

delegated voice: ritual speech, risk, and the making of marriage alliances in Anakalang

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Several prominent critiques take much of ethnography to task for tending to conflate analytic models, indigenous normative “rules,” and social practice (for example, Bourdieu 1977; Fabian 1983). This criticism is often linked to another, that the peculiar epistemological position of ethnographers leads them to favor models of communication when analyzing society. These lines of critique imply a question: how do *representations* of social interaction relate to the ongoing social *practices* in which they occur? In many societies, indigenous models of society do privilege spoken communication: to be able to represent social relations is profoundly implicated in their actual formation and transformation. In Anakalang, on the island of Sumba in eastern Indonesia, some of the most prominent forms of social interaction theatrically represent the large-scale social relations that they initiate and perpetuate as if those relations consisted, to a large extent, of self-referring acts of speech. Prominent among these forms of social interaction is the negotiation of marriage exchanges. In this essay I will discuss some of the ways in which reflexive speech performance contributes to how marriage alliances are made—or fail.

In particular I will focus on the structure of performance and draw out some linkages among three themes. I will attempt to show, first, that in Anakalang, the formalizing of participant roles, in conjunction with self-referring speech, is crucial to the way in which ritualized forms can *constitute* the relations they *portray*. I will argue, second, that the meaning of marriage payments in Anakalang cannot be reduced to the transfer of objects, for the act of negotiation *itself* plays a crucial role in making an alliance. Finally, I will challenge approaches that take orderliness as a self-evident goal or consequence of the use of ritual speech: I will argue that the formality and authority of Anakalanges ceremonial encounter operate in a complex relationship with order and risk. If ritual speech is a form of real social action, it must entail the prospect of failing, and may even require that such failure be imaginable. In this article I will discuss one pragmatic linkage between performance properties of the speech event, its spoken text, and the nature of its outcome, to try to demonstrate how, in Anakalang, the mastery of representations can be crucial to social action and its value.

Among the defining features of ceremonial encounter in Anakalang are the salience and self-referentiality of speech. At the level of denotation this means pervasive reference to the act of speaking. Speech is foregrounded in the organization of performance as well. Several of the speech participant roles—animator, addressee, author, and principal—identified by Goffman

Many societies stress communicative practice in their models of the social world. In Anakalang, Sumba, the process of marriage negotiation helps constitute and display the value of social identities and relations. In this “scene of negotiation,” ritual speech performance formalizes discrete speech participant roles and separates voice from agency. The scene implicitly portrays interaction as risky, with a potential for failure to which the very forms of interaction may themselves contribute. [ethnography of speaking, exchange, marriage, agency, performance, representation, Indonesia]

(1981; cf. Hanks 1989; Levinson 1986) are distributed among discrete actors in a stylization of dialogue. Such speech roles exist at a linguistic level that is often not subject to speaker awareness (cf. Silverstein 1981a). Their formalization in Anakalangese negotiations, however, makes them highly salient and is part of the way social interaction is iconically or diagrammatically represented as spoken dialogue pairs.¹ In Anakalangese marriage negotiation the distribution of formal participant roles effects a separation between "voice" and "agency." By "voice" here I mean simply the acts of formulating the contents of speech and of delivering it. The performance structure of Anakalangese marriage negotiation groups together the persons in whose name the event takes place, along with others who benefit from it, who direct it, or whose intentionality it manifests; in distinction to the bearers of "voice," these persons share "agency," a capacity to motivate, respond to, and resolve socially meaningful actions and events.

This separation of voice and agency has a number of effects. One is that it helps participants evade some of the consequences of failure. The separation takes place against a background of well-documented Sumbanese notions of risk, whether from the violence of spirits or the shaming ire of humans (Forth 1988:137; D. Mitchell 1988:68–69). Anakalangese, somewhat hyperbolically, may even speak of an alleged threat of warfare that lies behind the formality of negotiation. I once asked a senior man prominent in exchange what would happen if one did not marry with the mediation of ritual speech and speakers. He responded, "Then we'd have war."² I will argue that the perceived threat is associated with the constitutive force of the event and attendant uncertainties of outcome. In contrast to ritualized speech events in which the consequential action occurs outside the formally framed event (Irvine 1979), Anakalangese marriage negotiation can be the scene of fierce contest (cf. Keenan 1975). It requires confrontation between two—and only two—sides. The two parties usually have a common stake in the successful outcome of their encounter, while at the same time they often have opposed interests. In negotiating prestation and counterprestation, each party must find its way between the competing demands of honor and economy. The tension between these two demands is complicated by the fact that each of the two parties to the exchange is composed of many persons whose own interests may not coincide, and that the outcome, a mutual achievement of the two sides, is out of the hands of any single set of actors. Given these difficulties, delegation of participant roles appears to share a familiar aspect of face-saving strategies (Brown and Levinson 1978) by furnishing principals with a "personal volition disclaimer" (Du Bois 1986:319; cf. I. Mitchell 1981:362).

However, the need for simple saving of "face" is not sufficient to explain the performance structure and rhetoric of Anakalangese marriage negotiations, which represent the two parties as coming together across great social and spatial distance. Speakers call out to each other as if from afar and are figured in tropes of journey over rough terrain. The fictiveness of this drama is most evident in formal encounters between groups who have been allied for generations, existing in warm, daily contact. Here the perceived threat can be understood not just as a face-saving hedge against failure but as a way of implicitly depicting the *value* of the relationship that is renewed through negotiations, as renewal is portrayed as a difficult achievement. The structure of the encounter provides a stage on which persons and their relationships can be displayed and put to public test.

In addition to overcoming implicit threats, the separation of voice and agency, and their distribution among several distinct roles, have other effects. First, like other ritual and political forms of action, they permit the principals to remain offstage but implicitly and authoritatively present. Second, they implicate the participants in a scale of action beyond that of daily interactions, involving an agency that transcends that of individual persons (cf. Du Bois 1986; Hanks 1989). Role structure and textual properties of ritual speech help index the group itself as an entity possessing agency. Finally, the separation of voice and agency draws attention reflexively to the act of speaking, emphasizing conscious control over representations, and

makes salient the shared knowledge and mutual recognition that direct the interaction of the participants (cf. Giddens 1979). This reflexivity contributes to the defining of the event and the agentive roles in terms of culturally recognizable types, a local prerequisite for social action.

The ritual structure of marriage negotiation, what might here be called the “scene of negotiation” in order to draw attention to its theatrical and stereotypic qualities, is the locus for identifying and ratifying social ties that are always in the process of shifting, growing, or diminishing. Each negotiating party is often composed of disparate elements whose internal differences are momentarily suppressed, since formally only two sides can meet. In formal interactions, these parties are performatively constituted as having complementary social natures, the symbolically highly loaded roles of wife-taker and wife-giver.³ Successful use of ritual forms of negotiation results in powerful material exchanges and displays the group as an effective agent. Failure can disrupt exchange—which is *both* material and verbal (Irvine 1989)—and threaten the group’s capacity to present itself as a social agent with a coherent identity. The delegation of voice is crucial to how local action comes to be identified with larger structures and orders, ratifying the social and value-laden character of the agency in question.

Formality of text and performance is a familiar aspect of ritual speech. By formality here I refer to several of the features described by Irvine (1979): use of a highly structured and consistent code, invoking of positional identities, and central situational focus. It is common, in discussing formality of speech, to give particular attention to the existence of strong constraints on code. One line of argument interprets these constraints as primarily coercive in function (Bloch 1975). Another focuses on the conservative character of ritual, stressing the ways in which it asserts social norms or reiterates tradition (see, for example, McDowell 1983; Sherzer 1983; Urban 1986a). Both approaches emphasize one feature of ritual, that of seemingly rigid formality, and sometimes lend themselves as well to taking at face value indigenous assertions about the unchanging nature of tradition. However, as Irvine (1979) has made clear, “formality” is a complex notion, the properties and effects of which are not immediately self-evident. Thus, ritual speech can serve ends other than conservative, stabilizing, or didactic ones. Among these, it has been argued, is that of maintaining the arena in which political contention might come about (Brenneis and Myers 1984:11). Indeed, insofar as formality (in its various kinds) makes salient what might otherwise have remained tacit, it may open up possibilities as much as foreclose them (Irvine 1979:785; cf. Bauman 1977). So it should not be surprising if, in certain cases, it is the most public events that are most likely to be the locus of transformations (see Merlan and Rumsey 1991). Much will depend on what is at stake in a given type of speech event. When the central issue is defining and affirming group identities and relations, or asserting their value, speech performance may be not merely a means to but itself a part of the outcome.

marriage alliance and sociality in Anakalang

Anakalang is a society of some 16,000 people in the west-central part of the island of Sumba, Indonesia. Anakalangese is one of a family of closely related but mutually unintelligible languages of the island (for other Sumbanese societies see Adams 1974, 1980; Forth 1981; Hoskins 1984; Kuipers 1982; I. Mitchell 1981; Onvlee 1973). Social life at the local level is to a large extent dominated by relations among patrilineal clans (*kab^ˆisu*), the villages (*paraingu*) that serve as their bases, and their constituent lineage houses (*uma*).⁴ Anakalang has no chiefly office or all-encompassing rituals and tribute systems that might establish stable relations among its nearly autonomous clans, and the local Indonesian government exerts little direct influence on interclan relations. Negotiation of expensive marriage payments is the principal means of establishing relations and distinctions among the large lineages that make up clans, as well as membership and active cooperation within them. It is the most prominent field of

public display and contestation of status and group identity. Although lineages allied by marriages of their members are linked in a complex of mutual obligations and ongoing exchanges (especially the large-scale exchanges and buffalo slaughters at funerals and annual rites addressed to ancestor spirits), marriage exchange is the most subject to open negotiation and draws on the widest network of exchange partners. Marriage negotiation is a crucial moment in the forming and reforming of groups and relations (cf. Barnes 1980; Comaroff 1980), one in which the meaning of those relations is brought to bear on action (Sahlins 1985:ix).

The salience of marriage negotiation thus reflects another feature. Although Anakalang lacks either a stable and self-perpetuating system of interclan ranking or easily comparable positions within clans, the general principle of hierarchy is pervasive. Like the Wolof (Irvine 1974), Anakalangeses assume that the encounter of two persons will be between unequals. However, despite a generally agreed upon rank system of nobles, commoners, and slaves, fragmented clan-based hierarchies and prolific local cultural variation make it difficult to assume agreement on the relative status of persons in any instance, especially those not of the same clan. This is rendered more complex yet by the fact that while wealth is said not to affect rank, in practice—given the centrality of exchange to social life—the possession and use of wealth are crucial in establishing and manifesting one's position. Interclan and lineage competition and a tendency toward rivalrous fissions among clan members contribute to indigenous assumptions about social relations—namely, that they are difficult, require constant work to maintain, and are likely to mask hostility (cf. Forth 1988).

Countering this indigenous social agonism is the explicit ideal of harmony among clan fellows and of complementary interdependence between affines. The latter is founded in alliances between lineages based in repeated marriages, preferably of matrilineal cross-cousins.⁵ Prestations can be quite expensive, involving scores of animals and large numbers of gold valuables, since the level of marriage payments has direct consequences for the status of both parties. This is especially—and frequently—the case when alliances are relatively new or otherwise lacking in strong foundations. Uncertain alliances shade off into the least respected forms of marriage, which entail only token exchanges (verbal and material) and may result in the husband's entering the wife's lineage. Such gradations reflect the creative nature of marriage exchange, as different types of marriage result in different kinds of social relations (Barnes 1980; Comaroff 1980; McKinnon 1983; Valeri 1975–76).

Marriage payments, like all exchanges between affines, are governed by conventions of complementarity and asymmetry. As is common in the region (Fox, ed. 1980), men should acknowledge a perduring debt to the source of their wives through forms of respect and ongoing obligations to help them in future exchanges. Each side is identified as the source of certain types of objects: wife-takers (*ngábawini*) give buffalo, horses, swords, spears, and metal ornaments; from wife-givers (*yera*) come pigs, textiles, and ivory bracelets. Strong alliances are needed not only to maintain the flow of "blood" (*re*) brought to a lineage by in-marrying women, but also to sustain reliable sources of exchange items of both sorts. Because marriage alliances are in principle between groups, not individuals, multiple individual unions result in a multiplicity of group exchange obligations, as different specific lineages call on their respective affines for support in the exchanges required for funerals, worship, and feasting. Failures to maintain good relations with affines or strong cooperation among lineage-fellows can lead to ever weaker positions in exchange, in a self-perpetuating downward slide in status.

Formalized encounters such as the "scene of negotiation" of marriage payments are an important locus not only for solidary action and acts of exchange, but also for the performative display of the group as such, as it is physically assembled and represented as a united front to face the affine. They are also the preeminent site for naming relations, identifying actors, and specifying the nature of the relationship in play, the specific forms of which cannot be assumed to preexist the scene of negotiation. Indeed, the value and continuity of an alliance are not self-evident (cf. Strathern 1984). Repeated cumulative scenes of negotiation and exchange serve to

give the alliance and its constituent parties a clear identity. Enacting the alliance in this explicit form represents it as a discrete entity, existing beyond the disparate moments of ceremonial encounter, perduring from a forgotten past and into the future. Each party, in turn, comes to act as an entity represented as mastering an authoritative speaking voice able to engage in dialogue with an equally authoritative interlocutor. Such formal encounters are events foregrounded (Mukařovský 1964) against ongoing processes of fission and realignment. At the same time, in these moments social relations come to be objects of consciousness, and thereby subject to vicissitudes: they may be not only confirmed, but also subjected to challenge (Irvine 1979).

horung: the scene of negotiation

The major scene of negotiation is the formal encounter known as *horung*.⁶ A *horung*, which takes place after a series of smaller but equally formal initial encounters, brings together two parties, one of (potential) wife-givers, one of (potential) wife-takers. In composition the two are roughly symmetrical, consisting of all male heads of household who support or contribute to the principals, along with their wives and other members of their households in great numbers. The two parties should be roughly commensurate in scale. This is required in part by the ongoing internal conferring which requires consensus among participants, and in part by logistics: there are prestations to be transported, betel to be distributed, coffee and food to be prepared. More important, it would be shameful to appear with an inadequate following and equally shameful to be met with insufficient numbers by the opposite party.

In contrast to the scale of the party itself, the number of speaking participants in the formal negotiation is quite limited: most of those present serve as audience and witnesses (in fact, as will be explained below, the party of the host does not even hear the actual negotiation).⁷ Within each party there are a few named roles. The fathers of the children in question, “boat master, horse owner” (*mauri tena, mángu jara*), are not normally leaders or even significant speakers in the group. Direction should be in the hands of one or more men of higher status and authority within the clan. The latter figures are known by the generic term for leadership, “mother-father” (*ina-ama*), sometimes further distinguished by more specific formal epithets, such as “watch over underside, guard shadow” (*totu lubu, jiwa mawu*), keeper of the ancestral house.

An important feature of the participant structure is that the principals do not speak on their own behalf within the frame set by ritual speech. This is part of a general Anakalangese notion of authority which—in certain contexts—is associated with silence and immobility. In this common Austronesian pattern, the principals may be silent, immobile, and situated in the interior of the group (both physically and metaphorically, as they are essential to any internal consultations of the group) while the speakers are on the periphery (for the Lesser Sundas, see Cunningham 1965; Fox 1982; Schulte Nordholt 1980; Traube 1986; cf. Duranti 1984; Firth 1975). In a *horung* the principals should not directly present themselves to each other, instead remaining nonmanifest but presupposed presences.⁸ Typically, however, they gradually emerge into the foreground over the course of the negotiation, as either agreement or rupture brings the event toward resolution.

Those who serve as negotiators and spokesmen are known as *wunang* (literally, “weaving heddles”; Adams 1980:214). Unlike priests, who hold permanent ascribed offices, negotiators and spokesmen are chosen on an occasional basis and on the grounds of skill. As the occasion decreases in importance, so too does the degree of skill required of the person serving as *wunang*, until it shades off at the lower end into the ability of any competent adult to speak. The one significant restriction is that persons of high rank should not serve as *wunang*, for the distinctive characteristic of the *wunang* is that he is summoned and sent.⁹

In full-fledged negotiation, the leaders often do not even address their own spokesmen directly, for the hosts, at least, should have two pairs of ritual speakers. In each pair, one is the

wunang, the other a respondent. The hosts must have one *wunang* “who sits the speech” (*ma madid’ung na panewi*), the man who actually voices the consensus of the party in full *kajiála*, the ritual speech of negotiation.¹⁰ It is his task to formulate and present this consensus to the second *wunang*. The latter, “the one who travels” (*na ma halaku*), receives this message and conveys it to the “traveling” *wunang* of the opposite party.¹¹ The *wunang* from each party who directly face each other are the most skilled and most able to intervene strategically in the process; in some cases it is skillful “traveling” *wunang* who are credited with deflecting the rash or angry acts of the principals whom they represent. The *wunang* do not, however, normally participate in the actual forming of consensus: their concern is with the forms of speech, in a division of responsibilities reflecting that between voice and agency.

Sitting next to each *wunang* is a respondent known as *ma kad’ehang* (the one who serves as the *kad’ehang*) or *ma hima* (the one who answers). The *kad’ehang* is the ritual name by which a group is addressed.¹² The speech of *kajiála* takes the form of short segments, punctuated by the *wunang*’s exclamations of the *kad’ehang* of the opposite party, to which the respondent answers, “*málo!*” (“go on!”).¹³ Every clan and major lineage possesses at least one *kad’ehang*. In keeping with general Anakalangesse norms of name-avoidance, in ritual speech the clan is addressed not by its everyday name but by this term, which itself is usually an avoidance term for an ancestor—typically, the name of that ancestor’s slave. Furthermore, in terms of the performance, a *wunang* addresses *not* the *wunang* who faces him, but rather the respondent at the latter’s side—in formal terms the *wunang* only overhears his opposite number (cf. I. Mitchell 1981:363). In addition to responding to the *kad’ehang*, the respondent periodically interjects stylized back-channel cues: “that’s it!” (“*jiédi!*”), “true indeed!” (“*langatáka!*”), “right!” (“*malangu!*”). Other than that he never speaks, and his only other action is to assist the speaker in carrying offering dishes or the betel bag.

Ideally, the *horung* takes place in the chief ancestral village of the host lineage. The visitors go there in a noisy and lengthy procession that effectively displays to all neighboring villages the size of the party they are able to command and the quantity and quality of the gifts they bring.¹⁴ On arrival, they are seated in a house or specially constructed shelter separate from the house in which the host has congregated. There they remain, the two parties spatially segregated. While betel and coffee are distributed among the guests, the host party confers on opening moves. This is the largest gathering that will have transpired in relation to the marriage in question, and in principle a consensus of all the participants is necessary. In this meeting, people typically show little restraint in expressing opinions about proper procedures, prestations, and the relative statuses of the participating groups. One rationale for the openness of the meeting and the need for consensus is the general ideal of solidarity, both among fellow clan members and between them and the wife-takers on whom they have called for support: the entire group should be made responsible for decisions (cf. Keenan 1974:130). More specifically, most of those present have made material contributions to the exchange being negotiated: only the most arrogant or socially isolated of persons would attempt to sponsor a marriage unassisted.

The loose organization and often contentious manner of the conference (*b’atang*) reflect a situation of mutual interest constructed out of a willful and disparate membership. They are in striking contrast to the orderliness of the *kajiála* itself. There is no formal order of speaking, and topic focus is vague and difficult to maintain: men lacking in influence can attempt to take the floor in a sort of filibuster to draw attention to grievances or stray into unrelated matters. Etiquette tends to permit long uninterrupted speeches by the participants, but when things heat up, three or four men may all be fighting for the floor while women make teasing interjections from the sidelines. The leaders usually remain unobtrusive until they sense that everyone has had his say or that the meeting must be brought to a resolution. Both parties to the exchange often face last-minute shifts of support or material strength, as supporters desert or new ones are recruited.

At length the leader gives the “sitting” *wunang* the message to be delivered; at this point the actual couplets in which the message is to be conveyed may still be sketchy. The “sitting” *wunang* responds by delivering a brief summary to the leader by way of confirmation, and then turns to the “traveling” *wunang* to repeat the message in its entirety (this although his listener has heard the entire message from first delivery and in summation). The two *wunang* bear primary responsibility for the actual formulation in couplets, according to their respective skills. Having received the message from the “sitting” *wunang*, the “traveling” one recites it back to him and then walks over to face the *wunang* of the other side, who remains seated throughout this time in front of the visiting party (see Figure 1). Having received the message, the latter repeats it back to the *wunang* who delivered it, by way of confirming that he has understood, and then turns to the “sitting” *wunang* of his own party to pass it on. The “sitting” *wunang* confirms reception and passes it on in turn to the leaders of the group (who were witness to the very first presentation of the message). This process of verbatim repetition and prolongation of chains of communication through linked dialogue pairs is a prominent feature of *kajiála* throughout. At times reminiscent of Zeno’s arrow, it iconically portrays a distance to be progressively overcome through the course of the negotiation.

ritual speech in Anakalang

In Anakalang’s cultural atmosphere of social agonism, high formality accompanies most social relations of any importance outside the household. Among the features that distinguish all public action in Anakalang is the obligatory use of ritual speech, of which *kajiála*, the speech of negotiation, is one genre. Despite important variations among genres of ritual speech, they constitute a single marked set, *na panewi pata*, “the speech of ordered custom,” in contrast to the unmarked category of colloquial speech (*panewi* or, more negatively, *panewi ngilu*, “wind talk”). Most salient of the distinctive features of ritual speech is the use of parallel couplets and metaphors. The vast bulk of ritual speech is in the form of canonical pairs of lines linked by syntactic and semantic parallelism (Fox 1988; Jakobson 1966).¹⁵ The mode of denotation is

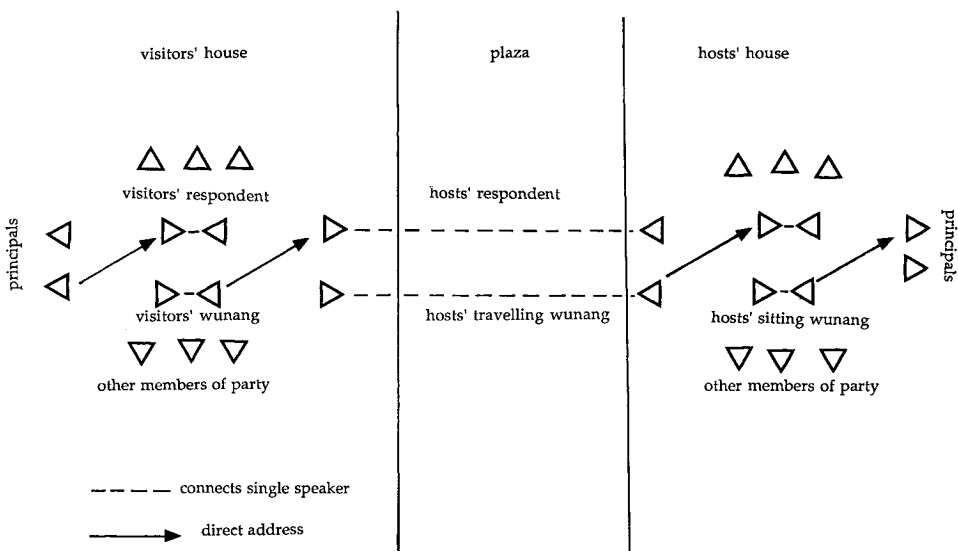


Figure 1. Positions of participants in marriage negotiation (not to scale).

often highly allusive, largely metaphoric. Most of the words come from everyday speech (with some semantic shifts), but many of the pairs are formed by introducing synonyms from other Sumbanese languages, and there are a few esoteric terms used only in ritual speech. Nevertheless, the speech is relatively accessible to the experienced hearer because the couplets and metaphors are canonical. The couplets, generally said to have been passed down from the ancestors without change or addition, have the authoritative quality of “prior discourse” (Bakhtin 1981:342), and each adult has heard them repeatedly over the course of a lifetime. While marked and esoteric (as well as aesthetically pleasing), ritual speech in Anakalang is not shrouded in secrecy per se. Actual knowledge of the phrases is in most cases relatively public—what may be restricted in some genres is the authority to use them.

If Anakalangese ritual metaphor neither creates referential opacity nor opens up new orders of insight (insofar as the metaphors are well worn and familiar), it does have other effects. First, it makes salient the fact of speaking in a high-status register. Use of esoteric terms, archaisms, and words from other parts of Sumba, combined with the belief that ritual speech has been received unchanged from the ancestors, serves to distinguish it from the colloquial—temporally, situationally, and spatially. Significantly, the use of ritual couplets is described in the same terms as is the act of delegating speech to another: both are to convey one’s intent “loaded on a boat, borne by a horse” (*pa-haila ngidi tena-ngu, pa-wuatu ngidi jara-ngu*).¹⁶

In addition to the use of couplets, ritual speech is marked by stylized enactment of dialogue roles. At the least, this involves a person who periodically interjects conventional back-channel cues such as those noted above. The respondent role is an important feature marking the breakthrough into performance (Hymes 1981) that can occur even in the midst of informal speech. When a participant in a meeting moves into a more authoritative mode, for example, two things often happen. He may begin to speak in regular intonation patterns, often interjecting couplets of ritual speech, and another (self-selecting) person may begin to act as a respondent. The respondent role is just one feature contributing to the way in which most Anakalangese formal speech events—even those that are not negotiations, such as prayers—are enacted as dialogues (cf. Basso 1986; Sherzer 1983; Urban 1986b). Turns at speech are codified by clear boundary markers: canonical phrases, varying by genre, mark the beginning and end of a stretch of speech, which should not be interrupted (except for the cries of the respondent). In the more formal genres the respondent is periodically cued by a ritual address term: the particular term used indexes the speech genre in question and thereby indexes the situation as one of a limited number of canonical types.

Although most men—and a large number of women as well—pride themselves on the ability to quote at least some canonical pairs, one does not have to be a practitioner in order to be a fully active member of political society (contrast McDowell 1983). However, any social unit, if it is to act, must be able to secure the services of ritual speakers. The delegating of speech in this manner has certain consequences for the relationship of the speaker to his medium. While skill commands informal recognition and respect, it does not change the social status of the speaker. His ability indexes experience, but since it is only his practical knowledge of speech and not his agency as a shaper and motivator of social encounters which is so indexed, it cannot affect his structural position.¹⁷

***kajiála*: the speech of negotiation**

I have argued that the participant roles and performance structure make salient the act of speaking and the structure of dialogue. The spoken text, to which I turn here, is also permeated with self-reference, and sometimes with the implication that speech may fail. I begin with the opening segment of a speech made by the *wunang* of a party of wife-givers to his counterpart.¹⁸ The two *wunang* had met a month previously in a smaller consultation to set the stage for the

present *horung*. The speaker opens the present encounter by using reported speech to confirm the events of the previous meeting. Quoting the wife-givers, he lists the prestations (lines 10–13) made at that time to welcome the guests with food, formally opening the ritual encounter. He then quotes the words with which he received the message brought by his interlocutor and promised to transmit it to his own party (lines 23–36). Finally, he confirms that he has delivered the message as promised (lines 42–45).

The opening cry (“*tanawudo*”) is a frame-setting formula that opens a single turn at speech. *Páda Pari* (PP) is the *kad’ehang* used to address the representatives of the wife-taker clan, *Palajangu* (PL) that of the wife-giver clan.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | PL: <i>tanawudo!</i> <i>Páda Pari!</i> | listen to this! <i>Páda Pari!</i> |
| | PP: <i>málo!</i> | go on! |
| | PL: <i>wi-mud’ipa nutu waiga:</i> | you were saying just now: ¹⁹ |
| 5 | <i>“lajju b’amu keru
na tuwu li panewi-mi Palajangu

pala b’amu toma
na kayi li kajiála-mu Palajangu”</i> | <i>“leap when you follow²⁰
connection of your words of speech, Pa-
lajangu
cross over when you arrive
receiving your words of kajiála, Pala-
jangu”</i> |
| | <i>Páda Pari!</i> | <i>Páda Pari!</i> |
| | PP: <i>málo!</i> | go on! |
| 10 | PL: <i>“ta lolu na hawalangu
ta jara haingi

ta mamuli na hapapa
ta hapi haingi

lau kana a-nyaka na auhu
b’ana táka ta hadoka pena pari
daku pa-watu ngodu doku
lau kana inu-nyaka na wai
b’ana toma ta halibaru palolu”</i> | <i>“by the one strand of chain
by one horse

by one pendant
by one cow²¹

go so he can eat the rice²²
when he arrives at the granary
I don’t merely sit dumb as stone
go so he can drink the water
when he has come to the benches”</i> |
| 15 | <i>Páda Pari!</i> | <i>Páda Pari!</i> |
| 20 | PP: <i>málo!</i> | go on! |
| | PL: <i>higuluna, Páda Pari!</i> | another thing, <i>Páda Pari!</i> |
| | PP: <i>málo!</i> | go on! |
| | PL: <i>“na gapi paki Palajangu
na tuwu li panewi-mi
katakú lima jara
na kayi li kajiála-mi
hob’a ngidu ahu

kaku pajíngi-pagi ta pajíngi mata
(mála)</i> | <i>“Palajangu clenches it
connection of your words of speech
takes in horse hands
receiving your words of kajiála
snaps up in dog’s teeth²³

first let me turn my turning eyes
(go on)</i> |
| 25 | PP: <i>(mála)</i> | <i>(go on)</i> |
| 30 | PL: <i>ta mauri-na na tena
ta madid’i oli pera
ta b’oku mamu d’umu
kaku pabaili-pagi ta pabaili goru
ta ngod’u oli lihi-na
ta mángu-na na jara
ta apu mamu d’umu”</i> | <i>to the ship master
to the sitting parrot companions
to your grandfather
first let me swivel with swivelling neck
to the seated flank companions
to the horse owner
to your grandmother”</i> |
| 35 | <i>wi-nad’ipa nutu waiga-na
b’ana pa-kayi kob’a kura-ngu</i> | <i>he said just now

when passing back and forth the
shrimp’s skin²⁴</i> |
| | <i>Palajangu.</i> | <i>[said] Palajangu.</i> |
| 40 | <i>Páda Pari!</i> | <i>Páda Pari!</i> |
| | PP: <i>málo!</i> | go on! |
| | PL: <i>d’ina pabaili-gi ta pabaili goru
d’a b’oku mamu d’umu</i> | <i>so I swivelled the swivelling neck
[as] your own grandfathers</i> |

I will stress two points here. The first is the self-referential emphasis in this text on speech itself. The second is the degree to which participant roles in general, and more specifically speech roles, are named and characterized. The opening invocation is not to receive, but to listen. This is followed by a locutive that names the alter (the address term or *kad'ehang* of the opposed clan) and then a recapitulation of speech in the previous encounter. This recapitulation itself consists in turn of a reference to the act of speaking (lines 24–27) and the use of the speaker's own *kad'ehang* (line 23), the address form employed by the other to address him. The speaker then quotes his own speech as reported of a third person, implicating the principals on whose behalf he speaks (line 37). In addition, the self-reference of the speakers emphasizes the formal structure of the scene of negotiation: “so I swivelled the swivelling neck . . . so I turned the turning eye” (lines 42 and 44) graphically depicts the act of turning about to face the party that one represents when conveying the message from the other side.

The passage confirms the exchanges made at the previous meeting, along with the formal name that metonymically specifies the type of event in question (“eat the rice . . . drink the water,” mentioned in lines 14 and 17, refers to the first stage in which visitors are formally received and ritual speech is initiated). The lines that follow (lines 28ff.) denote the act of referring the offer back to the party represented by the *wunang*; only now are the other participants mentioned. They are named in the roles relevant to the context established by the speech itself: the pair “ship master, horse owner” (lines 30 and 35) denotes the father of the girl, and the pair “parrot companions, flank companions” (lines 31 and 34) the members of his party. The terms “grandfather” and “grandmother” (which here refer to the party of the wife-takers as one pole in a structural relationship, but which can have the general sense of “ancestors”) rhetorically play on the ideal of ongoing alliance to focus on the transformation of potentially unstable asymmetries between affines into more established status differences based on generation, such as mother's brother and sister's son. Having reported the gist of both his interlocutor's and his own speech, the speaker now indicates that his task, promised in the previous meeting, has been accomplished. The compelling power of the promise is reinforced by the echoing of the very words in which it was made. With this, he now makes the offer.

The frame set and relevant roles named, the speaker brings the point of reference to the present. He lists item by item the prestations that have been brought by his party, along with the counterprestations demanded. These demands are framed as reported speech associated with various structural positions in the party of wife-givers. The naming of discrete components of bridewealth also serves to articulate the process of negotiation (cf. Nakagawa 1988). It provides a series of distinct moments at which the wife-takers can balk at the demands of the wife-givers and the latter in turn can show disappointment at the counteroffers made to them. Ideally, moments of resistance exist in order to be overcome, thus accentuating the sense—even in secure, close alliances—that successfully concluded negotiation is an achievement. In practice, they can become the foci of serious contention.

The speaker then finishes with a conventional frame that closes one turn of speech, using self-referential terms that explicitly denote the successful transmission of speech:

PL: <i>kaku loli waingu li</i>	I convey the words
<i>ngidi waingu peka</i>	bring the message
<i>Páda Pari! b'ijálu-gi!</i>	Páda Pari! I stow it here!
PP: <i>jíédi!</i>	yes!

The *wunang* of the wife-takers responds conventionally, by quoting his interlocutor's report of having to go back to his party. Continuing the focus on the act of speaking, and manifesting the recurrent concern with words gone astray, he then confirms both the procedural correctness of the quoted lines and the situational correctness of the message that was conveyed:

50	PP: <i>ada pala ya pa-pala waingu jara ya ta pa-pala Wa- nukaka lara li ya pa-li waingu tau ya ta pa-li Laboya</i>	crossing trail there for crossing by horse there at the Wan- kakan crossing followed path there for men to follow there at the Laboyan way
55	<i>da sagatu kalala-kad`imi uru tau ma daingu ya da leti ta kadapu-kad`imi wewi tau memangu</i>	you didn't step on thorns step of men of old there you didn't tread on rotten wood track of ancient men ²⁵

He then goes on to refer to the most immediate stretch of speech, namely the initial set of requests, framing it with the conventional couplet that denotes formal statement (lines 58–61) and naming his own party as the object of address within the quotation:

60	PP: <i>napa-ka jéli b`ali-neka na jara pa-kaleti-mu napa-ka laiju b`ali-neka na ahu papa-wujie-mu</i>	so now he leaps again your riding horse so now he jumps again your favored dog
65	<i>“kana tanawu-waka Páda Pari b`aku talaru panaingu kana tanawu-waka Páda Pari b`aku b`ajaru pamulangu”</i>	“so that Páda Pari may listen to me when I put all in rows so that Páda Pari may listen to me when I plant in a line”

Lines 63 and 65 are doubly reflexive, referring to both the correct order of speaking and the straight row of dishes containing tokens of prestations, and hence, more generally, to correctness of (and diagrammatic faithfulness to) procedures. Pádi Pari's *wunang* confirms that he will convey the message without alteration or mistake:

70	<i>dana duha-ma ta mawu ugu-kaguhaka ta ugu lima dana léb`ama ta lara b`ági-kaguhaka ta b`ági kabu daku lagoru pa-kasilu-manyá ta lagoru koku jara daku paji pa-kaboru-manyá ta paji keru teku</i>	not rejected in the shadows I grasp them in grasping first not discarded on the road I gird them at girt waist I don't damp the bells bells at horse's neck I don't wrap up the banner banner at pole's base
----	--	---

He will bring the message back to his own principal, who is identified as

75	<i>ma pa-b`oru-nya ta b`oru b`ági ta dutu jara mamu d`umu ma pa-taku-nya na taku lima ta keru ahu mamu d`umu</i>	he who belts him at the waist your own following horse he who puts the staff in his hand your own trailing dog
----	--	---

These two couplets identify the principals as established wife-takers (conventionally referred to as “following horse, trailing dog”), and therefore ones who are indebted as well as ones to be protected. They also identify them as the authorizing agency that lies behind the words of the *wunang*: it is they who give the *wunang* his belt and walking stick (lines 74 and 76), equipping him for the journey, figuratively across a long distance (that same figurative distance across which the *kad`ehang* is shouted), to face the opposite party. With the focus on the agency of the principals, it is common (but not obligatory) for the *wunang* to refer to himself in the third person, as here.

In responding, the other *wunang* confirms the correctness of each item in turn, affirming that the offer will be passed on to his own party. This is phrased in terms of the speech of the agent behind the *wunang*:

<i>líba-na ta láma papa-na ta ngaru</i>	he responds by tongue he matches with mouth
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Each item in the request receives its counteroffer, followed by qualifying lines that stress the perduring nature of the relationship between the two sides, as in this image connoting the gen-

erations of women who have already passed from the wife-givers to occupy the hearth benches of the wife-takers:

80 PP: *máli bínu-kad'íya na lad'u d'eta* as long as the upper bench is full
máli mátu-kad'íya na lad'u wawa as long as the lower bench is crowded

Since even the smoothest negotiation must move in stages of enacted resistance to the putatively weighty demands of the wife-givers, additional hedges are necessary, ones that also play on the speech event character of the action. They express a firm commitment to the relationship—the wife-takers will remember the debt and the promise made in this encounter:

PP: *b'ada nunga-ha newi-mádi* even if not firmly uttered
katiku-gu ma tídungu my head will carry them
b'ada tora-ja tíki-mádi even if not dyed and spoken
 85 *kabáki-gu ma d'aitu-ha* my shoulder will bear them

The wife-givers' *wunang* will then receive the counteroffer and repeat it, again offering assurances that he will not misrepresent it. After reporting back to his own party, he will meet his counterpart again. (Often these intermediate stages involve no further traveling between sides, for the *wunang* of the visiting party only need swivel about and face his own party, while his counterpart awaits the response.) Expressions of disappointment at the counteroffer are ventriloquized as words attributed to the principal:

PL: *na doku na ati-gu* my liver is disappointed
na jeji na matu-gu my eyes are unsatisfied
helu karera papa-ráka-jaka again betel pouches with just enough
helu kapu papa-túda-nahaka again lime powder measured out²⁶

This passage back and forth between the two sides, enormously drawn out by the conventions of repetition and layering of speakers, slowly whittles away at the difference between the amounts demanded and those offered. In addition to the prolongation that is built into the forms of communication, the negotiation is also protracted by a tendency to resist too rapid a resolution. While in part this is conventional, a matter of honor and challenge, it can become quite earnest as well, and develop into serious ruptures both between and within parties (cf. Bourdieu 1979). Often a single night-long session is not sufficient to bring the matter to an end. Eventually, however, most negotiations reach some sort of accommodation. As the concluding passages approach, the *wunang* increasingly tend to break the frame of *kajiála*, reverting to colloquial speech to count up the prestations agreed upon to that point, and the principals often take an increasingly active role. The latter might be said to be emergent, from their initial prescriptive absence in the first small meetings between the two sides to the point at which agreement has been reached and they finally come face to face. When the wife-takers have reached the limit of what they are willing to give, they may throw themselves on the pity and understanding of the wife-givers. In the example here, the *wunang* adopts the “voice” of the bride or her mother (implied through the use of female speaker kin terms):

90 PP: *garikiwali-naka?* what else can be done?
malangu nai b'oku grandfather is right
malangu nai ana moni brother is right
garikiwali-naka? what else is to be done?
malangu nai apu grandmother is right
 95 *malangu nai rina moni* brother's wife is right
b'a ai táka-kajaka if there really were [those items]
ku wo táka-kad'inaha ana moni truly I would give them to brother
laiku da ma betahu [we are like] unparting rope
ai da ma bata [we are like] unbreaking wood

The reversal of gender at this juncture may underline the subordination of wife-takers to wife-givers. It also represents the exchange not as a transaction between men, across lineage boundaries, but as a gift from sister to brother. The last couplet here (lines 98–99) asks for recognition

that a perduring debt has been established, one that need not be foreclosed at the present. At this point a single exchange between the *wunang* themselves (a men's cloth from the wife-giver side, reciprocated with a horse) closes the frame of the formal scene of negotiation: there will be no further *kajiála* in this *horung*. Now, at the point where *direct* participation in exchange by men who have heretofore spoken only as *intermediaries* to the exchanges of others closes the frame, the principals who have remained in the *background* can fully emerge and speak directly to each other. This meeting usually consists of some small talk and mutual assurances that the accounting of prestations on each side is in agreement and that the animals promised on credit will be forthcoming.

the sense of risk and the failure of negotiation

I have summarized a case of negotiation that runs smoothly. But it is important to realize that in Anakalang, *kajiála* is not a ceremonial event the outcome of which has been determined in advance or becomes inevitable once the machinery is set into play.²⁷ The insistence on correct form, the repetitive naming and delegating of roles, and the assurances that words will not go astray all operate against the background of awareness that they could fail. Marriage negotiations *do* break down, and indeed can provide the ground for wider hostilities. Just as the scene of negotiation helps constitute both relations between groups and their internal unity, so too breakdown can occur not only between the two parties but also within a single one—on either the wife-taking or the wife-giving side. In addition to determining the relevant identities of participants, the successful performance of ritual speech specifies the nature of the event itself, the context of action. As a formal register it indexes the event as of a certain type and the present situation as reproducing one of a limited number of stock situations. The use of ritual speech helps delineate which features of the empirical situation will be taken to be pertinent. Canonical couplets and discrete participant roles contribute to the suppressing of the individuality of persons and circumstances in favor of the constituting of authoritative types (cf. Du Bois 1986; Kuipers 1988). In Anakalang, the ability to instantiate types through the use of ritual speech seems to be one requirement for action to be social. Here I will give examples of different ways in which the scene of negotiation can become problematic, through disagreement over the definition of the event or of specific moments within it, or through a blurring of the distinction between voice and agency.

The first case concerns a failure of the entire ritual speech frame itself. This arose during the marriage of two non-Anakalangeses, both of whom had been raised in the district, one under the responsibility of a local lineage. The wife-givers had ill-advisedly selected as *wunang* a minor civil servant known to possess a great deal of synoptic knowledge of local tradition. It soon became evident that this did not translate into practical ability, and the use of *kajiála* quickly collapsed, the speakers breaking into colloquial Indonesian (so that the non-Anakalangeses relatives could follow). When this happened the offended wife-takers complained that they no longer knew whom they were addressing or who they themselves were, and that thus they could no longer dare to speak as representatives of the boy. In addition, the lapse from ritual speech was an insult to them, as if they were no longer "humans, but mere blocks of wood," incapable of acting—that is, speaking—with honor. Here was a case of failure to index and denote acceptable positional roles. This was not merely a failure of reference, it was a challenge to the roles themselves. It threatened to dissolve a potential alliance between groups into a mere union between a pair of individuals, a matter with little social significance and no assurance of future exchange relations for the other participants.

The second case concerns the definition of an event within the frame of ritual encounter. A *horung* nearly came to grief over how the presence of the girl in the wife-takers' village was to be typified. After earlier talks had stalled, the girl had run off to the village of the boy, where

her action was understood to be of the type called “following the mother” (*keri b’ai*), that is, taking a shortcut to renew an established alliance path. At the *horung*, however, her lineage came with prestations identified as those brought for pursuing a woman who has been carried off at the behest of the man’s village. This action redefined the nature of the parties, since by attributing the agency to the boy’s family and implying that connubial relations had begun it meant the couple was taken as an established entity (and the capacity of the wife-takers to threaten withdrawal—as they had been doing—was thereby severely limited).

Moves by one party can challenge the participation roles internal to the other: one encounter was nearly disrupted when the wife-givers’ *wunang* offered their prestations directly to the assembled hosts immediately upon arriving at the village, in an oration of formal conveyance (*pa-pala-ngu*). This speech genre required a direct response on the part of the wife-takers, meaning that their *wunang* had to speak without consulting his party. In collapsing the distinction between the voice of the host *wunang* and the agency of the party he represented, the event also threatened to provoke schisms within his party, prompting him to make an offer that other participants might not back up. Here is an example of how solidarity *internal* to each party is maintained in part by the interaction between them. In this case, so great was the anger of the offended party that the *wunang* of the wife-givers was in the end compelled to surrender the structural advantage afforded by the fact that the visiting party has the initiative in exchange. He did not specify what counterprestations were being demanded, leaving it up to the wife-takers to decide what to offer in return (see lines 100–107).

As this episode illustrates, the separation of voice and agency works against the reversibility inherent in dialogue. In formal terms a given speaker never becomes an addressee, remaining at most an overhearer, while the “swivelling about” of a *wunang*, as he delivers the other’s message to his own party, in a sense appropriates the speaking part of his interlocutor. Yet in Anakalang the shifting and agonistic nature of relations suggests that positions may be reversed (and in terms of micropolitics, many supporters of one party may have links to the other as well, their loyalties and structural positions never fully assured). Thus, while a formal reversal of roles between the two sides is not possible, a change in relative material and strategic resources is. This was a threat partially activated in the case noted above, for the wife-takers were able to take the initiative. At the moment of acquiescence, the wife-givers’ *wunang* went so far as to spell out the role reversal—significantly, putting it in terms of forms of address:

100	<i>máli ma pengu-d’iya li lawi</i>	as long as there is one who understands the way of marrying men
	<i>máli ma pengu-d’iya li mangoma</i>	as long as there is one who understands the way of marrying women
	<i>ma ka-ina-ma wi-makaka</i>	so we call “mother”
	<i>na dutu jara-ma</i>	our following horse
	<i>magu dutu jara-kanagaka</i>	although you are my “following horse”
105	<i>ama-ngu wi-makaka</i>	we call “father”
	<i>na keru ahu-ma</i>	our trailing dog
	<i>magu keru ahu-kanagama</i>	although you are my “trailing dog”

The speaker bows to the wife-takers’ superior command of *kajiála* (lines 100–101) and in doing so figuratively transforms them from wife-takers (“following horse”; cf. line 75) to “mother-fathers.” The wife-takers, conventionally humble, have been transformed into figures of authority, which in Anakalangesese terms is a cultural paradox. The reversal cited here is extreme, representing the limiting case, that which is performatively denied in the separation of animator from addressee that distances principals from the interactive reversals of dialogue.

Ritualized forms of negotiation are not, however, merely defenses against failure. They represent even well-established alliances in the idiom of distance. The very forms of encounter may provide conditions for disruption, for confusion of agency and voice. Occasionally, for example, the *wunang* himself takes offense and must give up his task to another. One *wunang* was insulted by maneuvers on the part of the other party. He felt that they had attempted to

trick him as if they thought he had no command of *kajiála* and exchange procedures—he had been treated like a child. As a result, at the next meeting he felt no longer capable of facing them. In another incident, a *wunang* came to feel that his own principals did not trust his abilities, since someone was always sent along and frequently intervened. In both instances, the *wunang* was rendered unable to serve as the voice of another. In the first case the *wunang*'s own agency was challenged and thereby brought into play, when it should have been subordinated to that of the principals. The second case was a reversal of the first: the *wunang*'s ability to serve as a voice was challenged by incomplete delegation on the part of the principals. Both problems resulted from insufficient practical differentiation among participant roles.

conclusion: self-representation and social action

If a major outcome of the scene of negotiation is not simply the transfer of goods or brides, but the defining, redefining, and stressing of the value of relationships (Comaroff 1980; Strathern 1984), this outcome must be understood in terms of the means by which the value is expressed and risked. The text of *kajiála* denotes structural roles and relations. But it does not act simply by naming. The use of an elevated register and its allocation to discrete participant roles convey messages through their very pragmatics (cf. Silverstein 1981b). The delegation of voice and of hearing distinguishes utterance from agency. Implicitly, it depicts the agent as that which lies behind, that nonspeaking subject implicated by the use of the register of ceremony and denoted by its terminology. It indexes the presence of a canonical authority, manifest only through subordinate actors. More specifically, it represents interaction as a matter of command of representations and their mediators and of cooperative transmission of speech across great distance.

The separation of participant roles constructs a site of interaction distinct from physically present speakers. If negotiation is structured as a dialogue, it is not a dialogue that occurs between the individuals who utter words. It is also not a dialogue that occurs within the limits of a single pair of interlocutors; instead, it involves a chain of redundant pairs. It is as if the speaking subject of everyday encounter, an individual who may be animator, author, principal, and addressee all in one, has been taken apart and reassembled at a scale above that of the individual. Only at the level of the entire party is there a speaking unity. Often no single individual is the principal of the group—several people may be equally involved. In fact, the norm that one not serve as one's own "mother-father" makes the involvement of others a structural requirement. Even when the interests and motives of a single prominent person direct the entire event, the use of canonical couplets and of *kad'ehang*, the gathering of supporters, and the pragmatic structure of speech events all portray him as representing a larger social unit, the clan or lineage. He speaks neither in terms of a personal interest nor in a voice located in the moment of speaking. A person cannot act with authority in the name of individual interests—he will not be recognized by his counterparts as a legitimate social agent.²⁸

The performative linkage of leadership with the agency of the group is echoed in the evocation of ancestors. The negotiating parties, as in all Anakalangesese ritual dialogues, are addressed by their respective *kad'ehang*, the terms of address for their ancestors. If lineage ancestors are themselves metonyms for the groups that take their names, the use of speech from the ancestors is also that most appropriate for—even a requisite for—large-scale public endeavors. It is, after all, the ancestors who give their names to the lineage and ground its identity in the clan village. It is they who provide the speech through which the living can act in society and engage in collective endeavors.

Effective ritual speech depicts relationships as the outcome of exchanges, not only material but also verbal, between two parties engaged in successive turns of talk. Each side is performatively depicted as a single agent capable of successfully recognizing and interacting with

another single agent to construct an authoritative event. By implication, it is the group that has agency, acting effectively above the contending interests of its constituent members. The alternative, failed speech, is the threat and challenge always represented—even in harmonious gatherings—as the background against which these speech events occur. To act means to risk unforeseen consequences (cf. Giddens 1979). If successful use of *kajiála* puts into action a group speaking in a single voice, its failure suggests the disintegration of the group and the polyphony of particular interests. This disintegration, which has immediate consequences for material exchange, can threaten not only the particular alliance at stake but also the existence of the group itself as a social agent. However, overcoming the perceived threat is not simply a functional requirement: it appears to be part of the *value* implicit in negotiated relations.

I have attempted to show some ways in which ritual speech, social interaction, and an indigenous communicative model of society can be related, in a situation where reflexive speech helps constitute relations and social groups. Unlike many of those who study systems of marriage exchange and alliance, I argue that in Anakalang the exchange of material objects, if necessary, is not sufficient to create a marriage alliance. Of equal importance are the gathering of people, the delegation of roles, and the verbal performance: the “scene of negotiation.” The scene of negotiation portrays and enacts a local model of social relations as forms of spoken interaction. Crucial as material exchange is, meaningful social action also requires self-conscious mastery of ancestral speech. But it is a mastery significant not as a personal attribute but as a resource of a group, pragmatically implicated as the effective agent. The scene of negotiation serves as a diagrammatic model of ordered social relations, productive of offspring and exchange ties, dependent on control of representations. Foregrounded as speech, this scene displays interaction as balanced in a model of canonical two-party dialogue. Paradoxically, it also sets conditions for failure. Ritual interaction in Anakalang is not merely coercive, nor does it serve only to reproduce tradition pedagogically. Crucial to the formation and evaluation of relations, it offers by the same token a site for their disruption. I suggest that in Anakalang, scrupulous concern with formality may in fact serve as a tacit reminder of the risks of interaction, portraying the value—even providing a test—of successful relations. While couched in an idiom of perduring alliances, the forms of ritualized encounter pragmatically highlight the fact that active group identities and allegedly stable alliances are interactively and recurrently achieved. The sense of risk contributes to the perceived value of successful negotiation, in which self-knowledge and mastery of representations are necessary conditions for action to be social and thereby fruitful.

notes

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¹For application of Peirce’s concept of iconicity—a relation between signifier and signified based on similarity of structure—to ritual speech, see Silverstein (1981b) and Urban (1986b).

²The warfare once endemic in Sumba was suppressed under Dutch rule in the early decades of this century. A certain amount of small-scale intervillage fighting does occasionally flare up today, marriage negotiations—or the rare marriage by capture—being an important source of tension. The point here, familiar to readers of Mauss, is the idiom by which Anakalangeses figuratively depict warfare as the limiting case of a general threat that lies behind the scene of negotiation. The role of warfare in the Anakalangeses

imagination is revealed by one speaker's error. He used the couplet "leaning on a spear, crossing the sea" ("tolaku-ngu nibu, pagatu-ngu lauru") to refer to the bringing together of the two parties—a term that may properly be used only in negotiating a peace settlement.

³This occurs the moment the two sides begin to use the ritual speech forms of negotiation, for they require speakers to employ complementary forms of address with each other; even if the negotiation eventually fails and the two parties never become affines, they must speak as affines for the duration of the encounter. The facticity of these identities is reinforced by the speech's focus on communication and amounts of material in question. As Keenan (1974:134) notes, focus on one aspect—here, the objects being exchanged—can imply that others, such as positional identities, are presupposed.

⁴Unless otherwise noted, all terms are in Anakalangese. The / ^ / marks implosives (b^ and d^), and accent marks precede long consonants. Otherwise the orthography is that of standard Indonesian. Stress is normally on the penultimate syllable of the root (affixes are indicated in the text by hyphens).

⁵An extensive literature addresses the marriage systems of Sumba and nearby islands, in particular asymmetric alliance as found in eastern Sumba (Barnes 1980; Forth 1981; Fox, ed. 1980; I. Mitchell 1981; Needham 1987; Nooteboom 1940; van Wouden 1968). Not all marriages establish secure alliances, and even long-standing alliances can break down.

⁶*Horung* as a verb, "to come, arrive" or "to shove, slide," refers either to the coming of one party to the other's village or, probably by folk etymology, to the motion by which a donor slides dishes containing tokens of exchange across the floor mats to a recipient.

⁷One might then extend what Goffman (1981:84) calls the "social situation" to include those who are not physically present. This appears to support the argument that the putative agents in the speech event are actually social entities larger than the individual persons concerned.

⁸I use the male pronoun throughout. Although women may serve as ritual speakers on rare occasions, marriage negotiation is conventionally enacted by men. Ritual encounters such as these have, of course, important ramifications for politics of gender and rank, ramifications that are beyond the scope of this article. Certain forms of ritual speech are the domain of women, notably keening songs (cf. Kuipers 1986).

⁹In the more hierarchical domains of eastern Sumba, the function is often delegated to slaves (Forth 1988). Even in Anakalang, where rank is less elaborated, I have heard the term *wunang* used as a euphemism for a person of low standing, one who would receive orders.

¹⁰I speak here only of *kajála* in the context of relations between affines, by far the most frequent and prominent situation of use. It is also used in peacemaking among nonaffines. In the related dialect of Wanukaka, the cognate term apparently has a wider range of reference, including speech genres that in Anakalang are distinguished by different terms (I. Mitchell 1981:456).

¹¹The division between walking and sitting *wunang* appears in part to be a function of the spatial division between parties: since the encounter between the two sides occurs in front of the visitors, they are able to follow the transaction directly, while the hosts cannot. Elsewhere in Sumba, the meeting occurs in a room separate from both parties, each of which has both a sitting and a walking *wunang* (Forth 1988:139–141; I. Mitchell 1981:334–345).

¹²*Kad'ehang* denotes a piece of wood used as a chopping block or a pillow and, more generally, a foundation or underpinning (cf. Forth 1988:138; I. Mitchell 1981:337).

¹³*Málo* is an allophone of the colloquial *mála*; as is normal in Anakalangese, the final /a/ is realized as a drawn-out [o] when cried out. Uttered in response to the shouted *kad'ehang*, *málo* is a high-pitched cry—in keeping with the idiom of distances overcome, this is said to be because the two parties are facing each other across a great space, like people calling from one ridge to another. *Mála*, spoken in a soft rising tone, may occur as a back-channel cue (line 29).

¹⁴Whether the visiting party is that of the wife-givers or the wife-takers depends on the history of the two groups up to that point. While the woman should reside with her family until the negotiations reach a resolution, circumstances such as elopement make it very common for the final meeting to occur at the village of the wife-takers.

¹⁵Since "canonical parallelism," a distinguishing feature in the ritual speech forms of Sumba and neighboring islands, has received a great deal of attention (cf. Fox 1988; Kuipers 1982), I will address only those aspects of it that are relevant to the specific concerns of this article.

¹⁶Bauman (1977) rightly points out the fallacies of assuming that "figurative" language is somehow objectively and obviously referable to the "normal" speech of "literal" reference and predication. What I wish to emphasize here is an *indigenous* construction of the difference.

¹⁷This seems to vary across Sumba, probably in association with relative degrees of open status competition. In some areas west of Anakalang, use of ritual speech does seem to be a direct means of acquiring status (Hoskins 1984).

¹⁸I tape-recorded five complete *horung* (ranging from one to three night-long sessions each), attended and partially recorded several more, and obtained detailed accounts of many others (the complete series of encounters that go into a single marriage can take years). Using transcripts produced by assistants from the recordings, I went over the texts with the speakers and principal figures involved.

¹⁹While the bulk of ritual speech is in parallel couplets, locutives (verbs of quotation) are often in unpaired lines. Following the conventions used by Kuipers (1988:108) for Weyéwa, I represent parallel units

of couplets by equal levels of indentation. Thus, lines 4 and 6 are one couplet, here intercalated with the couplet formed by lines 5 and 7 (compare lines 30–35, in which the speaker jumbled the order of the second lines of the couplets initiated on lines 30 and 31). Couplets are strung together to form poetic lines or segments, which in this transcription begin flush left and are separated from previous lines by vertical space, with the constituent couplets marked off by indentations. In the interest of keeping poetic segments visually unified, I treat the response to the *kad'ehang* as a new line, but indent and parenthesize the back-channel cue that occurs within a single segment (line 29).

²⁰The couplet in lines 4 and 6 refers to the passage of a *wunang* across the space that separates the two parties. It also resonates with a common couplet that denotes the act of speaking formally, figured as a horse that leaps, a dog that jumps (cf. lines 59 and 61).

²¹The couplets in lines 10–11 and 12–13 refer to two prestations, each in turn comprising a pair of exchange valuables. In each prestation, a small metal valuable, passed in a dish from one *wunang* to the other, represents the animal that is paired with it. The small chain (*lolu amahu*) is paired with a horse, the omega-shaped *mamuli* with a cow. In the case referred to here, the prestations formalize the invitation to eat.

²²This passage refers to the formal act of receiving a guest by giving a meal. The “granary” (the house attic) and benches are synecdoches for the house.

²³The figures of clenching and snapping are part of the very common use of figures identifying male agents with their hunting horses and dogs (cf. lines 59 and 61, 75 and 77).

²⁴An allusion to the process of making a spice from river shrimp, this rather obscure figure refers to the act of receiving and responding to a message. The speaker left out the couplet’s second line, which makes reference to an herb that grows by rivers.

²⁵Wanukaka and Laboya are two ethnolinguistic domains southwest of Anakalang. The figures of trail, thorns, and rotten wood play on the common image of ritual procedures as following a narrow path laid down by the ancestors (“men of old”) without deviating into the brush on either side.

²⁶This couplet refers to stinginess when offering betel to a companion. One should hand over a bulging betel pouch and one’s entire lime container rather than a measured portion. Like a number of other Anakalangese figures, this one represents a large-scale social performance in terms of the etiquette of casual daily encounters (cf. Kuipers 1982).

²⁷In this, Anakalang differs from some parts of East Sumba, where payments are prearranged (Forth 1988:138). For an especially interesting comparison, see Keenan’s (1975) analysis of strategy and breakdown in Malagasy marriage negotiation.

²⁸In a case in Wanukaka, the domain most closely related to Anakalang, a man was unable to persuade elders to serve as the leaders for his marriage negotiation. He tried to act on his own behalf but could not induce the potential affines to deal with him in that capacity (I. Mitchell 1981:337).

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