

Primitive War Lecture

Some things we can say about "primitive warfare" (dubious term):

1) Not about territory.

Seizing women (Yanomamo) & pigs is closest it gets to being about wealth

2) **Feud** = important

"These people's wars and raids yield neither prisoners, territory, nor plunder. They fulfill the obligations of the living toward the slain -- in fact, the ghosts of the slain. Unavenged ghosts bring sickness, unhappiness and possibly disaster. It is for this reason that they go to war -- and because they like to."

Feud not so foreign to us:

gang warfare

Northern ireland

Mid East

soccer hooligans in UK

Strange way killing binds together villages in Dead Birds. Locked together in endless cycles of reciprocal killing. Each killing brings village together in commemoration.

3) **Rules:** no raiding at night or during celebration of killing (Dead Birds)

Wait til each side is in position to fight (Dead Birds) -- like eighteenth century armies.

Axe-fights: only use blunt side of blades

Yanomamo agree not to use bows & arrows

All forms of warfare rule-bound, but the rules differ.

Looks to an outsider like Hobbesian anarchy, but it isn't

4) **Warfare is chaotic:**

Very individualistic (dead birds & Ilongot)

though Yanomamo at least take it in turns to look out for ambush and cover one another.

Discipline = one of great achievements of Western warfare:

drilling (**Foucault** writes on this in Discipline and Punish)

getting men to stand ground while charged and to rely on others to shoot with them at assailants

We'd criticize Ilongots' & New Guineans' lack of tactics & discipline

They criticize immorality of our form of warfare where one man orders another into danger

5) **Fight to show will & save face.**

(Don't always really want to fight & kill? -- Chagnon).

Similar to Western chivalric code & Wild west code of manliness.

Do we see anything similar in U.S. behavior?

6) **Killing as spiritually invigorating.**

Killing man = "tonic to the soul" (Dead Birds).

Resonance with WWI discourse

7) **Raiding as game with score & turn-taking.**

cf. Elaine Scarry on war as an "injuring contest"

8) **Women and children fair game for New Guineans.**

Yanomamo not supposed to kill women -- tho can rape them

Our distinction between combatants & non-combatants doesn't seem to apply -- though war = very gendered: for men to do.

(Are feminists right that it's not women as victims but women as fighters that male soldiers can't stand?)

9) **War as rite of passage for men** (cf. **Ehrenreich**):

Ilongot men get red hornbill earrings when take a head

10) **More wounding than killing**

Death ends fighting pretty much (Ilongot & Dead Birds)

Wounds as mnemonics:

Yanomamo skulls with scars

Chopped fingers in New Guinea

bleeding soccer fans having photo taken as
souvenir