The Asabano are one of several groups with populations numbering from the tens to the hundreds living in the rugged Om and Fu River valleys of central New Guinea. Peaceful coexistence replaced former cycles of endemic warfare among these groups during the 1960s and was consolidated in the 1970s. Their stories of warfare include ambush killings, torture of captives, abductions of women and children, annihilation of whole hamlets and cannibalism of enemies. These events occurred before their conversion to Christianity, an era they call "the bad time." Like the similarly fight-ready Jalé of the West Papuan highlands, the Asabano regarded fighting as both a necessary and a "bad thing" (Koch 1979:201). Conventional wisdom advised against fighting, yet people fell prey to vengeful and violent desires. Combined with the burgeoning solidarity with their fellows and allies that normally accompanied such wishes, individual feelings and their violent expression were recurrently magnified into the tragedy of war.

Attacks ceased with the arrival of the Australian colonial government and its policy of imprisonment for fighting. However, elders attributed warfare's demise to the arrival of Christianity. This was made possible when all groups in the area accepted the principle that revenge is the prerogative of Christianity's universal god.

In analyzing these changes, I seek to answer two questions based on the interviews I conducted 30 years after the last raids took place. First, how did the precontact sociocultural system perpetuate endemic warfare? Fresh acts of war after periods of peace were precipitated as much by developments within groups as by actions of future enemies. Initial attacks were reactions to sorcery supposed to originate from other groups or taunts of would-be warriors by others in their own communities. Where participating groups held up payback as a satisfying measure of justice and where organized ambushes were recognized as feasible, such catalysts

Table 1: Ethnic Groups of the Om Watershed Region

Self Designation	Asaba Designation	Telefol Designation	Language
Asabano	Asabano [Kienu River]	Duranmin	Asaba [Duranmin]
Asabano	Asabano [Om-Fu R.]	Sugamin	Asaba
Towale	Womolono	Akiapmin	Towale Ate
Telefolmin	Kibluno	Telefolmin	Telefol
Omai [or Menaubi]	Omaino	Mondubanmin	Omai
Opa	Beneyeneno	Emiapmin	Omai
Lembana	Kameablono	Efumin	Lembana
Oksapmin*	Silono	Oksapmin	Oksapmin
Saiyo	Seseno	Sisimin	Saiyo
Mianmin*	Kolino	Miyanmin	Miyanmin
Falamin	Yagamono	Feramin	Falamin

* The Oksapmin and Miyanmin had no traditional names for themselves as groups, but have now adopted the Telefol designations.

Table 2: Ethnic Groups of the Upper Wario River

Self Designation	Asaba Designation	Telefol Designation	Language
Baiyamo	Baiyamono	Yubaiyamin	Baiyamo (Paupe)
Kabiano	Abunakabeno	Unagabmin	Kabiano (Hewa)
Setiyale	Sideyale	—	Setiyale (Hewa)
Sumwari	Sideyale	—	Sitiyale (Hewa)

were able to incite attacks when the emotional pitch was sufficiently raised.

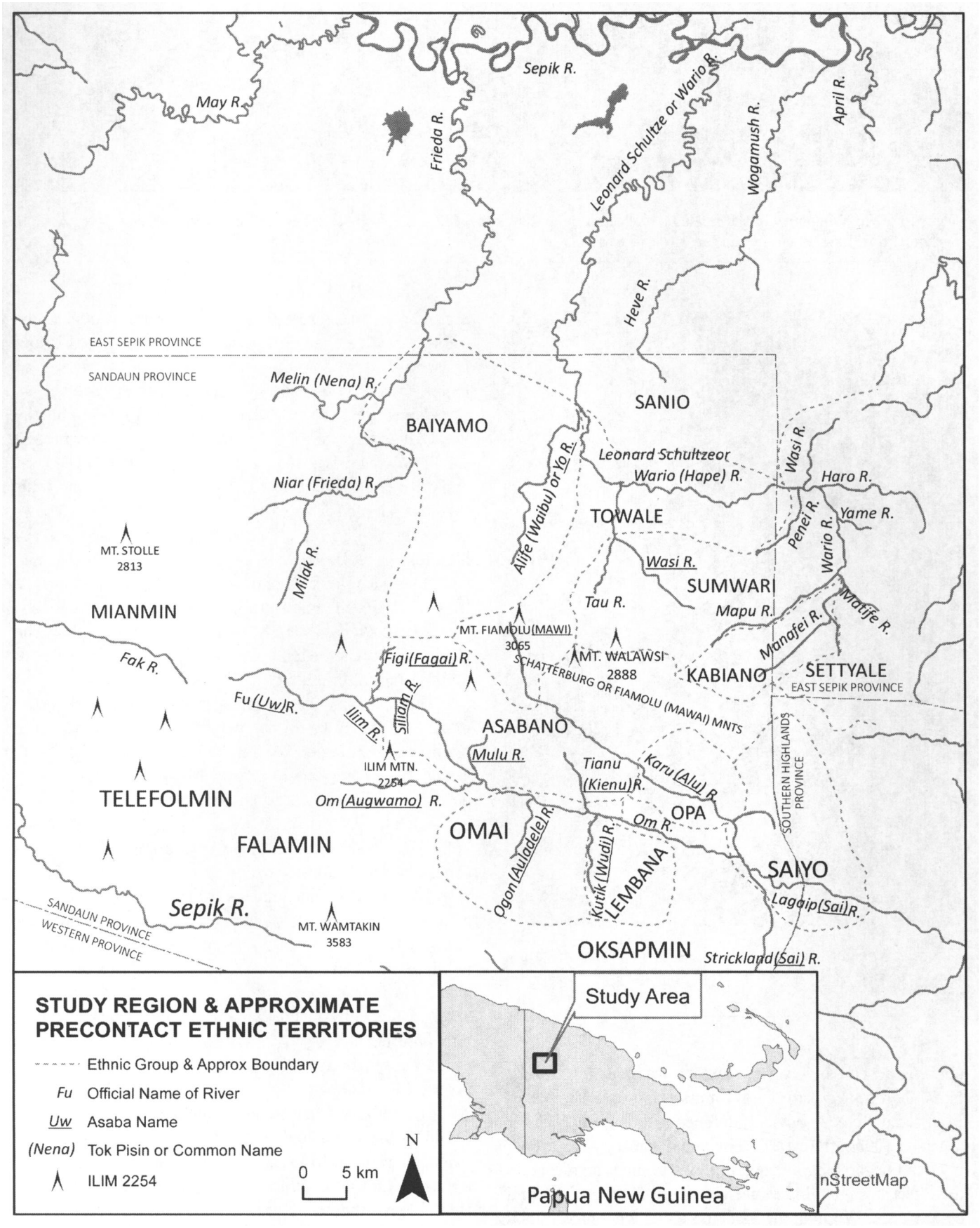
The second question I address is: how did changes in political control and religious ideology contribute to the end of warfare in this region? I find that enforced colonial pacification contributed an immediate disincentive to initiate new raids, but it did not result in a change in the retributive ideology that justified and encouraged tit-for-tat warlike outbursts. This latter was accomplished by the installation and virtually universal acceptance of a supernatural judge and enforcer. This belief, and the accompanying scripted response to perceived affronts—a ritual of prayer in place of directly avenging—stabilized the peace, which has remained for 50 years.

Material and structural causes of peace and war manifest and are apprehended in culturally distinctive ways, such that "beliefs and attitudes, though largely derivative, are still an essential part of the functioning of war systems. This opens the possibility that ideas developed by anthropologists may have an impact 'in the real world'" (Ferguson 1989:143). The value I intend for this essay is to show how the specifics of this case inform broader questions about the nature and causes of peaceful relations among societies across humankind, in all places and times. The scale of socio-political complexity of the societies engaged in efforts toward peace influences what kinds of peaceful alternatives to violent engagements are possible, since peace, like war, is a collective undertaking requiring political will and control. For peace to be sustainable, tailored cultural ideologies that provide viable alternatives to war must be distributed and maintained.

Pre-contact Warfare

Several small ethnolinguistic groups live in the remote and sparsely populated region where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 1991, 1994–95, 2005 and 2007 (see Tables 1 and 2 and Map 1). Before contact with globalized cultural flows during the mid-20th century, groups in this area converged and diverged, fought and established friendships, expanded and were reduced to extinction. Asabano elders, speaking in the mid-1990s of their relations with neighbouring groups before contact, reported that the Mianmin, the Oksapmin, the Baiyamo and the Towale were their consistent allies, while the Opa, the Saiyo and the Telefolmin shifted back and forth between being allies and being enemies. The Omai and the Kabiano were generally regarded as enemies, and the Lembana, the Setiyale and the Sumwari had little positive or negative contact with the Asabano. These generalizations, however, obscure the fact that even subgroups of the same people and other allies could be attacked or made the butt of an alliance with a third group, to deflect rapacious attention from themselves.

Warfare was a constant threat and occupation of the Asabano. Bows and arrows and long palm-wood hand



Map 1: Approximate Late Pre-contact Ethnic Territories. Redrawn by Candis Haak from Lohmann 2000:30.

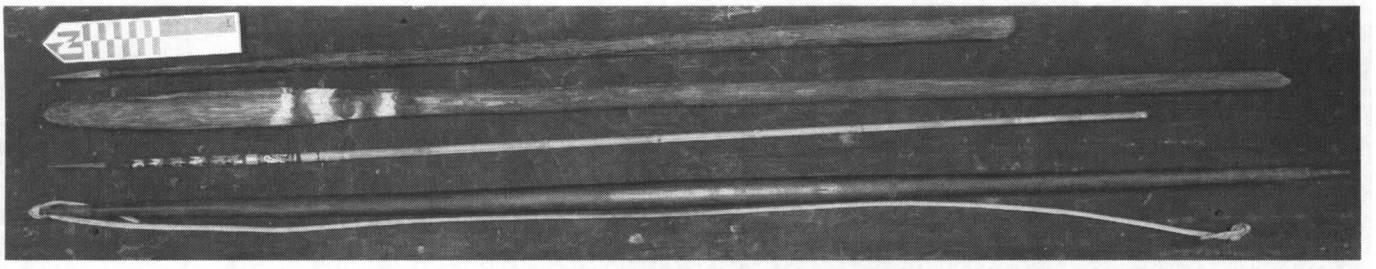


Figure 1: War Weaponry of the Asabano (collected by author in 1994–95). Top to bottom: spear tipped with cassowary spur, club, barbed arrow, bow. Photo by author.

Figure 2: Omahu (right) and Baraiab Demonstrate Fighting Partners' Use of Bow, Arrows and Shield, 1995. Photo by author.

spears and clubs were the primary weapons, and every house had a large supply of ammunition (see Figure 1). Man-sized shields provided defence (see Figure 2; Craig 1988:41; 2005a, figure 27). The usual strategy for attack involved organizing a group of allies to meet on a certain day. The host hamlet would provide a feast cooked in a steam oven. Wuniod, an Asabano elder who served as a multilingual interpreter based in Oksapmin during the colonial era, re-enacted for me a ritual he said warriors performed in the men's *nuwalemawbu* "secret/sacred house," where bone relics of male ancestors were stored, to prepare for a fight. A shield was laid face-up on the floor. Over the "heart" (the quadrangle at the centre of the carved and painted design; see Figure 2) they set one of the ancestral bones. Placing tinder over the relic, the men kindled a fire and held their arrows and bows above the fire, saying, "When I shoot these arrows, you hit their heart or their eye—kill them." Then the men would stand up and whoop, brandishing the weapons as they still do in celebratory drum dances. Similarly, Fraser Macdonald (2013:chapter 3) reports that the Oksapmin kindled such a fire on the bare chests of boys undergoing initiation.

The morning after arriving at the appointed settlement, the warriors would set off and camp near the hamlet they intended to attack. Before dawn they positioned themselves along the trail leading to the stream used for drinking water and shot the people as they came out of the house in the morning. One man would hold the shield while another would stand behind it and shoot arrows. Yalowad, who was an elder when I spoke with him in 1994, said that as a beardless boy he killed a Saiyo man. He was partnered with Wani, who later became the local Baptist pastor, and they took turns holding the shield. Yalowad shot the Saiyo man in the chest. He fell, but was not yet dead, so Yalowad ran up and finished him off by twisting his head back. I asked him how he felt about it at the time. He said he was really happy, as he had not killed a man before and this proved his manhood.

An Asabano man named Simolibo, in his thirties in the mid-1990s, recalled that when he was a small child, "the fathers used to say if a big rainstorm came at night it was a sign that enemies were close at hand and no one should leave the house in the morning" for fear of being attacked. He said sieges could last up to two weeks.

Figure 3: Belok Wearing a Wosaw and Holding a *Hawbu* (drum) for a Drum Dance at Yakob, 2005. Photo by author.

According to Bledalo, who was a mature man and an accomplished warrior before first contact,

> Before, in fighting times, we'd kill the parents and capture the children and look after them. Before, in the bad times, the fathers taught us like school that we mustn't be afraid of fighting. They would say, "If you run away I'll shoot you with an arrow!" So we would be afraid. "You must capture children and change them and look after them." They said it's good. I took an ancestor's bone in my net bag to raids, for power. Our ancestors didn't look after the bones well, so they would lose fights but, before I went to fight, I arranged all the bones in the sacred house, so I won fights.

When relations were positive, representatives walked for days to visit neighbouring groups and would honour them by donning huge *wosaw* feather headdresses and long grass skirts, leading singing for drum dances that lasted from sunset to sunrise. The host hamlet provided food cooked in a steam oven. All groups in the Om River watershed and the Upper Wario River participated in this tradition. Drum dances provided an opportunity to cement alliances, meet possible marriage partners, pay debts, hear complaints and forge plans. They provided an evening of drama and beauty to punctuate the usual life of gardening and hunting (see Figure 3).

The Asabano and Telefolmin living near the Duranmin airstrip recalled a long period of hostility between their peoples that significantly reduced Asabano numbers. Namo, a Telefolmin living in a hamlet on the Upper Fu, who appeared to be in his seventies when I spoke to him in 1995, said, "Our ancestors finished off the Irigimin who lived at Eliptaman, and then came to Aremin land in the Upper Fu. One generation finished off both groups. My father and I fought with the Sugamin [Fu River Asabano]." Olimilai, who appeared to be in his eighties in 1995, lived among the Telefolmin on the Upper Fu but was born an Asabano at Kienu River. Telefolmin raiders captured him as a boy of about 12.

> Most of us fled during the night from Kienu River to Karu River. After fighting us at Kienu River, they followed us to Karu River. I ran with my father to a garden fence and we hid under it. Many Telefolmin came and surrounded the place. Then they found us and killed my father with a bow and arrow and captured me. They killed my mother, two sisters and my grandparents at the same time. My cousin-sister (*isade*) Nenemo, Levy's [a well-known Telefolmin businessman] mother, now living at Telefomin, was also captured and we were taken to Aiyam River, which joins the Fu. Then they separated us and the Telefolip people took her and the Eliptaman people took me. I was just a kid; I was not afraid or wanting to run away—I just went with them. They became my parents and were kind to me. I thought and worried about it some, but I was just a kid so I wasn't angry.
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> Why did they fight? For land, sago, hunting land. When I went to stay with the Telefolmin, I grew up. Then there was another fight. I helped the Telefolmin fight with the Asabano. We stopped this fight before the Australians came.

Olimilai explained how peace was ceremonially reestablished between enemy groups in recounting the ending of hostilities between the Telefolmin and Asabano before first contact.

> We used to come and stand some distance from the enemy village and call to them the intention to make peace. Then we would carry some red Cordyline inside the house and break it with an arrow before their eyes. This is the custom of both Asabano and Telefolmin to finish hostilities. The Kienu and Fu River Asabano saw when we did this, they killed a pig, we told stories together, smoked, ate and slept together and then the war was finished. Then white men came and finished fighting completely.

Asabano men told me stories explaining the origins of the decades-long fighting between themselves and the Telefolmin, in which Olimilai was captured. My genealogical data indicate that this long enmity resulted in heavy losses to the Asabano in killings and abductions. Sitting in the bush house at Aduduma, the location where it happened, a young Asabano man named Jim Alosi told one version in 1995.

> My grandfather Aliadi turned into a *mosidu* [eagle species], flew to Aduduma and sat down near some *kwobodu* nuts that pigs eat. He was watching for pigs. He heard a sago tree fall. He turned into an eagle again and flew and sat on a branch. He saw some Telefolmin had come to cut sago. Then he flew to his village and told them, as well as the people from Kienu [Asabano], Towale and some Falamin friends what he had seen. All these groups met and there were many people gathered. They slept at Wobusuma [a camp on the Fu] and early the next morning they surrounded the Telefolmin. They fought with them and finished all of them off, every one was killed except a little boy who escaped. He told his group and they came to fight with us. This is why we fought with them. Aliadi was the father of Abueli, my father. He could turn into an eagle—he had a feather that allowed him to do it.

Belok, an Asabano man in his thirties in the mid-1990s, told the story with a different emphasis.

> Long ago, our ancestor went to watch for wild pigs near some nuts. As he was waiting, he heard a tree fall. Investigating, he saw a group of Telefolmin cutting sago on their territory. He went back and told the people what he had seen.
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> Meanwhile, the women had been talking about the men, saying, "Some of you have big cocks, but some of them are only little." They were saying all these taunting words and the men were mad about it, so they said, "You women have it too good, so we'll go kill those Telefolmin. We'll start a big feud and then you women won't have it so easy and make all this kind of bad talk." They got together lots of men, and made a big steam oven to cook sago and meat and said, "Tomorrow we'll go kill the Telefolmin." They gathered men from many areas.
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> Next morning they left and in the morning they saw two men come walking and they shot them. One Telefolmin had gone to watch for pigs at the nuts and he called out "*Kwina, kwina!*" This is said when a man has been hit with an arrow and he thinks he will die. In Asaba language you say, "*Wanali, wanali!*" We say this if we burn our hand in the fire, too. So the Telefolmin group heard the man's call and they argued over if it had been a bird or a man. One man said, "No, I heard it well—it was a man." He put his bow over his shoulder and took a piece of meat. Meanwhile the Asabano surrounded them and killed many of them but this man succeeded in shooting one of the Asabano in the mouth.
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> He then flew away (he was a witch). The Asabano killed many men, and then went back to their village and had a celebration and drum dance all night. After that, the Telefolmin were very angry and attacked us repeatedly, killing nearly all of us.

The Telefolmin elder, Namo, and Katalim, a young man of mixed Asabano and Telefolmin parentage, who both live among the Telefolmin on the Upper Fu, told of another skirmish that happened somewhat later. This story shows how fragile alliances were and how easily closely related groups could betray one another. The Falamin used to own the upper Om River, from the Figi and Bi Rivers. The Kasangelmin (Ungeno in Asaba), a subgroup of the Fu River Asabano, had territory at the head of the Bi River. An ancestral woman, Katamoson, was a captive Fu River Asabano living with the Telefolmin. She was with a party that went to Aduduma camp on the Fu to cut sago. This was on her natal territory, so she went to visit her Fu River Asabano relatives who were at Igima camp, downriver from Wobusuma. She told her brother, "The Telefolmin have come and are cutting our sago; what are you going to do about it?" They got lots of tobacco and put a bamboo knife inside a bundle of it and gave it to her and told her, "Give this to your husband, and tell the Telefolmin to go and kill the Kasangalmin and Falamin who are on the other side of the river at Wobusuma. Then they will leave us alone." She did this and, after they smoked, they went and killed the Kasangalmin and Falamin.

The bundle of tobacco with a bamboo knife is symbol of alliance and the start of a war against a third party. By sending this to the Telefolmin, the Fu River Asabano saved themselves from the potential threat of the Telefolmins by instead directing them to attack a third group, who were their allies and spoke the same language.

Bledalo told of his youthful experiences fighting the Telefolmin.

> When I was a little kid, they had come to Karu River to sleep—we thought about killing them, but they got away. At this time, they killed Wani's mother and captured two of my cousin sisters [sisters/female parallel cousins]. At Kienu River they burned the men's house where we kept men's skulls. The Telefolmin closed the door and set it on fire and it was destroyed. I was very little at that time. After that, the men were really afraid of the Telefolmin and would hide if they saw signs of them.

> The first time I fought, the Telefolmin came and fought with us. Then we were mad and I got a shield, and went to the head of the Fagai [Figi] River near the head of Frieda River. In one village we killed them all and burned their houses. There were many people there. I wasn't afraid; I didn't count them; I just wanted revenge. I didn't capture any women. We went with the Towale and Baiyamo. My friend and cross-cousin Ifauli said to me, "Let's go fight; they've hurt us; let's get revenge. I've slept at their village and I know what it's like." We killed everyone at a small hamlet with one house, too. The big village we destroyed had nine or ten houses. They came and hurt us a lot and I cried, so I killed women and children too. I had just a little beard and wasn't married yet.

The Omai, who occupied the Middle Karu River at contact, have vast territory along the Om as well. They were rivals of similar strength and close proximity to the Asabano, and relations cycled between feud and friendship—usually the former, driven mainly by the desire for payback. Fugod, an Asabano elder in the mid-1990s, told me how cycles of revenge ensured that fighting would continue.

> My mother told me that my father cooked an Omai man in a steam oven after a fight. Then the Omai came to fight us when I was a baby. They killed my father, burned our house and captured my mother and me. Later our men came to pay back and, when the fighting started, my mother hid and ran away with me, back to our own people. Years later, when I grew up I had forgotten, but the older men reminded me of what had happened in the past and made me feel angry with the Omai and anxious to fight with them.

The desire for revenge inspired not only killing and capturing but also torture. Baraiab, an Asabano man of about 60 in the mid-1990s, witnessed as a child the de-fleshing of a captured Omai man at the head of the Karu River, at Tubale River.

> We were very angry at the Omai for past raids. The fathers captured one of them and tied him to the central post in the community house. His hands were tied behind his back to the central post and his neck, waist and legs were also tied to the post. Inside the house women were grating taro in preparation for the steam oven. Then, amidst his horrendous, piercing screams the men proceeded to cut the meat off his body while he was alive. They started at the hips and removed the leg meat, then de-fleshed the arms, then the facial meat and then they got to his torso. Eventually there was nothing but bones tied up to the post. They kept doing it slowly, until the sun went down and he finally died. Only the important men ate the meat. At another time the Towale did the same thing to a Telefolmin man.

"Once," Bledalo told me, "the Omai came and burned down the [Asabano] sacred house and with it, burned part of one of Iblukanawe's [a culture hero] femurs. Since then look, there are hardly any of them left, so I think Iblukanawe was angry with them."

The last raid conducted by Asabano was in aid of their sometime enemies, the Omai, against the Saiyo in 1963. The Saiyo live along the Strickland and Lagaip Rivers. They were alternately friendly and belligerent toward the Asabano. They were the primary source of shell money and phallocrypts for the Asabano. The Australian colonial administration learned of it and made first contact with the Asabano as part of their investigation, sending several men to jail (Marks 1963). Bledalo took part.

> I was at Kienu River, and we went down to fight people at the Fu and Om—Saiyo and Omai people were there. They were mixed together in one village at that time. We were mad about a woman; there was a young woman we wanted to marry and if they wouldn't give her to us, we would go to fight.
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> I went to fight and I captured three women! Then the government came and made me give them back—I was really mad! They were all Saiyo. One of mine ran away in the middle of the night; we called after her but couldn't find her. I gave one of them to Fugod and they were married for two or three months. One of them was given to my little brother [brother/male parallel cousin] Taram, but both were taken back by the government. That was my last fight; the government put me in jail.

Shortly afterwards the Saiyo launched a retributive raid and killed some Asabano but this was their last experience of tribal warfare. Until that end came, armed men always accompanied women as they went to their gardens. Children were kept silent for protection from enemy raids that might come at any time. Houses were built high on stilts with ample supplies of arrows and firewood in readiness for siege. People lived in perpetual fear of attack, while often engaging in plans for their own attacks. Sometimes raids resulted in only one or a few deaths of men, women or children, as when lone individuals were ambushed on early mornings as they left their communal houses to bathe.

Older men admitted that in the past they were advised—in theory—to avoid warfare. "If you fight, you won't live long," their elders had said; yet people were nevertheless often drawn into fighting. Similar sayings

have also been reported elsewhere in New Guinea, as among the Enga (Wiessner 2009:181).

In the stories of past conflicts, every wrong is seen as a response to another wrong. A logic of retribution, which is widespread among peoples bearing exchange-centric cultures such as those of Melanesia (Trompf 1994), is obvious in this Asabano oral historic account of cycles of revenge. However, the period of peace that preceded the long feud with the Telefolmin is portrayed as having ultimately been broken not by a wrong from an external group that had to be avenged. Rather, according to storytellers, the start of it all was Asabano women—who did not themselves take up arms in pre-contact warfare—insulting their own men. The men did not reciprocate this verbal attack directly or in equal strength. Rather, they turned their fury on another group. While they justified killing these people because they were stealing Asabano property, again, the theft of some sago was out of proportion with this massacre.

In the story of the captive Asabano woman Katamoson, who apparently sought to incite her people to attack her "captors-in-law" for stealing their sago, their response was instead to strike an alliance with them and direct them to attack their erstwhile allies to save themselves. Making peace by ritually breaking an arrow and establishing an allegiance by sending a bamboo blade in a bundle of tobacco were opposite points of view on the same deadly exchange. Peace was established by allegiance, which, however, simultaneously implied agreement to come to one another's homicidal aid against others when a new feud came about.

The Om-Fu peoples had no shortage of land. However, the expansionist Telefolmin had moved out from their homelands around Telefolip village and the current station of Telefomin in Ifitaman to conquer Eliptaman, the Upper Fu and parts of the Frieda and Wario River valleys (Craig 2005b:2; Jorgensen 2007:62–63). Similarly, land acquisition was one factor motivating war in the densely populated central highlands of New Guinea (Meggitt 1977). However, the groups in the Fu-Om watershed shared characteristics identified among other New Guinea groups engaged in endemic warfare. Hallpike (1977:275) observed in the Papuan mountains that a cultural model of sociality emphasizing individual agency rather than control of the civil group allowed the flaring of passions to motivate responses in line with the prevalent "ethos of aggression and destruction." Such groups are often unable to control individual members' aggression (211). These incidents inspired retaliations.

Loyal identity brought group members to one another's aid, and any enemy group member was fair game to receive revenge or compensation for an act committed by any other member—what Raymond Kelly (2000:47) calls "social substitutability." In one skirmish, the Asabano joined with their allies of the moment, the Omai, to attack the Saiyo, one of whom had been accused of causing an Omai death by sorcery. The expedition resulted in several killings and abductions, but the particular sorcerer deemed responsible for magically attacking the Omai was not sought out for retribution. The widespread Melanesian emphasis on evening scores by payback and compensation also plays into cyclical attacks (Hallpike 1977:197–198). When actors have a penchant for one-upmanship in a violent exchange relationship, each attack can motivate a more severe response, leading to periods of intensifying hostilities. It has been noted that warfare is usefully theorized as a kind of exchange between the social groups that find themselves in violent rivalry (Otto et al. 2006:17).

When the death of a person attributed to a foreign group's magic is a catalyst to war, making war and peace involves attempts to justly repair not only physically efficacious affronts but also imagined and culturally postulated ones. As such, the cosmologies of the parties making war or peace profoundly shape motivation. In Roy Rappaport's (1984:237–238) terms, there are "cognized" (emic) as well as "operational" (etic) elements of the social environment, which scholars should distinguish and understand. Thus for the Asabano and many other Melanesians, not only are sorcerers and witches regarded as endowed with real powers to kill but also all occurrences, even those that scholars would call "coincidences," are understood to result from intentional actions. In effect, in Asabano thinking there are no accidents and so any injury suffered by a group member results in a call to settle the score, often with a group, a member of which has been identified as the "real" cause behind a particular death (Goldman 1993; Hallpike 1977:192). At one drum dance I witnessed, where Telefolmin visitors were performing in an Asabano hamlet, Yalowad demanded that the visitors compensate him for his sorrow over the death of one of his friends among their people. This man's death seemed natural to me, but to the Asabano his death had resulted from insufficient care by his own people—it was the result of human decisions and actions (or inactions). Likewise, most deaths are understood to be caused by sorcery or witchcraft and traditionally would call for revenge. When the culprit was revealed, through signs or dreams, to be an insider, the diagnosis was witchcraft and the response was vigilantes executing the "killer" (Lohmann 2010:234). When the accused was of another group, warriors might assemble for a violent expedition against the cognized perpetrators, conceptualized as the entire group.

Initial Pacification through Colonial Domination

The Om-Fu peoples escaped from endemic warfare through a two-part process in which new social pressures and ideological elements were introduced. First, the Australian colonial government encapsulated all of the region's tribes. Its first act of making contact was to intervene when it learned, through its Telefolmin policeman Wasinau, that some Telefolmin, Asabano and Omai had attacked the Saiyo, killing and abducting several people. The administration sent a patrol into the region to arrest the aggressors (Lohmann 2000:166–171). The patrol brought them back to the government station at Oksapmin some days' walk away and thereafter flew them to the coastal town of Wewak to stand trial. A young Saiyo woman who had been captured and married off to one of the attacking men was returned to her people, and the men experienced the technological wonders of globalized culture and the breadth of the government's dominion in New Guinea. Pleading before the judge that, as a newly contacted people they were unaware of the colonial laws, they were released. Accordingly, the Asabano bore unavenged a final retaliatory raid by the Saiyo and did not conduct further raids. Realizing that the Australian administration did not have the wherewithal to stop raids before they happened or to provide immediate, on-the-spot mediation or conflict resolution, the people remained on their guard.

As Martin Zelenietz (1979:91) has observed, the pacification of Native Oceania cannot be understood merely as a matter of forceful imposition, because the people often actively embrace opportunities to end war. The Asabano, reduced in numbers from earlier fighting and an influenza epidemic, seized upon this potential for peace. The Asabano welcomed the Australian administration's patrols, the presence of the government and the security from future raiding that it promised (Lohmann 2000:173–174).

The lack of an overarching political structure in precontact New Guinea made it difficult for small-scale societies such as these to escape from violent exchange cycles (Hallpike 1973:454). Jürg Helbling (2006:131) singles out "political autonomy of local groups in an anarchic system and the dependence of local groups on locally concentrated resources" as causing "a warlike type of strategic interaction between local groups, which may be described in terms of game theory." According to game theory, although peaceful cooperation would be of greatest benefit to all, "a one-sided peaceful strategy is too risky, since a one-sided bellicose strategy brings the highest gains and a one-sided peaceful one the highest losses." If interpreted loosely to consider revenge as a resource and egalitarianism as a sort of anarchism, this characterization fits the situation faced during late precontact by the Asabano and their neighbours. Peace came when the autonomy of all interacting egalitarian local groups was overarched by church and state and when the semblance of restricted access to resources like revenge, women and children, pride and sago, which had formerly catalyzed warlike outbreaks, was disrupted by introduced structures and rituals.

Consolidation of Peace through Missionization and Conversion

Baptist missionization of the area began in 1974 and culminated in the mass conversion of the community in 1977. It provided the means to make permanent the hiatus in intertribal warfare. Men who lived as adults through the transformative period of the 1960s and 1970s made it clear one of the reasons they found Christianity compelling was that where Christianity went, peace followed.

The missionary Diyos, who brought Baptist Christianity to the Asabano, risked all, as his Telefolmin people had formerly inflicted great losses on the Asabano over decades of attacks (Lohmann 2007). Men vividly recalled to me his early visits, when he claimed to come in peace and led prayers to the new god, asking those present to close their eyes. Expecting him to attack, it took some time before all the men closed their eyes after they had seen his example and that of the Telefolized Asabano men who had been captured as children with their bilingual offspring. In the spirit of reconciliation, those Telefolmin who accompanied Diyos from Eliptaman to the west and the Asabano living on the Kienu and Karu rivers to the east both moved together to the frontier of their respective territories and settled in a common village on the Asabano side at the junction of the Ilim and Fu Rivers. Although this joint community did not last and the two ethnic groups quickly retreated to multiple hamlet sites on their respective sides of the border, their common religious identity and overall good relations remained.

Diyos preached that God is universal, disallows killing and reserves to himself the right of revenge. This countered the traditional ideology that revenge through human agency is just, by introducing a new imagined agent—the Christian god—who handles issues of life and death so that people may be released from the dangerous and destructive burden of exacting revenge.

In 1977, a Christian "revival" movement began in the joint Asabano-Telefolmin church, in which Holy

Spirit possession, glossolalia and dreams provided spiritual evidence that the missionaries' claims were true. Cumbersome food taboos for women and uninitiated boys enshrined in the old religion were labelled satanic. Older men, concerned that their gardens and hunting might fail if they abandoned traditional religious practices, made an experimental garden without traditional prayers and magic—which had included planting an ancestor's bone—praying to the Christian god instead. Rather than making offerings to sprites and carrying ancestral bones while hunting, they prefaced hunts with prayers to God. When the garden produced well and hunts were successful, they were satisfied. A Telefolmin-Asabano elder named Kafko said in 2005 that, while dream evidence was one way that people were convinced of Christianity, the end of the food taboos and warfare was more important because it increased abundance and goodwill and simply made life easier. The cessation of warfare was itself regarded as evidence for Christianity's truth.

Asabano men attributed the end of war to Christianity and described this as among its most attractive features. By joining in the same Christian moral community, individuals and groups came to share a common identity and support system, which could prevent conflicts from escalating. Vengeful feelings were to be given over to God, who alone has the authority to mete out ultimate justice. God became a sort of cosmic accountant, able to take over the odious task of settling scores. This idea was "assimilated" into pre-existing notions of retributive justice in Joel Robbins's (2004:10) sense of incorporating new ideas into existing categories. Witch executions and raids against foreign sorcerers' groups were replaced with praying to God that the witch or sorcerer abandon satanic magic and become a Christian. "*God bai bekim*" ("God will pay back [the homicide]") was how older men phrased in Tok Pisin their release from the pressure to avenge. Prayer removed the danger of undertaking payback raids and resolved the moral conundrum by which raiding was both urged for revenge and seen as leading to a short life. Christian prayer for one's enemy allowed one to take retributive action that would benefit both one's attackers and one's self.

This introduced prayer ritual defuses triggers perpetuating the cycle of payback raids by reminding the person praying of two possible outcomes that obviate taking revenge into one's own hands. First, the ritual affirms that repentant homicides can be rendered nonviolent through conversion to Christianity—an outcome that the prayer encourages. Second, the prayer restates that the godly order ensures revenge in Hell for nonrepentant homicides. God and other supernatural beings are understood to have a peacemaking agency that is far more effective than government functionaries.

We have here an example, in a particular cultural belief system, of what William Walker (2009) has referred to as the practice of a supernatural agent in warfare—or in this case, in peacemaking. God fulfils for the Asabano the need for an intimate and immanent third party upon whom one may call for justice. This supernatural agent relieves pressures before they inspire violence better than the distant and increasingly ineffective agents of government can. This provides, in emic experience, a third, mediating party between disputants, the lack of which has been identified as responsible for endemic warfare in the New Guinea highlands (Koch 1974:26). Among the Manga of Papua New Guinea's Western Highlands, for example, "triadic mediation was extremely rare in the precontact system of conflict resolution and ... pacification was achieved when the government satisfactorily incorporated triadic relationships into the local Manga system of conflict resolution" (Pflanz-Cook and Cook 1979:182).

In the Asabano case, the mediating third party is, from an etic perspective, imagined, a projection of disputants' own minds, with copies enmeshed in the schemas of every person's mind. Therefore, it is better able than weakly enforced government institutions to prevent one person's rash violence or deaths attributed to sorcery from precipitating an organized violent response. The autonomy of individuals that is characteristic of small-scale, egalitarian societies, which Anton Ploeg (1979:177 n. 2) has identified as a barrier to enforcing a constant peace on all members, is more effectively controlled by an internalized non-violent ideology and practice than by external agents of either religious or secular orders.

Warriors carried ancestral bones so that the deceased might aid them. Many cosmologies posit the existence and potency of supernatural beings, and we must take these beliefs into account to understand their thought and behaviour. However, scholars must avoid the trap of tacit supernaturalism in our own models by attributing agency to objects and creatures of the imagination or including these in theoretical (etic) definitions of society, as Walker (2009:110) advocates, to prevent distortions of either emic or etic perspectives (see Lohmann 2003). As Jack Eller (2006:32) points out, "most human groups have approached the problem of violence with a prescientific and even specifically supernatural outlook," including notions such as witchcraft and other personifications of evil or destructive and constructive forces, such as immortal souls, demons and gods. These offer them explanations, motives, justifications and means of

war as well as peace. Such supernatural models, like the Asabano prayer ritual, defuse war differently than those cultural participants think they do; yet their earnest faith in them has operational efficacy by changing behaviour. While religious beliefs can generate war (Eller 2006:154), they can also engender peace.

Consider Douglas Fry's paradigm of conflict management techniques. His types include unilateral, bilateral and trilateral approaches. Bilateral techniques, enacted by the two combatant parties, include avoidance, toleration, negotiation and self-redress. Trilateral techniques involve a mediating third party who oversees a settlement, either through friendly or repressive peacemaking. Friendly peacemaking methods include separating and distracting, mediation, arbitration and adjudication, while repressive peacemaking relies on continual application of force or threat to prevent outbreaks (Fry 2007:82). Placing the Asabano Christian prayer ritual in this paradigm shows that, from an emic perspective, it is a trilateral approach, in which the prayer invokes God as a third party to act as a friendly peacemaker, separating and distracting the would-be combatants, adjudicating the conflict by deciding who is right and who is wrong. God is also emically understood to be a repressive peacemaker who enforces peace by determining the afterlife fates of the parties who cannot escape his notice or enforced judgement as they might reasonably hope to avoid government authorities in the weak state of Papua New Guinea. From an etic perspective, the prayer ritual appears to be a unilateral conflict management approach—the third party is imagined rather than an independent agent and what the ritual accomplishes in operational terms is avoidance, toleration and a form of self-redress through invoking a supernatural being (a mental model in the agent's mind) to mete out justice. Its unilaterality gives it significant strength through bypassing the need for complex negotiations and costly engagement of second or third parties before potential retribution can be stifled. Unilateral conflict management in the guise of trilateral conflict management also has particular efficacy in this cultural context for another reason: just like the imaginary and exaggerated offences that give impetus to attacks, it exists only in the minds of would-be aggressors.

Because the third party in this conflict management technique is imagined rather than a physical agent, it is continually available for immediate invocation in any person who has been enculturated to belief in "him." This illustrates that imaginary phenomena can be more "real" in efficacy than physical beings and forces, including military and police powers that, while an important factor in keeping peace, can be eluded in ways that one's own mind cannot (see Strathern and Stewart 2011). Shared belief in a supernatural agent creates the semblance of social scrutiny that enhances cooperation, in this case, for peace maintenance (see Rossano 2007). This conflict management approach does not rely on an overarching and powerful political force, such as government law, police or courts, which have become weak and inconsistently available in the region. Rather, it relies on individuals in all of the groups in contact with one another enacting a common ideological and ritual system that removes organized violence from the human purview and places it in the hands of an imagined entity at the centre of a multi-ethnic moral community of devotees. Conflict management distributed in the minds of human actors through enculturation in a common ideology is much more effective at maintaining peace than the trilateral justice system made possible by external government institutions. Ironically, it is the imagined and not the physical third party that appears to have enabled people to consolidate the peace in the Om-Fu River region for 50 years after it was temporarily established by state force.

Identity Conditions of War and Peace

Donald Tuzin (1982) observed, in a paper characteristically titled "The Spectre of Peace," that war in small-scale societies is motivated by surges of emotion, which might begin with a heated individual but must be brought to a communal boiling point in a bloodthirsty version of Durkheim's (1965) "collective effervescence" to mobilize the collective will needed to undertake an organized attack. Tuzin suggests that in some cultural situations, war may be a prerequisite for peace, even exercised as a way to get to peace, by demonstrating the collective power and sovereignty of a group—a sovereignty that must partly be given up to exist in peace with another group. Tuzin echoes here Camilla Wedgewood's (1930) linking of war and sovereign identity in Melanesia. Margaret Rodman (1979a:143) questions this for the case of the Longana of Vanuatu, "because the autonomous political units in Longana were very small segments of a larger social group, raiding can hardly be viewed as encouraging the sovereignty of the district." Yet even in small tribal groups from which members can come and go, people develop a sense of common purpose, residence and ideals that they often trace back in myth and oral history to founding ancestors and events. That is, they have a sense of nascent ethnicity, around which sovereignty and warfare become possible with sufficient political organization.

In Tuzin's formulation, living in peace with neighbouring groups necessitates sacrificing war as a means

of attaining a unifying and energizing emotional tenor. Peace can seem a state of weakness, dullness and acquiescence, while war can seem a state of strength, excitement and assertion. Peace is a condition of isolation and disengagement from the collective, while war is one of ecstatic unity with the collective. Seen from this perspective, the attraction of war, which on the surface sounds like an oxymoron, becomes more apparent. Insofar as war provides an indispensable mental and social service, abandonment of war requires a replacement that can provide these same benefits. The Asabano may have been able to live in peace with their neighbours for so many years because prayer for would-be enemies, belief that God will repay good and ill, and common identity with all of Christendom have replaced narrower tribal identities. Their peacemaking strategy provides them with a sense of membership in an expanded sovereign entity.

A further insight we can derive from Tuzin's formulation is that war and peace tend to oscillate in a kind of exchange relationship with one another. Each provides the conditions needed for the other to arise; one sacrifices itself to the other in an endless turn-taking. What happens, then, when the oscillation between war and peace ends? Does this undermine a people's ability to revitalize their identity in relation to others through the recurrent novelty and feeling of movement provided by a pendulum swinging between war and peace? The Asabano case suggests that a sense of sovereign identity can be maintained and enhanced in far less destructive ways than an endless round of giving up the peace for a war and the war for a peace.

It might seem that the peace the Asabano and other Om and Fu River peoples have enjoyed since the 1960s represents a permanent sacrifice of their local sovereignty to, first, the colonial Australian government and its successor, the Papua New Guinean state and, second, to the apparently universal deity of Christendom. Sovereignty can, however, be based and asserted on collective actions other than war, as the non-violent resistance movements of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. so aptly demonstrated. The structures of conflict resolution used or adopted in a society may serve as markers of participation in the just governance of one's sodality, polity or confederation. Even where revenge and honour-based interclan violence are central and long-standing traditional values, as among the Pathans of Pakistan, a leader in the movement for independence from Britain named Abdul Ghaffar Khan, gathered a substantial following promoting pan-Pathan sovereignty and political independence through embracing nonviolence (Bannerjee 2000). This movement, far from an abandonment of sovereignty, called for Pathan independence through Pathan transformation—a case, perhaps, of Kenelm Burridge's (1969) "new man" who helps create a new moral order that need not come at the expense of pre-existing identities but can indeed celebrate and build on these. One thinks here, reaching farther back, to Ralph Linton's nativistic movements (Linton and Hallowell 1943) and, more generally, of Anthony Wallace's (1956) revitalization movements. The Baptist "revival" gave the Asabano the sense that they could go forward with pride as sufficiently independent members of a more broadly unifying movement in which killing was vanquished.

This case is just one more piece of evidence against the maxim that warfare is inevitable and inescapable for our species. Marshall Sahlins (2008) documents an old thread in Western thinking famously taken up by Hobbes that, without social restraint, humans descend into self-centred chaos. In critiquing this notion, Sahlins notes that what is considered self and other, hence the unit of selfishness, varies cross-culturally. Notions that hominins in general or human males in particular are inherently warlike can no longer be supported because war relies on political organization not found in the band-level society that characterized most of the human past. Moreover, not merely aggression but also cooperation is emotionally rewarded by our instinctual system and has been enhanced by our species' gene-culture co-evolution (Bowles and Gintis 2011). As Douglas Fry (2007) strains to remind us, warfare is not universal in humankind: both the archaeological and the ethnographic records attest to this. Individual violence can escalate to warfare only when the political organization needed for any collective undertaking is sufficiently sophisticated. According to R. Brian Ferguson (2006:473), "war seems absent in the Paleolithic and emerges first among more settled foragers (although most of them are peaceable)." Steven Pinker (2011) argues that with the triumph of social complexity the destructiveness of war has begun to diminish, although his focus on the civilizing influence of European cultural reach has been criticized for underplaying "the sometimes deadly and exploitative conditions under which 'Western civilization' originally reached distant shores and penetrated native lands" (Kim 2012:246). Moreover, this self-congratulatory view elides the evidence that paleolithic life was more profoundly cooperative than violent. The option of warfare requires political unity, organization, the presence of other polities and relatively high population densities associated with growing social complexity—a relatively recent development for our species (see Kelly 2000). Civilization offers social technologies that may be directed

toward enhancing either peace or war—often both in oscillation. Though states appear to rise in violence, they can offer institutional support of peace maintenance, and the promise of this potential certainly adds to their appeal. For example, Polly Wiessner and Nitze Pupu (2012:1652) document how inter-group warfare among the Enga of Papua New Guinea initially declined following the arrival of Australian colonial power and then accelerated with the introduction of high-powered guns following the arrival of the Papua New Guinea state. After two decades of tremendous loss of life and security, fatigue and economic distress motivated people to dramatically reduce organized feuding with the aid of church institutions and village courts that draw on indigenous peacemaking methods under the arms-length sanction of the state. As John and Theresa Topic (2012:3–4) recently pointed out in their reconstruction of ancient Andean conflict resolution practices, "Scale, both in terms of geography and demography, is an important consideration. How conflict is resolved within the family or between members of a very close knit community, where people deal face-to-face with each other on a daily basis is very different from how a community deals with an invading army."

In the Om-Fu River Valleys of the 20th century, the greater reach and power of the government and mission compared to the pre-existing tribal polities and religious institutions enabled a moment of peace-directed domination and internalization that proved pivotal. Their overarching and more-or-less benevolent assertion of a new ideology that peace is possible, with a recipe for long-term success that relied on enculturation and acceptance rather than continual imposition, actually created lasting peace in one formerly violent corner of the world.

Cycles of violence can be interrupted when the right material, political and ideological factors combine. What makes these factors right for a particular case are, however, distinctive to the cultures and the social organizations of the erstwhile combatants. To be effective, measures to make and sustain peace must be shaped to prevailing cultural conditions, as Roland Bleiker and Morgan Brigg (2011) have also pointed out. This can be illustrated by comparing the present case of pacification with that of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands. According to Geoffrey White (1979), on Isabel, a similar combination of colonial military might and religious ideology provided conditions that local people were able to use to end runaway headhunting. "Raiding was eagerly abandoned by Isabel people because it had become a distinct burden" (1979:110). Like the Om-Fu River region, the entire island of Santa Isabel was quickly converted and the correlation of the arrival of Christianity with the cessation of raiding appeared to be evidence for the power of the new religion, such that peace and Christianity strengthened one another (1979:123, 125). However, unlike the relatively egalitarian Asabano and their neighbours, Santa Isabel had a big man complex in which men who organized their people for military domination and mutual protection earned relatively high status. Peace came through the strategizing of competing big men. In contrast, the Asabano and their neighbours took advantage of conditions for peace in a much more diffuse, consensus-based process. Each individual internalized Christianity to indefinitely maintain his or her newfound peace.

Can something like world peace be established and maintained? It would appear that structural conditions providing a hiatus of warfare are a precondition to instituting ideological and ritual means for maintaining peace. However, militarily enforced peace is inherently temporary, since it continually highlights organized violence as a culturally legitimate option, upon which its agents rely to control their own people and defend themselves against competing polities. Furthermore, even while it lasts, military domination cannot be immediately present to coerce each person everywhere and all the time. While universal principles to promote peace can be and have been identified, these must be continually tailored to the broader cultural, social and material conditions in which would-be combatants find themselves. The prayer solution that has kept the peace between the Asabano and their neighbours for 50 years, for example, relies on faith in a particular supernatural being. Therefore, it would not work for atheists or for people who had different religious beliefs. We know that cultures continually change, so periodic updating of any cultural mechanism to maintain peace is necessary.

Toward the Good

> We should view violence as a problem to be solved, the difficulty is that humans are creative in their uses of materials, ideas and strategies. Actions related to dominance, power, and violence are always going to be on the menu. When interests collide and when forms of physical or social survival are at stake, a Pandora's Box filled with instruments of violence, coercion and physical force will still be sitting off in a corner of the room, always ready to be culturally reassessed and revisited, to be employed again regardless of how much dust has accumulated on its cover. Our best hope is that most of us are willing to expend energy in constructing durable institutions and frameworks for peace—that we deem it necessary for the well-being and survival of our species and planet. [Kim 2012:264]

It is tempting to view pacification as mere colonial oppression compelling a people to "cede control over the use of military force to a group perceived as more powerful" (Rodman 1979b:1). Yet when people are convinced that a newly imposed order is just and can resolve conflicts peacefully, they are inclined to incorporate and identify with it. Pacification efforts become more successful by promoting a non-violent ideology that is backed up with ritual means—whether secular or religious—to defuse the various triggers to war. For the Asabano and their neighbours, these conditions were met by the imposition of a colonial political force prohibiting war among its subject peoples, combined with their mutual acceptance of a supernatural mediator and a prayer ritual that replaced violent response. The first stage created a hiatus in tribal warfare that was not sustainable. The second stage created a means of preventing tribal warfare from flaring up that is sustainable so long as it remains congruent with local cultures, promptly adjusts to cultural changes and is able to find purchase among those peoples who come into contact and conflict with the Om and Fu River populations.

As Fry (2007:213) reminds us so plainly, "we must abolish war before it abolishes us." The solution, he suggests (2007:222), lies in instituting, on a global scale, the kind of overarching authority that has the political power, the mediation and conflict resolution structures and practices, and the non-violent ideology that made a lasting peace in the Om-Fu River valleys possible. Robert Dentan (2008:47) is sceptical of the possibility of creating lasting peace on a global scale through institutional means: "since bureaucratic hierarchies run on frozen violence always threatening to melt ... putting them in charge of keeping the peace is like putting the fox to mind the chickens." Our challenge, then, is to build such an authority or set of authorities that does not in fact use and hence model the threat of violence, that shapes peacemaking strategies to multiple local and changing cultural conditions and that relies on people enculturated with these peacekeeping strategies to put them into nonviolent force.

What I think we can take away from the Asabano case is that the overarching government did not sustainably end war—its contribution was a hiatus in hostile exchanges that, on its own, could not last, as the resurgence of tribal warfare in other parts of Papua New Guinea has shown (Roscoe 2014). Rather, when each person internalized a non-violent ideology and practice that meshed with existing culture and replaced the catalysts to war, continuous and immediate prophylaxis against organized violence was engaged. Important as they are as potential game-changers, imposed political institutions can only temporarily enforce a peace tinged with warlike posturing, as Tiara Na'puti (2014) shows for the case of American domination of Guam. An enforced peace without justice, as Camellia Webb-Gannon (2014) shows, breeds simmering unrest that threatens its undoing. Understanding the role of enculturated ideologies and scripts, on the other hand, has the potential to provide the means for establishing sustained world peace, because they direct the reactions of individuals and groups by providing templates for response to perceived insults. Ideologies and scripts relevant to the cost-benefit calculus by which agents decide whether to initiate war or peaceful conflict resolution operate according to logics that vary cross-culturally, but can be modified. Attacks can be discouraged by dubbing peace a precondition for supernatural rewards (Schwoerer 2014), by preparing for war while acknowledging interdependence with potential enemies (Petersen 2014), or by exploiting magical beliefs to undermine would-be warriors' confidence (Kuehling 2014). Culture can encourage and provide the means for either organized violence or peaceful conflict resolution. Only through appropriate enculturation for the latter is sustainable peace possible.

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