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New Paths in the Linguistic Anthropology of Oceania

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Key Words

agency, entextualization, language ideologies, *mana*, personhood

Abstract

The linguistic anthropology of Oceania has seen vigorous and productive analysis of language ideologies, ritual performance, personhood, and agency. This article points to three related paths of inquiry that are especially promising. First, language ideologies are analyzed for the ways they shape expectations and interpretations of effective action and social identity. Second, processes of entextualization are examined with reference to Bible translation because Christianity is a dominant social force in contemporary Oceania. Third, prominent recent work on personhood and agency is reviewed, and scholars are urged to reconsider the classic Oceanic term *mana* in relation to changing understandings of power, including those wrought by religious transformations. These paths of inquiry are intertwined and cross-cutting and can lead to productive new understandings of ideologies and practices of stability and transformation.

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Personhood: grammatical configuration of social selves

Agency: responsibility for action

Entextualization: the process in which segments of discourse gain apparent fixity that facilitates their public circulation

INTRODUCTION

As scholars increasingly focus on culture's "public, mobile, traveling" qualities (Ortner 2006, p. 18), anthropologists ask how certain categories and identities come to seem stable and durable for our interlocutors. Rightly wary of essentialisms, anthropologists nonetheless recognize that discourse of fixity and permanence is a prominent feature of many cultural contexts and is a means of shaping unfolding practice. The study of language use has been at the forefront of efforts to understand relationships between ideologies and practices of stability and transformation, and in the past 20 years the linguistic anthropology of Oceania has played a vital role in developing relevant theoretical approaches with careful attention to ethnographic detail. (See sidebar, Oceanic Boundaries.)

OCEANIC BOUNDARIES

"Oceania" conventionally denotes the Pacific islands, extending from New Guinea and the Northern Mariana Islands in the west and northwest to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, and from New Zealand in the south to Hawai'i in the north. In 1832, d'Urville classified the islands in three groups: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (Besnier 2004, p. 97). These labels have come under scholarly criticism; archaeologists have proposed a new distinction between "near Oceania" and "remote Oceania" on the basis of migration and settlement histories (Green 1991, Kirch 1997). Despite such criticism, the terms have become accepted within the region and applied to such entities as states (the Federated States of Micronesia), economic zones (the Melanesian Spearhead Group), and religious organizations (the Anglican Diocese of Polynesia).

The two major language groups in Oceania are Austronesian and Papuan, with the former extending to southeast Asia and Madagascar. Papuan languages, which unlike Austronesian ones do not share a common ancestor (Foley 1986, 2000), are found largely in New Guinea. Oceanic, a subgroup of Austronesian, includes ~450 languages (Pawley & Ross 1995, p. 39). All Polynesian languages are Oceanic; all Micronesian languages are Oceanic except for two, Chamorro and Palauan (Lynch et al. 2002, p. 4).

Three areas of investigation in which the linguistic anthropology of Oceania has been especially illuminating are (*a*) language ideologies, (*b*) ritual performance, and (*c*) personhood and agency. In each of these areas, interplays between stability and transformation are manifest in discourse about tradition, authority, and efficacy. This article reviews recent work in these areas and points to three interconnected paths of inquiry.

We begin by examining language ideologies, shared notions about the nature of language, including reflexive representations of language characteristics, use, and effects. Language ideologies, which often treat stability and transformation as both subjects and criteria of evaluation, have become a major area of research because of the ways they "envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology . . . [and] often underpin fundamental social institutions" (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994, pp. 55–56). Anthropology has vigorously taken up research on language ideologies throughout Oceania and across a range of local settings and, in doing so, has illuminated culture's "public, mobile, traveling" qualities in new ways. Next we turn to entextualization, focusing on the intersection of ritual performance and translation practices, paying special attention to studies of Bible translation. We take this approach because Christianity is a dominant social force in modern Oceania and is increasingly the subject of intensive ethnographic analysis. Finally, in the third section we address topics of personhood and agency. Anthropologists have used detailed grammatical and pragmatic analyses of subjects such as "segmentary persons," the "heroic I," and ergativity to illuminate the ways that personhood and agency are constituted and contested in Oceanic linguistic-cultural contexts. We argue that work on personhood and agency in Oceania can be enriched through fresh critical attention to *mana*, a term whose cognates are found in languages throughout the region.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Language ideologies—shared notions about the nature of language—inform worldviews, shape verbal behaviors, and contour social interactions. As such, they help construct social realities, personhood, identity, agency, aesthetic sensibilities, and sentiments (Kroskrity 2000, Schieffelin et al. 1998, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). They do so not only through the use of language in which propositional meaning is created, but also, and perhaps more significantly, through the semiotic working of language, where social actors use or interpret "contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1982, 1992), in particular those with indexical and iconic properties linking linguistic elements to social and affective meanings.[1]

Fine-grained analysis of the relationship between linguistic structure and practice and language ideologies has provided a tool for understanding social and cultural formations' reproduction and transformation. Through close examination of verbal acts and their sociocultural contexts, linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated how verbal behaviors can constitute innovative, experimental, reproductive, and transformative acts, thereby illuminating the dynamic, processual relationships among what Williams (1977) called "emergent," "residual," and "dominant" cultural formations. Verbal behaviors themselves are shaped by the linguistic dispositions and ideologies of their speakers, which are continually reconfirmed or revised as they shape verbal interaction.

One of the reasons why Oceania has offered rich case studies of the links between language and social life is the central place of talk and oratory in the construction of social life in many Pacific societies, where talk figures prominently in the regulation of social relations, in the formation of group and personal identities, and in negotiations of power and interpersonal and group conflict (e.g., Arno 1993; Besnier 2004; Brenneis & Myers 1984; Makihara & Schieffelin 2007a,b; Watson-Gegeo 1986; Watson-Gegeo & White 1990). Several scholars working in Melanesia have undertaken pioneering work on the dense and complex interconnections among forms of linguistic and material exchange [Merlan & Rumsey 1991; Robbins 2001b, 2007; Schieffelin 1990; see also Keane's (1997) influential work on Indonesia]. In addition, Oceanic societies exhibit enormous diversity in language varieties, practices, and ideologies, even across small speech communities. Small speech communities also often experience sociolinguistic change at an accelerated rate, with transformation depending on innovations and strategic language choices on the part of fewer individuals.

Recent anthropological work on language ideologies and sociocultural reproduction and transformation has benefited in particular from Ochs's and Schieffelin's innovative writings on language socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs 1986a, 1986b). Socialization is a lifelong process of interaction and participation. Through careful linguistic and ethnographic examination of verbal interactions involving caretakers and children, Ochs and Schieffelin have demonstrated how participants structure communication to construct culturally specific worldviews in Samoa and Papua New Guinea (Ochs 1988, Schieffelin 1990). Ochs (1992) presents a theory of indexicality grounded in comparisons of the links between gender identities and language in a comparative study of Samoan and middle-class Anglo-American mothers. Through their verbal strategies of accommodation (such as the use or nonuse of a baby talk register) and evaluation (such as praise), Samoan and American mothers position themselves differently vis-à-vis children. Ochs demonstrates how use of linguistic resources indirectly indexes gender identity through stances, acts, and activities. Schieffelin's (1990)

Language ideologies: shared notions about the nature of language

[1]Included in contextualization cues are auditory and visual dimensions of prosody and paralanguage, which are nondiscrete, suprasegmental, and largely iconic. Such meaning construction is often performed in multisensory communication contexts where kinesic and musical modalities are intertwined with language (Feld & Fox 1994, Feld & Brenneis 2004, Feld et al. 2004).

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study brings attention to the ways in which the communication of emotion in socialization is central to the construction of notions of self. Her work among the Kaluli resonates with Kulick's (1992b) among Gapun villagers, also in Papua New Guinea, highlighting the ways in which these societies host quite divergent views of children and their verbal expressions of emotions, and how this difference has led to distinct cultural expectations and preferences regarding actions and notions of self.

Sites of language socialization are sites of sociocultural reproduction and transformation. For example, Schieffelin's examination of Bosavi church sermons in terms of participant structure, language use, and cultural content demonstrates how missionizing practices involve language socialization and effect linguistic and cultural change (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004; see also Schieffelin 2007). In his study of language shift in Gapun, Kulick (1992a,b) describes two aspects of the self: *save* ("knowledge"), associated positively with Christianity, modernity, education, civilization, and men; and *hed* ("head"), associated negatively with paganism, the past, ancestors, backwardness, lack of education, and women. These two expressions of the self have come to be associated with the national language, Tok Pisin, and the local vernacular, Taiap, respectively. Kulick argues that the change in conceptions of personhood and language as enacted in children's language socialization practices has motivated the loss of Taiap and shift to Tok Pisin.[2]

Other works have focused on language ideology to investigate questions of agency, performance, and participation. They have shown how different kinds of actors in diverse situations can objectify and manipulate language to constitute new social realities and how such activities are culturally organized and historically contingent. For example, in her studies of language, status, and gender in Pohnpei, Micronesia, Keating details how power and status are achieved in, and constructed by, collaborative semiotic practices involving honorific language usage, food, and the body. Local cultural notions of language and body, as well as gender and honor, inform the semiotic choices Pohnpeian speakers make in claiming entitlement to prestige and in negotiating their places in the status hierarchy (Keating 1997, 1998a,b, 1999, 2000, 2005; Keating & Duranti 2006). Similarly, in his work on gossip and politics in Tuvalu, Besnier (2009) analyzes interconnections among language performance and local notions of hierarchy, egalitarianism, and gender. In examining the construction of power, agency, emotion, and morality in language use, he uncovers telling complexities beneath the local discourse of consensus and homogeneity and points to the partialness and unevenness of cultural knowledge and practices across individuals and situations. In comparison, Philips (2000, 2004) analyzes Tongan magistrate's court interactions to show how multiple language ideologies manifest themselves in nationalist discourses that contribute to the making of the Tongan nation-state, combining modern and traditional images of the constitutional monarchy.[3]

Taken together, these studies show that language structure does not necessarily shape social reality as an earlier variety of Whorfian linguistic relativism would describe it, but rather that what people do with language has the potential to change social reality, as well as to change language structure, which is differentially opened to objectification and

[2] See also Riley (2007), who describes language socialization practices in Marquesas, French Polynesia. French language ideology has contributed to language shift toward French by objectifying and alienating the local language, 'Enana; Riley finds, however, that family interactions, which continue to use the indigenous teasing genre and codeswitching speech styles, have contributed to increasing communicative competence in 'Enana among children.

[3] Other notable sources on these topics include Meyerhoff (1999) on the use of "sorry" in Bislama in Vanuatu, demonstrating that gender differences in linguistic strategies are linked to the different sources of social power to which men and women have access; Brison (1992) on the political importance of gossip and rumor in Kwanga villages in Papua New Guinea; and Philips's (2007) historical analysis of how missionaries and Tongan elites shaped nation-state formation through scholarly representations of honorific language.

manipulation (see e.g., Brenneis 1984, 1987; Duranti 1994; Robbins 2007; Schieffelin 2007). Moreover, such studies challenge anthropologists to think critically of their own presuppositions about social reality and ethnographic enterprises. For example, Robbins & Rumsey (2008, p. 408) have recently noted that one assertion often heard in Oceanic discourse—that one cannot know other people's thoughts and feelings—can be used productively "to force a rethinking of some fairly settled approaches to topics such as the nature of theories of mind, the role of intention in linguistic communication and social interaction more generally, and the importance of empathy in human encounters and in anthropological method."

The culturally organized and historically contingent nature of verbal activity is especially marked in cases of cross-cultural contact (Makihara & Schieffelin 2007a,b). The introduction of a new language involves much more than the acquisition of new vocabulary and grammar by community members. Stasch (2007) describes how the Korowai of West Papua have understood and incorporated a new lingua franca, Bahasa Indonesia, in their ethnolinguistic landscape and analyzes the development of a local ideology of linguistic difference characterized by the coexistence of estrangement and attraction. The Korowai consider Bahasa to be a "demon language," something foreign and dangerous but also alluring, existing in a parallel world: "Indonesian's strangeness, summarized in the 'demon language' label, is an important part of why Korowai are learning the language and why they are using it in the ways they do" (2007, p. 110). In situations of language contact, language hierarchies often develop in accord with the political and economic balance between groups. The formation and transformation of such hierarchies are a result of the verbal practices of actors who base their actions on their own situated, but changing, understandings of language, identity, and power. For example, Makihara (2004) describes the rise of new Spanish–Rapa Nui syncretic speech styles on Easter Island, where symbolic values attached to these new varieties as well as to the native Rapa Nui language are leading to the breakdown of the previously established "colonial diglossia"—a sociolinguistic hierarchy and associated diglossic separation of the functions of colonial and local languages.[4] In this context, where the balance of political power has steadily shifted toward the local Rapa Nui, community members have begun to develop a purist Rapa Nui language ideology. Seemingly opposed language ideologies—syncretic and purist—may be drawn upon within the same context or even by the same individuals (Makihara 2007).

ENTEXTUALIZATION, TRANSLATION, AND CHRISTIANITY

The term entextualization denotes the ways in which segments of discourse gain apparent fixity that facilitates their public circulation (see e.g., Bauman & Briggs 1990, Briggs & Bauman 1992, Duranti & Goodwin 1992, Kuipers 1990, Silverstein & Urban 1996). Drawing on models of culture as textual inscription and performance, per Ricouer and Geertz, Silverstein & Urban (1996, p. 1) observe that entextualization and contextualization "are the central and ongoing practices within cultural orders," processes in which people objectify social learning and facilitate its public circulation. Translation can be seen as a kind of entextualization, a variety distinguished by the crossing of linguistic codes in an attempt to replicate something from an original inscription such as semantic meaning or performative force.

The past two centuries have seen massive and ongoing efforts at rendering the Bible in diverse local tongues in Oceania, and these translation projects have had deep social consequences. Tahitian was the first Oceanic language in which a book of the Bible was printed (Luke, in 1818), as well as the first New

[4]See also Jourdan (2007, 2008) on changing language hierarchy in the Solomon Islands where Pijin, with its association with cosmopolitanism and individualism, has become the (de facto) national language and the new language of urban youth identity.

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Testament (1829) and complete Bible (1838; see Murray 1888, Rickards 1996). By 1918, 15 languages of the Oceanic subgroup had full Bible translations (Rickards 1996, p. 463); a half century later, this number had increased to 21, with 54 languages receiving at least one book of the Bible in translation (United Bible Soc. 1974). In the mid-1950s, members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), an organization dedicated to the task of Bible translation, were dismayed to learn how many distinct languages existed in the islands of the Pacific—well over 1000, and New Guinea itself has a large share—because they intended to translate Scripture into every single tongue (Handman 2007). At present, SIL aims to begin a translation in every remaining language of the world by 2025 (Handman 2007).

Processes of Bible translation are notable not just for their global scope but also their local impact, including changes within indigenous grammar, vocabulary, and ideology (Schieffelin 2000, 2007). For example, Besnier (1995) describes how Samoan missionaries reshaped local linguistic practices as they worked in Tuvalu from the mid-1860s under the aegis of the London Missionary Society. The missionaries introduced literacy so new congregants could read the Bible, but the Bibles they brought were Samoan translations; as a result, a diglossic situation arose in which Samoan came to represent education, church, and government authority. Although Tuvaluan has replaced Samoan in many contexts over the past century, and islanders have energetically turned literacy to purposes other than Bible reading, a distinct Samoan imprint on the dialect of Nukulaelae atoll is evident in grammar, vocabulary, and phonology (Besnier 1995, pp. 54–55). In Fiji, by comparison, British missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society worked with their Tongan and Fijian counterparts to produce Fijian-language Bibles almost as soon as they arrived. In 1843, the missionaries selected the dialect of Bau Island as the standard for their translations, partly because of Bau's political status. Through the middle of the nineteenth century they kept translating, revising, and publishing Scripture in Bauan, and the wide circulation of their Bibles fostered the development of a national language now referred to as Standard Fijian. Bauan, Standard Fijian, and the language of the Bible all diverge in significant ways; our point is simply that the establishment of modern Standard Fijian began with missionaries' Bible translation efforts (Cammack 1962, Clammer 1976, Geraghty 1989, Schütz 1972).

Connections between Christianity's universalist trajectories and its local appropriations are revealed through close attention to the use of particular Bible passages. For example, Robbins (2004, p. 163) notes that for the Urapmin of highland Papua New Guinea, who are obsessed with the end of the world and how to prepare for it, Revelation is the Bible book that "they pore over more than any other"; Romans is the second most popular because "statements in Romans that pertain to the divine legitimacy of the state have become key texts in Urapmin attempts to think about their current situation" within the nation (Robbins 2004, p. 170). Also in Papua New Guinea, Schieffelin notes how the gospel of Mark was the first translation project for Protestant missionaries to the Bosavi "because its narrative was seen as relatively simple for nonliterate indigenous people to understand" (2007, p. 148). It was taken up enthusiastically, becoming "the most popular and often repeated of the Gospels," with the first 12 verses of the second chapter especially favored because they gave Bosavi a persuasive new understanding of illness and Jesus's role in healing (Schieffelin 2007, pp. 145, 148–49).

Yet both Robbins and Schieffelin demonstrate how Bible translation is never a simple or straightforward process, but instead a problematic and open-ended encounter. Translators confront grammatical incommensurability, culturally presupposed meanings that require extensive elaboration, the pervasive significance of contexts of performance, and the force of different language ideologies. Schieffelin describes how Bosavi pastors have difficulty reading Tok Pisin Bible verses aloud and translating them into Bosavi as they go along—even though this is a prominent ritual action

during church services—partly because their reading skills are inexpert, but also because their Tok Pisin Bibles contain metalinguistic and metapragmatic elements that are difficult to reconcile with Bosavi cultural principles (see also Schieffelin 2008). Robbins notes Urapmin interest in, but difficulties with, the verse John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The verse troubles Urapmin because of its opaqueness bordering on incoherence, but it also appeals to them because it reflects their understanding of speech's centrality to Christian ritual. They often say that "God is nothing but talk," a phrase that Robbins notes sounds insulting to Urapmin speakers (as well as English speakers) but one that indicates "problems many Urapmin people have with the Christian promotion of speech to the center of religious life" (Robbins 2001a, p. 905; see also Robbins 2004, 2007). Robbins and Schieffelin show that although missionaries commonly aim for clarity in their Bible translations, incoherence is sometimes valued and treated as a source of interpretive motivation for local audiences (see also Engelke & Tomlinson 2006).[5]

Sermons are key sites for tracing articulations among texts, performances, and broad patterns of ideology and practice. Analyzing congregationalist preaching in Tuvalu, Besnier (1995, pp. 116–68) shows that the effectiveness of sermons—and Christian ritual generally—depends on a sense of orderliness conveyed by an emphasis on literacy. Preachers base their sermons on handwritten texts, which vary from short notes to full scripts read aloud verbatim. Preachers may lend their scripts to kin, circulating the written productions as they do customary forms of knowledge. Gender ideologies are reinforced in sermon script production and circulation because women never write their own. In addition, sermons highlight models of individual personhood, as preachers use pronouns and patterns of parallelism in distinctive ways that "centralize the separate individuality of the preacher and of each audience member" (1995, p. 147). Finally, sermons both reflect and shape local passion for understanding "truth," which is ideologically linked to a sense of completeness (see also Duranti 1993, Miyazaki 2004). This concern with truth leads to heavy quotation of the Bible in sermons, and Besnier notes that "quoted and quoting voices merge" (1995, p. 150), crowning preachers with an aura of divine authority, at least in contexts of performance.

These examples show the force of entextualization in social life. Missionaries created newly circulating texts as they translated Scripture into diverse local tongues, and their products were taken up selectively and deployed creatively by local audiences who shaped new practices—and new texts, and new ideologies—in response. These engagements often focused people's attention on processes and interplays of stability and transformation. Christianity arrived as a new cultural product, but it thrived in some places because it was recast as something primordial, whereas in other places it took hold precisely because of its novelty. This complicated relationship between stability and transformation is shown vividly in Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo's (1991) analysis of differences in communication styles between Anglican and evangelical Kwara'ae speakers in the Solomon Islands. Anglicans, who present themselves as more respectful of pre-Christian tradition, give a high degree of prestige to formal "high rhetorical" Kwara'ae speaking styles, whereas evangelicals, oriented to nonindigenous forms associated with the West, consider Kwara'ae language to be uniformly less prestigious than English and Solomon Islands Pijin. For markedly religious terms such as "baptize," "pastor," "heaven," and "sin," Anglicans use

[5]Positive evaluations of incoherent language are not limited to contexts of Christianity or conversion. Lindstrom (1990, p. 121) notes that "[v]aluable Melanesian knowledge . . . typically includes a lot of nonsense words," which, he argues, "permits people to seem to be revealing their knowledge while maintaining its secrecy, privacy, and thus its continuing exchange value." Crowley (2001), drawing on Lindstrom's observations and his own data from Erromango, Vanuatu, implies that a group holding such appreciation of "opaque nonsense" might readily accept grammatically awkward translations of new sacred texts precisely because of this appreciation.

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(or have developed) Kwara'ae equivalents, whereas evangelicals tend to borrow English terms. Grammatically, evangelicals speak everyday Kwara'ae in a simplified, repetitive form molded by the simplified, repetitive Bible translation they use, and phonologically, they imitate certain non-Kwara'ae pronunciations. Because of these differences, evangelicals' "Kwara'ae sounds[s] like 'babytalk' (children's speech) to Anglicans. In turn, the Anglican penchant for using high-rhetoric Kwara'ae forms associated with traditional practices make[s] [Anglican] Kwara'ae sound *wikit* 'wicked, sinful'... and old-fashioned to Evangelicals" (1991, p. 541).[6]

The practical importance of Christianity in contemporary Oceania cannot be overstated. The missiologist Charles Forman characterized Oceania in the 1970s as "in all probability, the most solidly Christian part of the world" (Forman 1982, p. 227), and in the decades since he wrote this, the influence of churches has arguably increased, as missionary efforts continue (with newer evangelical groups challenging established denominations) and Christian leaders assert their presence in national political processes in places such as Fiji. Anthropologists have come to pay increasing attention to Christianity as a dominant social force in Oceania (Barker 1990). In doing so, many have found language to be a fruitful field of investigation, especially for apprehending people's ideologies and practices of stability and transformation.

PERSONHOOD, AGENCY, *MANA*

Innovative writings on personhood have been a hallmark of Melanesian anthropology (e.g., Leenhardt 1979); Strathern put forth the influential argument that Melanesian personhood is not predicated on a parts-whole relationship between individuals and a reified society, but instead follows a logic in which dividual persons condense social relationships with different relationships "elicited" in different contexts (e.g., Strathern 1988, 1992, pp. 90–116; compare Scott 2007). Such scholarship, which developed partly in response to dissatisfaction with Africanist descent theory's application to highlands Papua New Guinea, raises complicated questions about interrelationships among representation, action, and identity.

Linguistic anthropologists have contributed to this field of inquiry by investigating the precise ways in which social identities are generated and shaped through language use, and the ways in which identities are linked to attributions of agency (Ahearn 2001). For example, Merlan & Rumsey (1991) argue that persons who are discursively configured as agents in formal oratory in the western Nebilyer Valley of highlands Papua New Guinea are often neither solitary individuals nor stable social groups but "segmentary persons." Such "persons" are social units frequently designated by first- and second-person singular pronouns and associated verb markings. A group is often referred to by speakers in formal oratory as "I" or "you"; indeed, such pronominal reference is more common than overt designation by "tribal" name. The fact that pronominal referents can be shifting and ambiguous offers orators strategic potential because they are able to treat groups as presupposed and also render their claims "less available to overt contestation than the use of segmentary identity and personal names" (Merlan & Rumsey 1991, p. 139).

The designation of groups by singular pronouns is also seen in Polynesian use of the "heroic I," an "I" whose author and principal (per Goffman 1981) are considered to be ancestors and polity rather than the person uttering the words. Analysis of the heroic I is most strongly developed in the work of Sahlins, who treats it as an integral part of his theoretical project of reconciling structure and agency, culture and history: "By the heroic I—and various complements such as perpetual

[6] Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (1991) show how these emblematic differences in speaking styles are correlated with differences in habitus: Anglicans aim for quiet, serious, respectful comportment and speaking styles, whereas evangelicals carry and express themselves exuberantly. On the construction of emblematic differences between mainline and evangelical denominations elsewhere in Oceania, see also Besnier (n.d.), Brison (2007), Jebens (2005), Miyazaki (2004), and Philips (2007).

kinship—the main relationships of society are at once projected historically and embodied currently in the persons of authority" (Sahlins 1985, p. 47; see also Sahlins 1981, 1991). This Polynesian expansion of "I" to encompass social wholes might seem to be at odds with Melanesian partible personhood per Strathern (see Mosko 1992), thus perhaps redrawing boundaries between Melanesia and Polynesia that were set in earlier discussions about distinctions between big-men and chiefs (e.g., Sahlins 1963). Rumsey (2000) argues, however, that these different models of personhood can be reconciled through close attention to the linguistic practices in which persons are made discursively present, especially the use of pronouns. Building partly on the work of Urban (1989), Rumsey argues that dividual, partible personhood follows a logic of anaphora, whereas heroic, encompassing personhood follows a logic of direct indexicality, both of which are possible with the first-person singular pronoun. Because both relationships exist within any language, both possibilities exist in any social system. That is, "these two contrary tendencies, the simultaneous amplification of the everyday self and partial eclipse of it," are copresent (Rumsey 2000, p. 109). The value of such an insight is that although different cultural configurations of personhood and agency are evident, no system is treated as closed or immutable: Melanesian personhood can be encompassing (as in the example of segmentary persons described above) as well as partible, and Polynesian personhood can be partible as well as encompassing.

Such scholarship encourages close attention to linguistic practices' political effects, a subject on which anthropologists working in Oceania have produced several invaluable studies (e.g., Brenneis & Myers 1984, Duranti 1994, Watson-Gegeo & White 1990). A previous review article on the linguistic anthropology of Oceania noted that "[t]he interconnection between speech-making and politics has been a continuing interest in the Pacific, where oratorical skills are critical to many forms of leadership" (Watson-Gegeo 1986, p. 153). A well-known ethnographic illustration is Duranti's (1994) monograph on Samoan political oratory in the context of the *fono*, a formal village council where speakers discuss contentious issues. A key difference in speaking strategies concerns use of the ergative particle (*e*), which marks subjects of transitive clauses. That is, *e* explicitly identifies agents, as opposed to other roles such as actors and instruments (Duranti 1994, pp. 122–23). Noting that use of the ergative particle is somewhat rare in everyday speech, and that speakers do not need to use it to represent a subject as an agent, Duranti argues that analysis of its use is an insightful way to link grammar and politics: To mark agency explicitly in the *fono* is often to praise or to blame because one is either giving credit for effective action or offering criticism for it.

In making this argument, Duranti notes that "the use of transitive clauses with explicit agents often seems to contribute to the actualization of Polynesian *mana*, meant as an unstable and mobile potency that needs to be activated in concrete acts, speech acts included" (Duranti 1994, p. 129). He does not extend this observation, however, and ironically does not ask how the term *mana* itself is configured grammatically and pragmatically. Here, we want to argue that rethinking the classic topic of *mana* is a key task for anthropologists. *Mana* is an old favorite that urgently needs fresh scholarly attention, especially close linguistic analysis of its use and transformations.

Mana: an Oceanic term often denoting efficacy, but which has a wide range of meanings cross-culturally and in different contexts

The term *mana* (and its cognates) is found in many Oceanic languages across the divisions of Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia, although in Melanesia its extent is not as well established (Blust 2007, Blevins 2008). The earliest well-known English definition of *mana* came from Codrington, whose letter on the subject to Max Müller was included in the latter's Hibbert Lectures in 1878 (Blust 2007, p. 406; Smith 2004, pp. 125–26). In his classic statement from 1891, Codrington wrote that "[t]he Melanesian mind is entirely possessed by the belief in

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a supernatural power or influence, called almost universally *mana*. This is what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature" (1957, pp. 118–19). Theorists including Frazer, Durkheim, Marett, Hubert, and Mauss saw a golden opportunity for evolutionary classification, and "many early accounts of *mana* do seem caught up in the attempt to propose religion as the ordering principle of homo-oceaniens as a genus of homo-primitive" (Mawyer 2006, p. 420). A generation of anthropologists observed closely but also speculated freely; Hocart, for example, wrote a sober article comparing Fijian *mana* and truth (1914) but followed it with a short piece recklessly characterizing *mana* as "one of the more archaic forms of a belief that has spread to the uttermost bounds of the earth" (1922, p. 141; see also Hocart 1927). In response to such claims, Firth observed wryly that *mana* was in danger of becoming "a technical term describing a specialized abstraction of the theoretical anthropologist" and called for more rigorous attention to contextualizing speakers' use of the term (1940, pp. 487–88; see also Evans-Pritchard 1965; Keesing 1984, 1985; Shore 1989; compare Lévi-Strauss 1987).

As a term found widely in Oceania, *mana* offers rich possibilities for comparative studies—but one might justifiably wonder, in light of the extensive attention it has already received, why it is worth general reconsideration at this point. We argue that the main reason is that conceptions of power are changing in significant ways in Oceania owing to evangelism, global capitalism, national independence, and other forces (variously generated, coopted, adapted, channeled, and resisted) that are glossed as "modernity," although this term is not one we want to debate here. Ironically, as anthropological attention to power and resistance waxed in theoretical sophistication during the past decades, precise attention to *mana* waned; however, we argue, focusing on *mana* can reveal a great deal about how global forces are engaged with and how those engagements reshape their own terms.

For example, as we argue in the preceding section, Christianity has been an especially transformative cultural force in Oceania. It should be no surprise, then, that Christian institutions, speakers, and genres have newly configured *mana* in distinct and consequential ways. White (1991, p. 194) shows that Anglican missionaries in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands, appropriated the indigenous concept of *mana* so effectively that "[b]y the 1930s, extraordinary mana was attributed only to persons identified with church knowledge and ritual."[7] Tomlinson (2006, 2007) argues that Methodist missionaries helped change indigenous Fijian uses and understandings of the term and concept *mana* through their biblical translation practices, shifting use of *mana* as a verb denoting achievement toward *mana* as a noun in the classical Polynesian sense (see also Blust 2007, p. 409).

The more widely the term circulates, the more it becomes available for appropriation, and in some ways *mana* is becoming commodified—used in the names of commercial ventures, staged entertainment, magazines, and other products. At the same time, the term has become a marker of specifically indigenous efficacy; for example, the Hawaiian anthropologist Tengan (2008, p. 211) writes of the success of a Maori political party in New Zealand as "a direct outcome of the collective Maori mana" generated by a huge protest march. Within indigenous political contexts, *mana* may also be associated with gendered activities and identities (Keating 1998b, p. 126; Linnekin 1990; Tengan 2008). In short, whether understood as the "unstable and mobile potency" described by Duranti or as a stable and eternal force in Christian cosmologies (emanating from Jehovah) or indigenous politics, the term *mana* is a keystone in ideologies of stability and transformation and rewards close analysis of its usage.

[7] The local term *nolaghi* is apparently not cognate with *mana*, but White (1991, p. 38) notes that "[s]peakers of Cheke Holo refer to spiritual potency as *nolaghi*, and readily equate the term with the word *mana* used by their Bughotu neighbors."

CONCLUSION

The path is a common diagrammatic icon in Oceanic discourse (Parmentier 1987), and here we have invoked it to signal some promising directions in which the linguistic anthropology of Oceania can travel. Language ideologies, Christianity, entextualization, personhood, and agency are not uniquely Oceanic topics, but work done on these subjects by anthropologists in the region has proven both substantial and provocative. These paths of investigation are intertwined and cross-cutting, and many of the topics raised here can be investigated most fruitfully by tracing interconnections. For example, as we have suggested for the term *mana*, its key contribution to anthropological theory should be the way it links these topics in distinct and consequential configurations.

All these subjects are urgent ones for anthropologists and demand attention because they are enmeshed in wider debates about ideologies and practices of stability and transformation. Vital new conceptualizations of culture, discourse, ritual, and power need ethnographic investigations attuned to the concrete details of situated practices, and this is precisely what the linguistic anthropology of Oceania has been developing and promises to offer in newly vivid, productive ways.

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