The Red Flag of Peace: Colonial Pacification, Cargo Cults and the End of War among the South Fore

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Abstract: Warfare among the South Fore ceased quickly after first contact in 1949. Three aspects of the process of colonial pacification profoundly changed incentive structures for local warfare: punishment by force of those groups continuing acts of aggression, incentives for giving up warfare and the emergence of hybrid forms of judicial institutions to peacefully settle conflicts. The Fore stress their own agency in ending warfare, mainly through participation in cargo cult movements with promises of valuables and "new things to come," which made it possible for all groups to end war at the same time.

Keywords: pacification, war, cargo cult, conflict settlement, Fore, Papua New Guinea

Résumé : La guerre a pris fin rapidement chez les Fores du Sud, après les premiers contacts en 1949. Trois aspects du processus de pacification coloniale ont profondément modifié les structures d'incitation à la guerre locale : la répression par les autorités des groupes perpétuant des comportements d'agression, des mesures incitatives à l'abandon de l'activité guerrière, et l'émergence de formes hybrides d'institutions judiciaires visant le règlement pacifique des conflits. Les Fores rappellent leur propre rôle d'acteurs dans la cessation de la guerre, particulièrement leur participation dans des mouvements de cultes du cargo, avec leurs promesses de récompenses et « de nouvelles choses à venir », qui ont permis à tous les groupes de mettre fin simultanément aux activités guerrières.

Mots-clés : pacification, guerre, culte du cargo, règlement de conflit, Fore, Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée

Introduction

Among the South Fore, situated at the southern edge of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the inter-group conflicts that formed a fundamental part of their society and culture ceased within a surprisingly short time after the first Australian government patrol reached the area in 1949. In contrast to the case of the Asabano (Lohmann 2014), Fore people are not univocal in their view of why fighting ceased: some attributed it to the working of the colonial government and a few to the coming of the missions, but many of the elders I interviewed emphasized their own role and agency in ending wars once and for all. They mentioned leading or participating in cargo cult movements with promises of valuables and new things to come and saw this expectation as a decisive factor for why people no longer took recourse to warfare. In their account, a pivotal moment was the raising of a red flag by one of the cargo cult leaders, symbolizing the coming of the red-skinned people (the Australian colonial officers) and the wealth that was supposed to arrive with them, if warfare was given up for good.

Based on participant-observation and oral history interviews in the South Fore villages of the Purosa area, I first give a short account of the cycle of pre-colonial warfare that dominated the region and demonstrate some fundamental underlying principles and incentive structures that perpetuated it. I then account for the quick elimination of warfare in the area, based on the view of the Fore, documents of the colonial administration and interviews conducted with former colonial officers. I concentrate first on the history of the cargo cults that had such a critical impact in ending warfare and then place these in the larger setting of colonial pacification. Since pacification can be sustained only if inevitable conflicts within and between local groups can be settled peacefully, I put special emphasis on emerging and hybrid forms of conflict settlement involving local leaders and colonial institutions. In doing so, I would like to

highlight important aspects that contribute to peace-making in general and the end of warfare among the Fore in particular.

Fore Society and Pre-colonial Warfare

Warfare among the Fore consisted of open field battles, ambushes, surprise raids and hit-and-run attacks. In open field battles, the bulk of warriors of one local group and their allies moved onto the no-man's land separating them from the enemy local group. As they advanced, they sang, danced and called out obscenities and insults directed at the enemy, who, at this point, also mobilized and moved into position. The warriors from both sides faced off against each other in long, loosely stretched out lines. Armed men carrying large wooden shields formed the first line. Following a little behind them were men holding only bows and arrows. The lines from both sides engaged each other first over a certain distance and then manoeuvred back and forth along with the intensity of the fight. The fighting usually took the larger part of a day, always interrupted by conventional breaks, in which both sides would retreat before starting the fighting again. Fighting ceased in the late afternoon and started again the next day. The wars could last for months on end, with respites of several weeks in between. This type of fighting did not cause a lot of deaths, since fighting took place over a certain distance and arrows could be avoided or deflected by the shields (see Robbins 1982:185–188 and Hayano 1972:192–194 for similar accounts of warfare among the neighbouring Auyana and Awa).

Much more lethal forms of warfare were the stealthy raids, conducted by a sizeable force against enemy settlements mostly at the crack of dawn, in which the men's houses were encircled and set on fire, and the hit-and-run attacks and ambushes by just a few fighters against enemy men, women or children in their gardens or on footpaths. Tactics of stealth could also be employed during open field battles, with a handful of warriors trying to catch the unsuspecting enemy from the side or from behind. Such tactics were not usually employed as a first reaction against a perceived wrong (except against long-standing enemies), but formed part of a secondary level of escalation after initial field battles. If a party suffered several casualties during open field battles, they then usually took recourse to these stealthy tactics because only these could offer some certainty to bring about an adequate revenge (see Robbins 1982:185–187 and Watson 1983:64 for the Auyana and Tairora).

War among the Fore took place on the level of what I refer to as the local group. A local group was the larg-est politically significant social and economic aggregate of people, even though it could at times dissolve into its composite units. In addition, membership of local groups was constantly subject to fluctuation. Previous anthropologists in the area called such local groups "parishes" (Glasse and Lindenbaum 1971) or "districts" (Berndt 1962), to stress the importance of territoriality and co-residence over kinship as the defining organizing principle. Conflicts between members of the same local group were generally settled amicably; only in rare cases did a conflict within local groups escalate to armed violence.

These local groups consisted of two to four hamlets, which were named after nearby landmarks. A hamlet consisted of usually one or two men's houses and numerous individual women's houses, surrounded by a stockade and thickets of underbrush or reeds. The hamlet was the closest support group for warfare and thus the effective political body. Usually several lineages co-resided in a hamlet. These lineages are genealogical units, although not all members of a lineage are related through patrilineal descent to each other and agnates are not terminologically distinguished from non-agnates (Glasse and Lindenbaum 1971:368–369). These lineages belong to named exogamous clans that are dispersed over several local groups in the Purosa area and beyond. There is a certain notion of ancestral coherence among lineages of the dispersed clan, and if lineages had to flee, they usually sought refuge among clan members in other local groups. The internal composition of a local group was equally complex, with lineages from different clans often co-residing.

According to my informants, warfare was what made local groups stand out. Warfare was always perceived as a defining interaction among different local groups, even if only a few of its constituent segments actually participated. As soon as a member or a segment of a local group was attacked from outside, the local group mobilized as a unit and fought the aggressor. The local group can therefore be considered the unit of defensive warfare, even though it was not a permanently stable unit and the decision for collective defence always rested on its constituent members (Berndt 1971:392–393; Glasse and Lindenbaum 1971:365–368).

If a war broke out, the initial attack sometimes took the form of a secret raid rather than a pitched battle. These initial raids were conducted by only a small number of men from a local clan segment or co-residing in a hamlet. The hamlet can therefore be considered the tactical unit of offensive warfare. The local groups, however, were still considered the main contestants in

warfare. This makes sense, as not only did warfare between lesser units often rapidly escalate and quickly involve whole local groups, but also because the local group was the juridical unit in the sense that any individual could be held responsible and killed for the wrongs committed by a member of the same local group (Glasse and Lindenbaum 1971:368; Lindenbaum 1979:40).

Causes and Basis of War

Deaths that were attributed to sorcery were often the main reason given for acts of retaliation against other groups that led to war. Other, less common reasons were conflicts between local groups over the rights over women or about the killing of runaway pigs. If a person died under suspicious circumstances, showing a range of symptoms attributed to sorcery—for example, loss of flesh, swelling or sudden collapsing—a detection ritual was arranged. In this ritual, people would hunt and kill marsupials in the forest, then place them in several bamboo containers, bestow upon each of them the names of people suspected of sorcery and roast them over a small fire. If the liver of a marsupial in one of the bamboo containers was not thoroughly cooked, this was a clear indication of guilt (Lindenbaum 1979:69–71). This did not mean, however, that a physical attack was immediately launched against the group harbouring the sorcerer. Sorcery might be countered by sorcery, and I collected the story of a case in which two local groups were engaged in just such a cycle of sorcery and counter-sorcery, without it leading to an escalation into warfare.

Triggers for wars then appear to be less significant in explaining the occurrence of warfare than general deliberations on whom to attack at what time. Sorcery suspicions are full of strategic considerations: the main suspects are usually those other groups with which the relationship was already strained, and from among these groups suspicion is mainly directed against smaller groups who are deemed weaker and might thus resort to sorcery as their only chance to right a wrong. A review of all collected cases of warfare in which sorcery accusations led to warfare has shown that it was typically the numerically stronger groups of Mugayamuti and Ketabe that leveled such accusations against weaker groups and started wars. That these groups were at the time numerically and militarily stronger than their opponents or at least of even strength is demonstrated in four cases when they were able to rout enemy hamlets, local clan sections or whole local groups, which then dispersed and fled elsewhere. In all other cases, the wars started by these stronger groups ended in a stalemate,

usually because the smaller local groups mustered enough allies. But never were these bigger groups themselves routed in such a conflict.

That strategic deliberations were indeed behind many decisions to start a war is also exemplified by the case of the "war over taro." This particular war started after the Wanitabe clan segment of Weneru, which had been chased away a few years previously by the Ketabe local group, returned and attached itself to the Mugaya-muti local group. Together with a bountiful harvest of taro, a food crop that could be easily turned into more alliance relations with other groups in the system of food exchange common in the South Fore area, this became a great threat to the Ketabe-Ai alliance. The leaders of the Ketabe local group then hatched a plan that they would start a new war against the Wanitabe clan under a pretext, so that they could steal the taro from the Wanitabe gardens and thus actively deny them the fruits of their labour while starting a long-simmering conflict again.

The foregoing cases tie in convincingly with the theory of warfare in tribal societies elaborated by Hel-bling (2006a, 2006b), wherein political autonomy and territorial immobility of local groups are the two central preconditions for the emergence of a warlike form of strategic interaction between local groups. Without the existence of a superordinate authority that could sanction and enforce bilateral agreements between such groups, with the aim of peacefully settling emerging conflicts, the involved groups can never be sure that the other group is indeed honouring such an agreement. Using concepts from game theory, this situation can be described as a prisoners' dilemma, in which a peaceful strategy (cooperation) cannot assert itself because it is too risky. A unilateral strategy of peace can be interpreted by other groups as a sign of weakness and encourage them to attack. The groups are caught in a perpetual security dilemma: unable to trust each other and fearing the other side's aggressive potential, they had to immediately address by forceful means each perceived slight to uphold a reputation of strength and retaliation for the sake of deterrence. At the same time, groups cannot move away from conflicts because they are tied to locally concentrated resources. Moving away from conflicts would mean that they would lose their land and their harvest, in effect risking starvation.

These structural preconditions—namely, the lack of a superordinate authority and high opportunity costs in case of movement—explain why wars may break out at any time. They do not explain, however, why some conflicts lead to war and some do not. It can be argued that

a local group will hardly start a war if it cannot expect to improve its own situation or at least avoid a deterioration of its current position. As has been shown in the case of the local groups of Mugayamuti and Ketabe, a stronger group will try (as long as they are still stronger) to attack a (still) weaker local group before it is too late. However, the relations of force between local groups can quickly change: through a change of group size (by group splitting or by immigration) or through a shift in alliance relations (i.e., loss of allies or recruitment of new ones). Therefore, according to Helbling (2006a, 2006b:126–127), when success is foreseeable or when worse outcomes have to be averted, local groups will attack other groups in opportune moments to decimate or rout the enemy groups or at least to weaken them and thus lessen the risk of being attacked themselves in inopportune moments.

While I have been describing local groups as collective actors, it has to be emphasized that, ultimately, Fore wars are the result of decisions taken by men as members of a local group. The decision to start a war or not is reached through a delicate process of negotiation among all male members of the local group. As in all decision-making, the men's house was the focal point of deliberations and discussions. Since local groups were composed of members of different lineages and clans, different age levels and differing political influence, their interests did not always overlap, and there could be "hawks" clamouring for retaliation and "doves" trying to avert open hostilities (Helbling 2006a:532–537). As success and prowess in warfare were among the main qualifications for political status (Glasse and Lindenbaum 1971:372), there were ample incentives to start wars for reasons of political gain, especially for young men aspiring to become leaders (see Wiessner 2010 for a similar case among the Enga), but also for established leaders trying to defend or bolster their status.

On the other hand, war was associated with high costs. War mortality among the Fore was typical for New Guinea highlands societies (for an overview, see Hanser 1985:186). I have collected the names of 115 people who died in warfare over a 25-year period until the last war ended in 1952. With a population size of 750–800 people for the whole Purosa area (six local groups), this results in a yearly war mortality of 5.75–6.13 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants. In addition, hamlets and local groups were often chased away or had to flee during wars. With the men fighting for weeks or months on end and the women unable to tend to their gardens for fear of ambush, hunger was a constant threat.

Peacemaking

In this cycle of recurring events of warfare brought on by strategic deliberations, institutions of peacemaking also existed. South Fore informants said they always saw peace as a desirable state but a state that had to be established and reinforced constantly and thus was more akin to a process than a lasting state. Groups on friendly terms would regularly invite each other to feasts, and the hosts would prepare special food items (pork, but also taro, yams or winged beans) for their guests to consume on the spot or to take home with them (Sorenson 1972:360–361; 1976:63–68). Through this system of intergroup exchange, village leaders strategically funneled agricultural surplus into alliance relations with friendly groups and thus increased their own political clout.

When a war broke out, both sides agreed from its onset on a few men on both sides to serve as institutionalized go-betweens, called *pako*. These were usually older men who had relatives on both sides and were relatively safe to carry messages back and forth. They were not to be killed and this was widely observed. Older women with kin connections with the enemy were also quite free to visit, and they and the *pako* informed the other side on deaths caused by the fighting, to keep a record of the tally. If the leaders on one or both sides planned peace overtures, usually when both sides had a similar number of casualties or when both sides were exhausted, these messengers would be sent to bring a *daka* (betel pepper) leaf to the leaders of the enemy side.

If both sides agreed that the fighting should cease, they would plan to hold a ceremony a few days later. On the morning of that day, the go-betweens would plant *daka* on the main field on which the fighting took place and then both sides would assemble in lines. Warriors on both sides carried their decorated fighting shields and weapons and gathered on both sides of the battlefield. Then the older, influential women would go first toward the middle, carrying sugar cane and *daka* leaves. They would stop a short distance from each other and deposit the sugar cane. The influential war leaders then followed and met in the middle, holding a length of sugar cane, cutting it in half with a stone axe and commensally chewing it (for a similar ceremony among the North Fore, see Berndt 1962:235–236). The sugar cane was deemed to hold cooling qualities, and thus the war was "cooled down." Afterwards, the sugar cane skin was all heaped upon one mound—to signify that both groups were at peace—and leaders of both sides held speeches, agreeing that the fighting was over and that both sides

would no longer escalate conflicts but concentrate their efforts on raising pigs to compensate their allies.

Two to three years after this ceremony, when sufficient pigs were raised for slaughter, both sides would meet again at a prearranged time on the former battlefield. On both sides, the men of the main local groups involved in the fight would contribute one or two pigs each, the leaders sometimes up to ten pigs. According to Sorenson (1976:68), up to 100 pigs could be slaughtered during these peace rituals. The pork was cooked in earth ovens and distributed mainly to those allies who assisted the main protagonists in the war, with especially generous portions going to the relatives of men from allied groups killed in the fighting and to men who excelled in fighting and were responsible for killing an enemy. A smaller portion of pork was also exchanged with the enemy, thus cementing the peace.

In late 1953 or 1954, such a pig feast was underway. It was to bolster the peace after a fight between two large alliances of Purosa and Ivaki local groups that lasted for several months and involved a network of alliances encompassing a significant portion of the South Fore. Hostilities ceased in 1952, and it eventually turned out to be the last war in the greater Purosa area. During this feast, one young, reputed leader from the Purosa side unstrung his bow and fastened a red piece of cloth on its tip, held it aloft and told everyone present that the time of fighting had ceased once and for all. Together with other village leaders he announced that people from this time onward had to look up to this piece of red cloth and no longer fight in wars and that soon good things would come their way, novel and valuable things—*mono'ana*. This event was claimed by several informants to have effectively stopped warfare from ever recurring because everybody was keen to receive *mono'ana*. But what induced this man to act this way? And what is understood by this concept of *mono'ana*?

A History of Change

This momentous turn in peacemaking was ushered in by almost 20 years of constant changes, rumours and novel events affecting the villages of the Purosa area. The first portents of things to come were artifacts, such as steel axes, pieces of cloth, ceramics or mirror shards that reached the villages of the Purosa area from the south through long-distance trade networks from the Purari river area and the Gulf coast. Through these networks, the Fore traditionally acquired shells that were the main indigenous valuables in exchange for tobacco. Knives and axes were especially coveted goods, since their superiority over traditional stone and bamboo tools was soon discovered. All these goods were associated with the

spirit realm and deemed to hold supernatural powers. The influx of such goods dramatically increased from the 1930s onward, when the first missionaries, gold prospectors and government patrols reached Kainantu, north of the Fore area. This caused a reversion of traditional trade flows. Groups in fringe areas, like the South Fore, who were traditionally in a favourable middleman position between the coast and the highlands, suddenly found themselves at the periphery of a trade network radiating out from the government and missionary posts in the highlands (Boyd 1975:42; Lindenbaum 1979:76–79).

In the mid- to late 1930s, the first airplane was sighted. People were horrified and scared by the noise and went into hiding. The plane was believed to be a huge bird and the name Kukube was attached to this plane, which in variations (Kukumbe, Kubukabana, Pupumbayo) was also given to this plane by the neighbouring Awa and Auyana language groups, indicating that there was a path of communication probably extending all the way to Kainantu, where planes landed on an airstrip for the first time in 1932. Together with those trade goods, artifacts and airplane sightings, rumours reached the villagers in the Purosa area that men with red skin were sighted in the North around Kainantu. The purpose of their appearance was unknown, but they were variably believed to be spirits from the land of the dead or even returning ancestors. Among the North Fore, some rumours predicted the death of all pregnant women or of all black-coloured pigs (Berndt 1952–53:50–56), while others had it that the returned ancestors were handing out large quantities of shells and iron tools. As a matter of fact, shells and western goods did arrive in larger quantities at around the same time and so indirectly confirmed these rumours.

The first white man who crossed through the Purosa area from Kainantu en route to the Gulf coast probably did so just at the onset of World War II. People of Purosa told me that they experienced this visit as a surreal event and people from everywhere came to look at this strange red-skinned being. The white man and his company of Papua New Guinean cargo carriers pitched their camp for a night, distributed some salt and then moved on, leaving everybody to wonder what kind of being just visited them. Some precautions were taken to ward off evil; a special leaf was put on the path on which the white man walked and then cooked with vegetables and eaten. It is believed that some of those who did not eat from this dish later died of a dysentery epidemic. A while later, two other white men with a sizeable escort came through the Purosa area, who, based on the informants' account, forced the people to construct a

shelter by whipping them with canes, shooting off guns and intimidating them but, again, also distributed salt. It is not possible to pinpoint with certainty who led these two patrols, although it is known that two gold prospectors, Tom Fox and Ted Ubank, each on his own, evacuated toward the Gulf coast taking this general route at the onset of World War II, and Patrol Officer G. F. Neilsen led an army patrol through the area in 1943. The first government patrol after the war reached Purosa only in August 1949.

With the advent of World War II, the speed of exogenous events increased. Suddenly whole squadrons of airplanes were flying over the area, and again they were believed to be birds and given names. Some people reported seeing men in these flying contraptions, and there were rumours coming down from the North that there was a big war going on. That men were indeed flying these planes was confirmed when a plane crashed at Awande in the North Fore and a few people from Purosa went there to examine the bodies of the crew. A little bit later, a Japanese bomber crash-landed near Awarosa, just on the other side of the mountain to the east of the Purosa villages. In an attempt to break apart the wreck for metal that could be shaped into knives and axes, some villagers from Awarosa unknowingly triggered one of the bombs, and it is estimated that more than two dozen people died, most of them from the closer villages of Awarosa, Mobutasa and Ilakiah, but also at least two men from Purosa. Two of the four Japanese crewmen survived the crash and tried to warn people not to get close to the wreck, but they could not make themselves understood. These two Japanese were nursed back to health for a few weeks, and afterwards they hiked out toward the North through the territory of the Awa and Auyana toward the Ramu valley, leaving behind a population that had experienced first-hand the terrible forces these strange beings could unleash.

An even more deadly, if invisible, force soon made itself felt. A dysentery epidemic swept through the area in 1943–44 and a whooping cough epidemic in 1949 (Lindenbaum 1979:84–85). Dysentery killed a large number of people, especially young children, and agricultural activities ceased for a while because too many people were too sick to tend to their gardens (Lindenbaum 1979:31). Bennett (1962:36) realized in his demographic report on the Fore area in the 1960s that there was a clear gap in the age group of 15- to 29-year-olds, caused by the dysentery epidemic. Hayano (1972:93) in his genealogical census of the Awa village of Tauna counted 25 people killed by epidemics, about 20–25 per cent of the village population at the time. Dysentery and whooping cough, however, did not directly lead to warfare since both diseases were categorized as not inflicted by other humans but "carried by the wind." A different case was Kuru—a deadly spongiform encephalopathy transmitted by the cannibalistic mourning rites of the Fore—which only arrived in the Purosa area within living memory, around 1933 (Lindenbaum 1979:17–22). The Fore attributed the symptoms of this degenerative disease to a type of sorcery called *Kuru* (from which the disease got its name). Since the first case in 1933, at least three wars in the Purosa area were started because of this previously unknown disorder. Because this disease afflicted more women than men, there already was a significant demographic gender imbalance by the time of the first government patrols through the area, which increased even more in the 1950s and 1960s.

With World War II the influx of goods from the North abruptly stopped. Colonial officers and missionaries were evacuated out of the Kainantu area because of the Japanese threat. According to Berndt (1952–53:56–57), the Fore considered themselves betrayed by the spirits and new rituals were invented to appease the spirits and to re-attract the goods. The Purosa people also participated in such rituals. In one of the first acts, people built special houses for these spirits, collected stones from the river, bundled these up and hung the bundles in the rafters of these new houses. It was believed that if the stones were to break when heated on a fire, they would reveal large *kumu-kumu* and smaller *giri-giri* shells (see Berndt 1953–54:214 for a similar ritual).

It was at this time that the word *mono'ana* reached the Purosa area for the first time. *Mono'ana* was a term coined to signify all the goods associated with the red-skinned people, from shells to axes and knives to pieces of cloth or even salt (the term might in fact be derived from the English *money*). Some Purosa men tried, time and again, to find ways to produce this *mono'ana* for themselves. One of my main informants, Tambendo Te'u, heard a rumour from up North that the dead were able to produce *mono'ana*, so he went to the burial places of his ancestors, lit a fire there, smoked tobacco the whole night and asked for *mono'ana*. After this did not work, together with others, he built a house with big wing-like protrusions, to catch the wind that was supposed to blow *mono'ana* in their direction, and ordered that only women congregate in this house to "catch the wind." After this failed, he carved wooden guns and put them in a house, and he and some followers entered the house, took out these wooden guns and marched around.

All these rituals are variations on a common theme also reported on by Berndt (1952–53, 1953–54) from the North Fore, Usurufa, Kamano and Jate areas. There was

indeed a direct link between Purosa and Kagu in the North Fore. Part of a lineage from Ai clan of the Ai local group had split and fled from the constant fighting in the Purosa area and found a new home in Kagu. Once Kagu was affected by the rumours and the ritual activities, one of these refugees travelled back to Purosa to inform them about what was happening. He brought news of *mono'ana* to the Purosa area. He instigated rituals and told the Purosa people that they would have to stop wars and no longer marry prepubescent girls, so that the red-skinned people would arrive with their *mono'ana*. Some Australian patrol officers were later quite surprised when people enthusiastically welcomed them with gifts of pigs and food, lined up as if they were ready for a head count or saluted them—all behaviours they had either heard about or witnessed first-hand in already-contacted and pacified areas (Lindenbaum 1979:80).

In the Purosa area, such rumours and cargo cults created a climate conducive to rapid pacification. They bred an interest in new and non-traditional activities. Traditional standards of knowledge were weighed up against these novel events. Thus, the collapse of traditional activities was not only accepted but also actively supported. According to Berndt (1952–53:149–150), the decline of cargo cults among the southern Kamano, the Usurufa and northern Fore coincided with the spread of colonial power and the fervent desire shown by the local population to radically alter their life bore certain traits of a cargo cult in itself.

Among the South Fore, cargo cults did not instantly disappear with the advent of the colonial administration, and there were several recurrences in a different form in the 1950s and 1960s. The quest to gain *mono'ana* remained a preoccupation with the Purosa people throughout the colonial period. When the first Australian patrol officers contacted the Purosa villages, their North Fore translators also constantly used this concept of *mono'ana* and connected it with the end of warfare. Several people told me that they were also more than willing to help in the construction of a car road from Okapa to Purosa in the years 1956–58 because they expected *mono'ana* to arrive with the road. They then went on to say that this was in a sense the truth since, soon after the construction of the road, they were shown how to plant coffee and create an income that for the first time allowed them to purchase novel goods, true *mono'ana*, on a large scale.

In front of this history of new ideas spreading throughout the area, it becomes understandable why a lot of Purosa elders see the event of the raising of the red piece of cloth (associated with the red-skinned people) as the decisive end point in their long history of warfare. It was the common desire among all groups to receive *mono'ana* and to partake in this new world, which made it possible for all sides to stop warfare at the same time, once and for all. That such peace movements can have an overwhelming force is also shown by a case among the Kamano in the late 1930s (Radford 1977), where a charismatic movement to give up war and burn weapons spread to encompass large parts of the Kamano, Agarabi and Gadsup.

The Colonial Pacification Project

The Purosa people came into contact with the "pacification project" of the Australian Colonial Administration when the first exploratory patrol reached their hamlets in 1949. This patrol was part of an ambitious project to establish government control over all the remaining uncontacted areas of the Territory of New Guinea after World War II until 1955 (Downs 1980:98). The extension of control was thereby seen as a necessary prerequisite to the social, economic and political development of the Territory of New Guinea that the Australian government was committed to under the trusteeship agreement with the United Nations (Griffin et al. 1979:103–105).

Australian patrol officers, the so-called kiaps, were charged with implementing the extension of control by conducting patrols accompanied by a detachment of the New Guinean constabulary and cargo carriers who went from village to village to establish contact with the people. In subsequent visits, these patrols then explained and later also enforced government rules regarding the ban on warfare and violence. Kiaps on their patrols conducted a yearly census, appointed village officials, settled disputes and complaints and encouraged people to build bridle paths and roads and, later, to plant cash crops (Griffin et al. 1979:118). Communication of these aims during the first one or two patrols was difficult because of lack of translators. Subsequent patrols then used men from the North Fore who had already picked up a bit of the colonial language of communication, Tok Pisin, and could make themselves understood in the South Fore dialects. It was through these interpreters that the connection between the end of warfare (which had already occurred in the North Fore) and the spread of *mono'ana* was insinuated and strengthened.

The first patrol reached the Purosa hamlets in August 1949 and stayed one night before continuing onward to the Lamari River valley. Until 1952, there was about one patrol per year, usually staying only a night in the Purosa area before moving on. All these patrols until

1952 reported continuous fighting in the South Fore area, which usually ceased for the duration of the patrol, only to break out again afterwards, but the kiaps did little to stop it.

A police post staffed by three New Guinean policemen was set up in Moke among the North Fore in 1950. It was about half a day's walk away from Purosa. These policemen were in charge of bringing the situation in the North Fore under control and overseeing the construction of a road connecting the area to Kainantu. They also did some patrolling on their own in the South Fore area and were well received by the Purosa villagers, even though they could hardly communicate and could do nothing to stop the fighting. One of these policemen, Corporal Nalakor, was on a patrol staying in Waisa Village in early May 1951, when the Purosa local group of Ketabe and their allies attacked the village. Cpl. Nalakor gave two warning shots but, since the effect of a gun at that time had not yet been demonstrated, the Ketabe pressed on. Nalakor then shot Umabea of Takai-Purosa through the knee, whereupon the Ketabe promptly retreated, leaving behind Umabea, who was then killed by the advancing Waisa warriors. It was the first and only time that a government agent used its deadly police force and got embroiled in violence in the South Fore area. While it prevented the village of Waisa from being overrun by the Ketabe at that moment, fighting in the area continued unabated.

It was only the patrol of Assistant District Officer West in 1953 that reported fighting had effectively ceased and that stockades were falling into disrepair:

> The people of South Fore live in small scattered hamlets on the forest line or well concealed in bamboo and pit pit thickets astride steep ridges. All are palisaded, but many of the palisades have been allowed to fall into disrepair, indicating that peaceful conditions had prevailed for some time before the patrol's visit. Everywhere there were indications that steady progress towards a settled way of life has been made since the people were initially contacted and that there has been a considerable amount of free and unmolested movement—an essential prerequisite to any development. [West 1953:4]

In the same year, the administration opened a new patrol post staffed by a patrol officer and a detachment of police in Okapa, 24 kilometres (15 miles) or about half a day's walk north of the Purosa villages. From then on, patrols were regularly visiting Purosa villages at least once yearly, and the next patrol in 1954 reported that the situation in the South Fore had changed considerably:

> Although the area has had several patrols, systematic organised patrolling could be said to have commenced only as far back as October, 1953, with the initial census. Much of what the earliest patrols had accomplished would have been annulled by their infrequency and irregularity. As the situation is today, we have gained a lot. There have been no tribal fights for over a year at least. The confidence of many important men has been gained, and, to a lesser extent, the people considered as a mass. [MacArthur 1954:11]

On their patrols, kiaps offered themselves as neutral and impartial mediators and exhorted villagers to bring grievances and conflicts to the government officers for adjudication, rather than resort to violent retaliation. Former kiaps who I interviewed reported that their presence alone was usually sufficient to bring the aggrieved parties together to discuss the issue and, by themselves, decide upon a mutually satisfactory solution, usually involving compensation of one sort or another.

Where mediation was not successful, kiaps were invested by the colonial administration with their own judicial powers. They could establish a "court of native affairs" by proclamation at any time, acting as prosecutor and judge, giving a verdict and meting out the punishment at the same time. Through this union of judicial and executive powers, kiaps could regulate conflicts very efficiently, either on the spot during patrols or at the patrol posts (Downs 1980:148; Gordon 1983:220–221). The kiaps had the duty to enforce the Native Affairs Regulation, which concerned practically every sector of traditional life. The regulation provided sanctions for varying infractions, from theft, assault or "riotous behaviour" (a euphemism for armed warfare) to the lack of maintenance of roads and houses or the burning of grassland without permit—a traditional form of hunting or clearing land for gardens (Sinclair 1981:46–47, 170).

Those arrested because of riotous behaviour were usually sentenced to two or up to six months in prison at the patrol post in Kainantu or Okapa. Those few people actually charged with murder received sentences of several years' duration. The convicts had to perform hard labour while imprisoned and were employed in road construction, logging or general improvement work around the patrol station. Apart from being a disciplinary measure, the prison was also a focal point of pacification. It was in prison that, for the first time, Highlanders came into intense contact with the "civilizing" project (Görlich 1999:158). They got acquainted with the extent and aims of the colonial presence, befriended policemen and learned a smattering of Tok Pisin, which often rendered them valuable contact persons for kiaps upon their return to the village.

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Local Leaders and Conflict Settlement

Since the number of colonial officers and native policemen was hardly sufficient to effectively patrol or efficiently control the whole area, indigenous contact persons and representatives of the government were needed. In each village (or more precisely, in what kiaps considered to be each village), a village head (known in Tok Pisin as *luluai*) was appointed, as well as a deputy-cum-interpreter (*tultul*). The luluai, acting as the local representative of the government, was responsible for maintaining law and order and was charged with the duty of reporting promptly to the administration any breach of the peace or other irregularity (Gordon and Meggitt 1985:37). When kiaps first contacted a village, they usually lined up all the inhabitants and tried to identify the most influential man in the village to appoint him as luluai.

The people chosen as luluais in the Purosa villages were all respected leaders of their local groups. Tultuls were younger men who had already made names for themselves as warriors, but who also had already come into contact with the administration. The positions of luluai and tultul were apparently highly coveted because of the prestige afforded these official representatives. Many ambitious men saw in this position an excellent way to strengthen their own standing in society with the assistance of the powerful kiaps. All tultuls and luluais in the Purosa area were keen to support the administration, and thus were quick to stop quarrels and bring troublemakers to Okapa patrol post for sentencing. Most people readily accepted the legitimacy of courts held by police and the kiap at the patrol post, and many voluntarily went to Okapa with their disputes or waited until the kiap came by on his yearly patrol.

The luluai and tultul also held rudimentary courts, whereby minor cases—mainly concerning adultery—were debated in front of an audience and finally settled through the administering of a compensation payment or corporal punishment. The acceptance of such informal courts was widespread, and rested on a scant understanding of the duty of a village official in combination with a consensus among the majority of the population that conflicts needed to be settled. These courts were efficient, not only because they upheld traditional values, looked at root causes of each case and passed more locally acceptable sentences, but also because the luluai and tultul could always send recalcitrant villagers not wanting to obey these sentences to the patrol post for imprisonment (Berndt 1962:314–327). Such unofficial courts are also known from other parts of the Highlands (Gordon 1983:211; Meggitt 1977:150; Pflanz-Cook and Cook 1983; Westermark 1996:307) and seemed to be crucial for the keeping of the peace, since they handled most low-level conflicts in easily understandable and culturally appropriate terms.

The cooperation between the luluai and the tultul on one side and the police and kiaps on the other was apparently functioning very well, and the two former tultuls still alive told me that whatever the dispute or infraction was, they would accompany or send the guilty party on their own to Okapa to serve some time in jail. Most people interviewed thus spent some time in prison, usually for a few weeks at a time. One self-avowed troublemaker achieved a total of 12 different prison sentences within about a dozen years, for infractions such as hitting his wife and not showing up for compulsory roadwork, but also for participating in brawls and stick fights between hamlets or even local groups over disagreements regarding the distribution of mortuary payments or marriage arrangements. At least in this case, the threat of a prison sentence did not seem to have a deterrent effect, even if the person in question stressed that prison labour was hard work, and the sleeping arrangements there were less than satisfactory. But what the institution of the prison achieved was that troublemakers could be taken out of the village for some weeks or months at a time, allowing emotions to cool down and thus effectively preventing the resurgence of serious violence.

Considering that sorcery was indeed the most frequent trigger for warfare, it is worth noting that, with the increased number of kuru cases in the 1950s and 1960s, there was no return to armed conflict. That such a danger was indeed present can be shown by an incident in 1955, when four men from Ketabe and Mugayamuti ambushed and killed two men from Ainai whom they held responsible for the death of the wife of one of the attackers by kuru sorcery. The Ainai did not retaliate, but instead alerted the tultul of the Ai local group (who was related to them) and informed him about the identity of the four killers. The tultul then went to these four men and instructed them to kill all their pigs and eat them, since they would have to go to prison for a long time. The attackers did not resist and followed the luluai and tultul up to Okapa patrol post, where they were first imprisoned and later charged and sentenced by a Supreme Court judge to six years of hard labour. They were taken to Lae and Port Moresby to serve their jail sentences. As they were absent for such a long time, a lot of people in Purosa actually assumed that they were killed by the administration, and this seemed to have quite a deterring effect.

As these examples show, considerable segments of the South Fore population (especially the luluai and tultul, but also the general population that heeded their

instructions and refrained from instigating violence) were instrumental in ensuring that war would no longer break out. Without the collaboration between village leaders and colonial authorities, pacification would not have taken place so quickly, and wars might have broken out again for quite some time, as can be cogently demonstrated by the example of the nearby Southern Tairora, situated in the Lamari valley 30–40 kilometres to the east, where pacification took much longer, mainly because no such collaboration existed. On several occasions the Tairora leaders, luluai and tultul among them, were behind renewed retaliatory attacks. Although the Southern Tairora area was first contacted in the same year (1949) as the South Fore area, wars ceased only in the mid-1960s.

This raises the question of why village leaders in the Purosa area so willingly cooperated with the colonial government. Rumours about *mono'ana* and a new way of life certainly played their part, combined with the realization that leaders could strengthen their power position with the help of government backing, thus paralleling similar developments in the Western Highlands, where big men quickly realized the value of co-operation with colonial authorities in order to access shell valuables that could be used to increase their political status in feast giving (Strathern 1984:22–23). What seems crucial to me is the fact that leadership among the Fore did not depend on prowess in warfare to the extent shown among the Tairora. Fore leaders were also skilled orchestrators of alliances and exchange relations, sponsors of feasts (although not to the same extent as in the Western Highlands) and makers of peace. Glasse and Lindenbaum (1971:376) called them "Little Big Men," and informants from Purosa mentioned their role in feast giving side by side with their role in warfare. The emphasis of their leadership was thus slightly if perceptibly different from the Tairora "Strong Man," who also arranged alliances (although among the Southern Tairora they never encompassed more than two or three local groups), but whose reputation and fame rested much more on his skill in warfare and aggressive personality (Watson 1971; 1983:234–238). With quite elaborate and costly peace ceremonies (again in contrast to the Tairora), it was the Fore leaders' skill in arranging and also contributing to these ceremonies that guaranteed lasting peace between local groups. It was this legacy as peace brokers that facilitated their transformation into mediators and adjudicators, and they no longer felt the need to underline their leadership with recourse to warfare.

Conclusion

Helbling (2006a:72; 2006b:128–129) has advanced three decisive conditions for pacification based on his theory of warfare in tribal societies: first, a strategy of repression by the state (or any other superordinate authority) that will force local groups, under threat of violence, to no longer wage war and will protect groups who renounce war; second, a strategy of incentives that will reward groups willing to cease war with prestige goods and co-opt their leaders; finally, the establishment of judicial institutions that enable the peaceful settlement of conflicts between the pacified local groups. As has been shown in this article, these conditions cannot solely be construed from the perspective of the state but have to be interpreted and looked at from the point of view of the local population.

When people were asked to account for the end of warfare in the Purosa area, they laid stress on their own agency, mentioning most of all the promise of *mono'ana* and new things to come as a decisive factor in why people no longer took recourse to warfare. There certainly was a threat of force by the state, as the shooting of one Purosa man by a police corporal attests, but this was not seen as a determining event in the ending of warfare. As has been shown in other studies of the process of pacification in Melanesia (Gordon and Meggitt 1985; Rodman and Cooper 1983; Strathern 1984), colonial force was certainly present, at least as a threat, but it acquired social significance only through the cognitive context in which it was set: how it was interpreted and acted upon by the local population. Positive incentives to give up warfare were far more crucial and in the end it was the promise of rewards spread by rumours and North Fore translators in a psychological climate of uncertainty, rapid change and new possibilities that made it possible for all groups to end war at the same time, within a few years after first contact. All groups felt that they could trust each other to no longer escalate conflicts in the knowledge that each one of them desired the goods that were supposed to arrive with the coming of the red-skinned people. This movement of peace thus acquired a dynamic of its own, and the end of war became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Once peace was established, it was the active support from significant parts of the population, especially the role of the luluai and tultul in setting up their own courts and sending troublemakers to jail, that sustained this rapid pacification. Here, too, it is important to realize that judicial institutions to settle conflicts peacefully can

be imposed by a state, but that the success of these institutions hinges on the willingness of a local population and local leaders to use them and make them their own, transforming them in the process. Without this active participation in conflict management, according to Koch (1983:206), peace might be nothing more than "the people's acquiescence to foreign domination and their fear of violent reprisals for which they have no real chance of redress." That South Fore leaders cooperated with the colonial administration to such an extent can be explained by the fact that traditional leadership did not solely rest on prowess in warfare. These leaders were also coordinators and contributors to traditional peace ceremonies, which facilitated their transformation into mediators and adjudicators; thus, they no longer felt the need to underline their leadership with recourse to warfare.

What can the example of this historic end of warfare among the South Fore contribute to the quest to replace armed conflict by non-violent means of conflict settlement? First of all, it shows that the process of ending warfare can develop a positive, self-propelling dynamic. It shows that local leaders can be enabled to keep conflicts under control and settle them peacefully, if given positive incentives and support. And it shows that local cultural understandings and epistemologies have to be taken into account when determining reasons why people give up warfare. After all, the flag of peace among the Fore was red not because of the blood that was shed but for the wealth and prosperity that it promised.

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Acknowledgments

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