Dangerous Words
Language and Politics in the Pacific

edited by
Donald Lawrence Brenneis
Pitzer College
and
Fred R. Myers
New York University

New York University Press
New York & London
1984
8. Lāuga and Talanoaga: Two Speech Genres in a Samoan Political Event

Alessandro Duranti
Dipartimento Glotto-Antropologico
Università degli Studi di Roma

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss several ways in which a social event constitutes a "frame," in Bateson's terms,1 within and through which particular speech genres are performed and interpreted. I will show that two speech genres recognized by Samoans, lāuga [la: 'uŋa] and talanoaga, differ in their internal organization, form, and content according to the context in which they are performed. My discussion will also demonstrate that native distinctions are sometimes context-sensitive, that is, they do not equally apply across different sociocultural contexts.

The scene of this study is a particular type of meeting of titled people (matai) — both chiefs and orators — in a traditional Samoan village.2 I will refer to this kind of meeting throughout this chapter as the fono. Although this is the term also used by Samoans, the word fono has quite a variety of possible interpretations, which must be specific in each context (cf. Duranti 1981; Mead 1930; Shore 1982). The fono discussed here are special meetings that are called for discussing some particularly important "case" that threatens the established political alliances, the respectability of some community leaders, or the alleged
“mutual love” (fealofoani) of the village or district members. A fono works as a “high court” and as a political arena for the kind of antagonistic interaction that Victor Turner (1974) describes as typical of social dramas. It is within a fono that the leading members of the community try to overcome crises in the social life of the village, struggle for power, and challenge the existing alliances and hierarchies. In this context, language is the most important medium and is an essential element for defining what goes on. At the same time, the use of speech within a fono can be understood and related to the use of speech in other social contexts only if we take the entire social event as an interpretive frame, which “gives the participants instructions or aids in [their] attempt(s) to understand the message” (Bateson 1972: 182).

Both the organization of talk and the language of a fono are different, in many respects, from conversation. In the next section, I discuss the distinctive features of the talk in a fono as a whole. In the last section, I show that, despite similarities among all fono speeches (illustrated in the next section), native speakers make a distinction between two different types of speeches: lāuga and talanoaga.

In the spirit of the approach proposed within the ethnography of speaking (cf. Bauman and Sherzer 1974, 1975; Frake 1972), I will first illustrate the basic native criteria for the distinction in question: a topic constraint and a sequential constraint. On the basis of my own observations, I will also illustrate some further differences between the two genres in the last section. Finally, I will compare the lāuga in a fono with the lāuga delivered in an exchange of dowry and bridewealth and a lāuga at the installation of a chief. I will argue that the differences must be related to a different focus of interaction and to the social function of speech in the social event. A lāuga in a ceremony is the climax of that event, the most important domain for display and evaluation of verbal art, in which the performer assumes a commitment toward the audience and the audience toward the performer. However, a lāuga in a fono is perceived as a transition point, a necessary introduction to the forthcoming discussion, while the climax of the political event.

Data Sources and Research Methods

The data for this study were collected during a one-year period of fieldwork in the village of Falefā on the Island of Upolu, in Western
Samoa. The data consist of direct (participant) observation and audio recording of *fono* in the village. Informal conversations and ceremonial speeches were also recorded for comparative purposes, and several informal interviews were conducted with chiefs and orators from the village who could provide insights and evaluations of the events from a Samoan perspective. A large number of the interviews and discussions with chiefs and orators in the village were also recorded (for more discussion on data sources and methods cf. Duranti 1981).

**Definition of the Event: What Is a Fono?**

I am particularly interested here in addressing two issues with respect to the definition of a *fono*: (1) Is it possible to define a *fono* as distinct from other events in the society (that may share with the *fono* several important or minor features)? (2) Can we establish the event's boundaries and other characteristics in a way that would be consistent with the native view?

These are important questions, not only with respect to the *fono*, but, more generally, for any ethnographic account of speech events in a given society. In what follows I will provide a list and a description of what I judge to be characteristics of the *fono* consistent with these questions, although I will not always specify with respect to which other event a particular feature becomes relevant.

Accounts of other types of *fono* in other villages and with other foci of attention and goals can also be found in Mead (1930), Freeman (1978), and Shore (1982).

**Features of the Event**

**Boundaries.** In talking about "boundaries" we must distinguish along two dimensions: *spatial boundaries* and *temporal boundaries*. The spatial boundaries define the "space" in which the event is taking place. The *fono* discussed here takes place inside one house. There are other social events in which participants (also) act in an open space (usually in front of a house), and there are other *fono* (*fono tauati*) that take place in several different houses at the same time (see Shore 1982 for a description of a *fono tauati* in the village of Sala'ilua on the island of Savai'i).
Seating arrangement of matai in a fono.
The symbol $\cup$, which is taken from child language transcription procedures (cf. Ochs 1979), indicates the direction of the pelvis (bird's-eye view) and, therefore, of people's positions with respect to each other and the possible reach of their eye gaze.

The way people seat themselves inside the house is also significant and is done according to an ideal plan structured on the basis of statuses (chiefs vs. orators), ranks (high vs. low-ranking titles), and extent of active participation in the event. Variations and "violations" of the ideal plan are common and must be understood as having the abstract plan as a key. Very roughly, the two senior orators$^3$ of the village and the orators who are going to speak sit in what is considered the "front" of the house.$^4$ High-ranking chiefs sit in either one of the two shorter sides (tala); other chiefs and those orators who are in charge of the kava ceremony sit in the "back." Figures 8.1 provides an example of an actual seating arrangement in one of the fono I recorded.

Temporal boundaries refer, for instance, to the beginning and to the end of the event. The beginning of a fono is always signaled by a kava ceremony. Almost anytime matai get together for some official reason, kava is served. However, the way kava is distributed varies. In the fono I am describing, the order of kava serving at the beginning is different from any other gathering of matai in that orators drink first and according to a particular sequence principle (cf. Duranti 1981). The order of drinking kava also parallels the order of speakers in the fono, at least up to a certain (predictable) number. Right after the kava an orator
Figure 8.2. Temporal Boundaries of a Fono.

from a particular subvillage will deliver the first speech of the day, a lāuga. After this speech, either other lāuga follow (one for each of the subvillages represented at the meeting) or the discussion (talanoaga) starts.

The end of a fono is sometimes marked by another kava ceremony. At other times, though, the end is less clear-cut, and one may perceive a gradual change in the form and content of verbal and nonverbal behavior going from more "formal" to less "formal" features. (I am thinking here of the various characteristics of "formality" discussed by Irvine 1979.) A different kind of end marker from the official kava ceremony is laughter. A person will make a joke — and the laughter that follows it, with public recognition of that particular speech act as a "joke" — signals that the tension is (or, at least, "should" be) over and people should relax. After this, the verbal interaction resembles conversation, with several people speaking at the same time and in a less homogeneous and restricted register. Figure 8.2 illustrates the temporal organization of a fono.

Time. Fono take place in the morning, usually on a Saturday (but other days may also be chosen), probably to allow people who work in the capital to participate. These fono do not take place regularly but are instead called only if some important matter must be discussed. (Other types of fono, as, for instance, the fono o le pulenu'u, take place every other week, on Mondays, regardless of the particular issues to be discussed.)

Norms of etiquette. Several norms must be followed by the participants in both their verbal and nonverbal behavior. Since I will discuss
the verbal behavior at length in the rest of the chapter, I will mention here only three nonverbal norms: (1) Everyone sits on mats and cross-legged (chiefs, but not orators, are allowed to put one foot on the other leg's thigh [napevae], and only while they are not delivering a speech). (2) A person may walk across the internal "circle" of matai for a ceremonial reason only (e.g., in the distribution of kava). (3) If someone who is sitting in the front row wants to give something to someone else of those present, he must call upon some untitled man from outside the house or a matai of low rank from the back row to deliver the object from one matai to the other.

Reasons for a fono. A fono is called when a breach of some social norm has taken place or is about to take place, such a breach involving some social relation between individuals or groups (e.g., families, sub-villages). A crisis or a conflict makes the village "weak" according to the Samoan world view, and it ruins the "beauty" of the village. The "love for each other" (fealofani) must be restored. This process, among other ways, takes the form of a fono, in which the trouble sources are discussed and certain measures are taken by the matai, who represent all the families and people of the village, to remedy the misconduct of those who violated the social rules and alliances.

Goals and outcomes. Following Hymes's suggestion (cf. Hymes 1972: 61), a distinction must be made between the goals of (some of) the individuals engaged in the interaction within a fono and the outcomes of that interaction from the point of view of the community. Personal ambition or rivalry among powerful members of the community may be in the background of the convocation of a fono; however, what the society as a whole gets out of these meetings may be independent of and beyond the particular goals of some individuals. From the society's point of view, the fono is the place for restating secular alliances and values; it is also the time in which the social structure and the ties with the tradition are challenged, and changes of more or less importance may take place.

Verbal interaction in the Fono: An Overall View

In this section I will describe some of the main features that distinguish verbal interaction in the fono from verbal interaction among the same individuals before the event starts or in other, less planned types of
activity). All the characteristics of speech listed must be understood as belonging to both läuga and talanoaga, the two types of speech I will discuss in the last section. (For an example of interaction among matai before the fono starts, see the Appendix.)

**Turn-Taking Rules**

In a fono, speakers' turns are preallocated up to a number that is predictable from the situation (cf. Duranti 1981). I am using the term "turn" in a different way from what is meant in "conversation analysis" (cf. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), and more in the way the term has been used by Duncan (1972). Turn organization and turn management in a fono are in many ways different from conversation. I propose thus to use the term "macroturn" to characterize the difference from, and, at the same time, maintain the relationship with, "turns in conversation."

Within one's speech (macroturn), predictable responses are elicited from the audience (all of which convey agreement, e.g., mālie!, "nicely [said]"). This is the most common environment for brief overlap.

It is always the case that, after the audience has given the requested feedback (cf. the use of mālie!), the one who is delivering the speech will reselect himself, unless his last utterance conveys the message "end of my speech." (The most common formula is manuia le aofia ma le fono! which may be translated as "best wishes to the assembly and the council!" or "long life ... "). If the person has terminated his speech, the audience will not answer mālie! but, instead, mālo fetalai! (for an orator); mālo saunoa! for a chief; or mālo vagana! (for one of the two senior orators). They could all be translated as "congratulations for [your] speech!"

Gaps between macroturns are generally longer than between turns in conversation (this may be a characteristic of macroturns).

Overwhelmingly, parties self-select in starting to talk.

Once a party has started, there are no "second starters." This means that nobody else will compete with the current speaker for the floor if he has the right to speak at that particular time. Thus, for instance, at the beginning of the fono people must speak in a prearranged order. If one person violates that order by self-selecting himself at an inappropriate time (as happened once in a fono I recorded), another person (who has the authority to do so) may interrupt the current speaker to
reestablish the proper procedure. Furthermore, there are cases in which someone else may begin to talk after a person has started to deliver his speech, but this would not be sensed as "competitive" with the ongoing speech, although it might be competitive in terms of focus of the interaction. Here a distinction may be drawn between "onstage" and "offstage" participants, a feature of the event that can also be captured by referring to what I call the spatial boundaries. When someone talks while another person is giving a speech, it is more likely to happen among those matai who sit in the back of the house than among those who are sitting in the front. Among those who sit in the back of the house, there is more a tendency to do this among those sitting in a second back row, if there is one (see Fig. 8.3). Such "offstage" or "backstage" interaction would not be immediately perceived as competitive with the ongoing speech. This backstage talk is in a much lower volume than the official speaker's voice, and it usually lasts a relatively short time. It also tends to occur toward the beginning and the end of the meeting, not in the middle of it, when the discussion is more lively and less predictable. One could suggest, then, the following generalization: talk that overlaps with the official speeches tends to occur at the external spatial and temporal boundaries of the event.

**Linguistic Characteristics of a Fono**

I will now describe certain linguistic features of a fono that characterize fono speeches as a whole, regardless of the distinction between lauga and talanoaga.

**Lexicon.** In Samoan, there is a special set of words that are used for talking about matai, their actions, feelings, relatives, belongings (Milner
1961). Thus, whereas the common word for “to see” is va’ai, the word for a chief or an orator is silasila; whereas an untitled person is said to be ma’i to say that he is sick, a titled person is said to be gasegase. In some cases, two different terms are used according to whether the referent is (related to) a chief or an orator. Thus, a common house is a fale, but a chief’s house is a maota, and an orator’s house is a laoa. A chief’s wife is a faletua, but an orator’s wife is a tausi. Instead of the common word sau, “come, arrive,” the expression afio mai can be used in talking about a chief and the expression maliu mai in talking about an orator. In some cases, even subtler distinctions can be made between, say, a high-ranking and a low-ranking or medium-ranking chief or between a common orator and a senior orator.

The selection of one term (e.g., common word) over another (e.g., respect word), however, is not simply a function of the referent. That is, it is not simply due to whether one is talking about an untitled person or a matai, but it is to a large extent related to the particular kind of social event or speech act that one is involved in. Thus, for instance, whereas in an exchange of greetings or in a request for a favor the respect vocabulary terms are common, in informal household interaction among relatives or friends, common words are preferred instead. To a large extent, it seems that respectful words are used in those interactions in which it is the social identity associated with the title that matters or is highlighted, for whatever purpose. In this sense, it is clear that a fono is among the most typical environments for the use of respect vocabulary, given not only that someone’s title is extremely important in a fono but also that the very fact of being a title holder is defined by the participation in the village fono (cf. Mead 1930). Some examples will illustrate the way in which the fact of being in a fono explains the use of a respect vocabulary term. The first case is in example (1) below, in which, before the meeting has started, the senior orator, Moe’ono, asks Taofiualoa (shortened “Loa”) whether the orator, Mata’afa (pronounced Maka’afa), has come from the two nearby sub-villages (Falelua). Here we find the common word sau, “come,” in the line indicated by an arrow. In example (2), when Mata’afa’s presence is acknowledged within the fono interaction, a respectful term, maliu mai, is used in the line indicated by an arrow.

(1) (Transcript I, p.10; Fono, April 7, 1979; before meeting starts)
Moe'ono: 'A fea fo'i lo kou pikogu'u (a) li'i, (0.3) Loa?
"Where is the rest of your subvillage, Mr. ... Loa?
Taofiualoa: (Se) ka'ilo ā iai. (0.2) Savalivali mai ā kaika ke le (iloa).
"Poor me, how do I know? ... I walked here. I don't know."
→ Moe'ono: Ga'o Maka'afa a le Falelua ga sau?
"Only Mata'afa of [the people from] the two subvillages has come?"
Taofiualoa: ia ai a ga'o // Maka'afa.
"There is indeed only // Mata'afa."

(2) (Transcript I, p.47; Fono April 7, 1978; after the discussion of the first topic on the agenda of the meeting, the chief Tevaseu and the orator Mata'afa are called to participate. Their arrival is recognized by the senior orator, Moe'ono, chairman of the council.)

Moe'ono: ( ...) ia. 'O lea 'ua lua afio mai Ke'vaseu
"So, now you [chief] Tevaseu have come"
→ maliu mai fo'i Maka'afa.
"[you] have come too [orator] Mata'afa."

Another interesting example is found in a speech by a titled woman, who has gone to the meeting to speak in favor of her brother, Savea, a young chief. Normally, as reported by Milner (1961), one does not use respect vocabulary terms in talking about oneself or close relatives. In the woman's speech, however, we find the word finagalo, "wish, opinion," used to refer to her brother's decision, example:

(3) (Transcript III, p.49; Fono April 7; Savea's sister, who holds the orator title "Tafili," is delivering her second speech of the day.)

Tafili: 'A 'o legei kaimi, lelei ā le malamalama.
"But at this point, it is better to understand."
Ua 'o le maka'upu, o le maka'upu o lea 'ua-
"Because the discussion, the discussion is about the fact that"'ua liso kaoji iai le kalosaga iia Savea
"Savea has already filed a request [to the court]"
→ iiga ia kakala loga- [Pause] figagalo i laga kagi.
"so that [he] would change his ... mind about his petition."
There is a brief pause before the speaker utters the respectful term *finagalo* (pronounced *figagalo*) for her brother’s decision, but she finally chooses to treat him as a chief rather than as a brother. This choice makes sense within the *fono* context, in which Tafili must speak as an orator who respects a chief’s opinion rather than as a woman who wants to protect her brother.

Another typical aspect of *fono* speeches is the extensive use of parallelism (cf. Jakobson 1968). We find, that is, different words, phrases, or sentences used to convey the same concept but referring to different statuses or ranks. An example can be seen in example (2), where the speaker uses the verb *afoi mai*, “come,” in talking about a chief (*Teva-seu*) and the verb *maliau mai*, also meaning “come,” in talking about an orator (*Mata'afa*). Parallelism often seems to be employed for restating the basic traditional distinctions that are made in the social structure of the village — e.g., between chiefs and orators, between common orators and senior high-ranking orators (*matua*), and so forth. In some cases, the choice of a different word or expression for different statuses reflects a difference in decision power. Thus, orators often talk about chiefs’ “decision, will” (*tōfā, finagalo*) but about their own “hope” (*fa'amoemoe*) or “humble opinion” (*tāofī vai vai*).

**Morphosyntax.** I will present here a few examples of the kind of morphosyntactic variation that one finds between the language used in conversation and the language used in a *fono* speech.

In the *fono* speeches there are more sentences with “full constituents” than in conversation. By considering only main declarative sentences with transitive verbs we find that out of 17 sentences in conversation before the *fono* had started only 3 (17.6%) have (in addition to the verb) both Agent NP and Object NP superficially expressed by nouns or full pronouns. Once the *fono* has started and speeches are delivered, we find, instead, that out of 58 transitive sentences 17 (29.3%) have full Agent and Object NPs in them.

In *fono* speeches there is a greater tendency for verbs to appear with tense/aspect markers than in conversation.

The so-called transitive suffix *-Ciila* appears in a wider range of forms and contexts during a *fono* than in conversation. Several linguists have tried to capture the syntactic or discourse function of the various verbal
suffixes known under the label -Cia (e.g., -a, -ia, -mia, -tia, -ina) (cf. Chung 1978; Cook 1978; Milner 1962, 1973). When we look at the fono speeches, however, we realize that the grammatical or informational context alone cannot explain the use of -Cia in this context. Generally, in the language of a fono we find a broader spectrum of -Cia environments and a higher percentage of -Cia suffixes than in conversation. This suggests that -Cia is also a stylistic marker — a point also made by Tuitele, Sāpolu, and Kneubuhl (1978).

Sentence subordination and coordination is more clearly marked in fono speeches than in conversation, which is in turn characterized by what Givón (1979) calls "loose subordination."

In a fono, speakers sometimes use the particle 'i before a full pronoun (e.g., iā 'i kākou "to us [inclusive]"). This feature, very common in the language of the Bible, is usually absent in conversational Samoan.

**Phonology.** Samoan exhibits the possibility of two phonological registers, one in which there is an opposition between /ŋ/ and /k/, and between /ŋ/ and /ŋ/ (written "g"), and another register in which the contrast is neutralized and only the two velar segments, /k/ and /ŋ/, are realized. The first register has been characterized as associated with Western-oriented activities or institutions, (school, church, radio, government documentation, etc.) (cf. Shore 1982) or with literacy (cf. Duranti and Ochs 1984). The k/g-pronunciation is instead typical of traditional activities or of activities that are not associated with Western values or institutions. This includes both informal conversation and formal speeches in traditional ceremonies and in fono of the kind discussed here.

Generally speaking, fono speeches are characterized by more careful pronunciation than conversation among matai before the meeting starts or in other contexts. This is clearly tied to a slower speed of the fono language in general.

Lāuga and Talanoaga: A Native Distinction

In the previous section I presented several features of fono speeches and pointed out which ones distinguish the language of a fono from the language used by the same individuals in a different context (e.g., conversation before the meeting). In this section, I will show that,
despite the many similarities among all the speeches in a fono, native speakers, in fact, make a distinction between two genres láuga and talanoaga.

In the following subsection, I will provide the native criteria for such a distinction. Furthermore, I will discuss the role of the sociocultural context in defining the particular genre and its features.

The term láuga has a general, nonspecialized meaning and a context-specific, specialized one. Generally speaking, a láuga is any kind of ceremonial speech, which follows certain patterns of internal organization (with different "parts") and makes great use of respect vocabulary and figurative language. In this sense, a speech performed at a funeral, as well as any of the speeches delivered in a fono is a láuga. In a more specific, technical use of the term, láuga refers only to certain speeches delivered by certain orators at a particular point in a given social context. In this more specialized sense, only some of the speeches delivered in a fono are láuga. Other speeches are talanoaga, a term that outside a fono means "chat, conversation" and that in a fono means "discussion."

The Native Criteria for the Distinction

What are the criteria by which láuga and talanoaga in a fono can be distinguished? As in the case of the Yakan litigation discussed by Frake (1972), the physical setting could not indicate the difference or the passage from one type to the other.

The basic criteria by which native speakers distinguish the two types of speech are the following: (1) topic choice and (2) sequential ordering.

Topic choice. In a láuga the agenda of the meeting is mentioned, but it cannot be discussed. Speakers cannot express their opinion on the matter. This can be done only in the talanoaga, or discussion, part of the fono; and talanoaga is also the term used for a speech given in this part of the meeting.

Sequential ordering. Once a fono starts, first there are one or more láuga, then talanoaga follow. Once the "discussion" has started there can be no more láuga.

The end of láuga and the beginning of talanoaga is announced by one of the two senior orators with a special formula (fa'auso le fono); cf. (2) in the Appendix. Furthermore, at the beginning of a speech that
is not a läuga, a speaker may remind the audience of the fact that he is going just to discuss, talk, and not perform a läuga. He would then use expressions such as tātou talatalanoa, “let’s talk,” or ou te tautala atu, “I am [going to] talk; I am [just] talking.” This is a way of “keying” (cf. Goffman 1974) his performance, that is, of suggesting how the audience should interpret his words. By saying “I am just talking,” the speaker is saying “do not take my speech as a läuga, that is, do not expect me to respect the format and rules of läuga; instead, expect me to tell you my position on the issue.”

On the basis of the native distinction, I have reexamined the transcripts of the fono speeches looking for further differences.

Further Differences between Lāuga and Talanoaga. I will describe the differences between läuga and talanoaga along the same lines as I described their similarities in the previous section.

Turn-Taking. The set of potential speakers varies from läuga to talanoaga. Only orators who are sitting in the front row can give a läuga. Anyone (chiefs and orators sitting in the front or in the back) can participate in the discussion.

With respect to overlaps and competition for the floor, in the talanoaga part of the fono overlaps are more likely to occur along with some competition for the floor. For instance, if someone gets “carried away” with his speech and is too harsh, another matai may interrupt him and take over the floor.

With respect to question-answer pairs, these occur only in a talanoaga. They may fall in either one of the following two categories: (1) a momentary “side sequence” (cf. Jefferson 1972) (e.g., before going on with the discussion, the senior orator who is chairing the meeting may interrupt his talanoaga to ask someone in the audience whether so-and-so has been officially informed of the meeting, who was in charge of delivering a certain message, etc.); (2) within a talanoaga speech, a person may ask a question involving one of the matai present. In this case, the latter may subsequently answer in his speech, or ask permission, during a pause, to answer immediately.

In addition to the use of the word mālie! (see the previous section) as an elicited response within one’s speech, which is common in läuga,
the word mo'i, "true," "right," is also found during a talanoaga as an expression of agreement with the content of the speech. This fact reflects a difference in focus between the two genres. It marks a shift from form to content.

When more than one läuga is performed in a fono, each speaker must thank and/or acknowledge all the previous speakers. This is usually done by starting from the last one and then going back to the first one, followed by the second, and so on. When giving a talanoaga, instead, the speaker may thank the speaker immediately before him and some important matai who had spoken before, but there is no predictable norm.

Lexicon. In terms of the register being used, some "slips" into ordinary language, "vulgar" expressions, may occur in the talanoaga, but not in a läuga (e.g., okaokal, an expression of surprise).

In the talanoaga more proverbs are used to picture a situation or to express a concern. They are associated with "opinions" or "viewpoints."

Morphosyntax. Along with recognition as well as denunciation of actions accomplished (or intended) by some of the powerful figures of the community, more constructions with agents appear in the talanoaga (as in a trial, it seems important in a fono to specify "who did what").

Oratory style. From mostly homiletic ("reinforcement of what is already known"; cf. Firth 1975: 42) in the läuga, the oratory becomes also persuasive and manipulative in the talanoaga (see Firth 1975 for these categories).

Forms of reference. Whereas in a läuga only titles are used to refer to people who are matai, in a talanoaga it is also possible to hear, at times, somebody's untitled name being used next to his title. This fact probably relates to a shift from läuga to talanoaga with respect to the opposition "title: individual." In the introductory, ceremonial speeches, reference is made to titles as historical mythical figures that have a life of their own, independent from the specific persons who hold those titles at any given time. In the talanoaga, instead, along with the recall of some more recent, specific event, people show an interest in other people's actions, and in their individual identities.
Talanoaga in and out of the Fono

The differences between talanoaga in a fono and outside the fono are more or less captured by the description of the fono verbal interaction given in the previous section. Despite the fact that the talanoaga in a fono shares some features with more informal verbal interaction (e.g., a few expressions typical of casual talk, question-answer pairs, some "stories"), it is still very different from what is usually considered a conversation, a chat. Thus, we could say that the talanoaga in a fono is a type of speech that shares many features with the lāuga, but it tends toward more colloquial Samoan — without, however, ever completely coinciding with the way people would interact in casual conversation.

Lāuga in the Fono and Lāuga in Ceremonies

Despite the fact that the lāuga in the fono and the lāuga performed in ceremonies share some very basic common features, they are also different in some respects. The common features of lāuga in the two contexts have to do mostly with the structure of the speech, its lexicon, and sequential organization.

There is a basic structure that a lāuga must qualify for. Some variations are allowed (either personal or contextual). A lāuga has a certain number of "parts" (vaega): (1) folasaga or "introduction"; (2) 'ava, "kava"; (3) fa'afetai, "thanksgiving"; (4) pa'ia, "dignity of the chiefs"; (5) taeao (literally, "morning"); "recount of important events in the history of Samoa"; (6) 'auga o le aso, "reason for gathering"; (7) fa'amatafi lagi (lit., "clearing of the sky"), "wishes of good and long life." Despite some variations across different speechmakers and on different occasions, some parts are mandatory and follow the order given here (e.g., the pa'ia may come after the taeao, but a speech must end with the fa'amatafi lagi; the folasaga may be left out, but every lāuga must contain the fa'afetai, or "thanksgiving to God").

Each of the above-mentioned parts is made out of an arbitrary number of expressions, mostly metaphors, taken from a very rich corpus transmitted orally over the centuries from one generation of matai to the next.

Differences between Lāuga in Ceremonies and Lāuga in Fono. Eleven major differences between lāuga performed in a ceremony and lāuga
performed in a *fono* are described in the accompanying list. The data on the *lauge* in ceremonies consist of transcripts of two different kinds of ceremonies (an exchange of dowry and bridewealth and an installation of new *matai*), participant observation of several other ceremonial encounters, and interviews with speechmakers in the village on the content and significance of the speeches.

**(CEREMONY):**

1. Before the *lauge*, there is a debate (called *fa’atau*) among the orators present, in order to decide who will give the speech. This discussion may be a pure formality lasting only a few minutes, or a very long and complex negotiation.

2. The number of *lauge* is known beforehand (usually the two parties, e.g., hosts and guests, deliver one speech each).

3. The one who delivers the *lauge* must be a recognized, skillful (*poto*) speechmaker (this is guaranteed by the fact that he was good enough to win the debate at the beginning—see item 1).

4. People later evaluate the “beauty” of the speech, its form (see Keenan 1974 for a compatible Malagasy example).

5. The speech performance usually represents an agreement of some sort.

6. The speech is usually addressed to a subgroup of the village’s *matai* and families.

**(FONO):**

1. There is no debate. Orators who wish to speak sit in the front row, usually one orator for each subvillage.

2. The number of *lauge* may vary, according to two factors: (a) how many subvillages are represented in the *fono*; (b) whether the chairperson decides to start the discussion immediately after the first *lauge*.

3. The one who delivered the *lauge* for a given subvillage may not be a particularly skillful speechmaker. He must be powerful enough to be allowed to sit in the front row with the higher-ranking orators.

4. The *lauge* is not talked about subsequently. There is much less emphasis on the act as a display of oratorical skills.

5. The *lauge* is a prelude to a possible confrontation. Agreement among the different parties may or may not be reached.

6. The speech is addressed to the entire village, or even to the entire district. This is symbolized by the enunciation of the full version of the ceremonial address (*fa’alupega*), which mentions all the important titles.
7. The speechmaker may be formally interrupted (seu) at a certain (relatively predictable) point, and he may have to shorten his speech (e.g., to stop the speechmaker from mentioning genealogies (ga'fa), which should not be recited publicly).\textsuperscript{13}  

8. Once the speech is over, no parts are added or repeated. It is assumed that speechmakers do not make mistakes, or that his mistakes cannot be repaired by others.

9. No specific part of the speech is dedicated entirely to the fuller version of the ceremonial address to the village.

10. The speech is usually delivered in a very distinct voice quality and in high volume.

11. There is compensation for the speechmaker (e.g., money, a fine mat).

7. The speechmaker cannot be formally interrupted, although he may actually be stopped for a number of reasons.

8. If the speechmaker has not mentioned the agenda of the day (or has not done so properly), the chair of the meeting may ask him, after the speech is over, to "repair" by announcing the agenda (or doing it in more precise terms).

9. A specific and fundamental part of the speech is dedicated to the ceremonial greeting to the village (see item 6).

10. The voice quality is similar only at times to that of the lāuga delivered in a ceremony. The pitch and the volume are not as high.

11. There is no compensation for the speechmaker.

All these differences can be accounted for by considering two factors: (1) the focus of the event in which the lāuga is being delivered and (2) the role of the lāuga in the event. In fact, not only are the speeches different in different social events, but speakers' participants' expectations with respect to the speech also vary from one event to another.

A ceremony marks a change in somebody's status; it is a rite de passage, e.g., from unmarried to married, from untitled to titled (matai), from alive to dead (a funeral ceremony). The ceremony both represents and is that change of status.\textsuperscript{14} Someone in the community enters in the event with one status and emerges with another. In the case of an exchange of dowry and bridewealth, or in the case of an investiture of a new chief, the ceremony is the public announcement of an agreement that has been reached by two or more parties (e.g., two families, differ-
ent lines in the descent groups). Such an announcement takes its verbal form in the läuga that will be delivered. The village will know from that speech that those two families are now related or that a certain man has become a chief, a "sacred" person. A ceremonial läuga says all of these things, and more. It goes back in time to the eternal values of the community, to the names of the sacred and mythical figures of the ancestors who founded the village or the whole country.

The ceremonial läuga is the most sophisticated form of verbal art in Samoa. It is the time for the best speechmakers to display their eloquence, their knowledge, their skills. The läuga in a ceremony is the socially recognized domain of "performance" par excellence, in the sense in which this dimension has been defined by Bauman (1977: 11):

performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence.... Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence.

With respect to these characteristics, the läuga in a fono differs from a ceremonial läuga. There is no real competition over who should deliver the speech; people do not usually comment on the speech after the event is over; there is no immediate compensation for the speechmaker. Läuga in the fono do not stand on their own. They are a prelude to something else. Their role is to define the event as a political one, to greet the assembly, and to prepare the atmosphere for the more important and difficult moments to come, namely, the debate and confrontation among the matai about some particularly important issue. The läuga itself, in a fono, is not the focus not the climax of the social event. While the speechmaker routinely enunciates those very same expressions that are characteristic of a läuga in a ceremony, people around him are hardly listening; they cannot enjoy his performance, because they are concentrating on what will come next, preparing themselves psychologically for the discussion, thinking of their speech (talanoaga), of the position that they should take, and the consequences of leaning more on one side or the other.
It is then the nature of the speech event, its social and cultural significance, that determines the form, meaning, and the connotations of a lāuga. Within the same genre, namely the lāuga, variation is not only possible, but expected, to fit the needs of the participants in the event.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed several ways in which the speech event may constitute a "frame" for performing and interpreting a particular speech genre. In the fono, the meetings of chiefs and orators in a Samoan village, both the organization of verbal interaction and the particular kind of language that is used by the participants are very distinct from what goes on in conversation among the same individuals (before the fono starts, and even more different in other social situations). The turn-taking rules are different, the lexicon is specially suited for talking “about” matai and “to” matai. Different terms and expressions are used for differentiating among statuses and ranks of the people addressed or referred to. Even the morphology and syntax of the language exhibit some distinctive characteristics. All these facts make the event and the people who participate in it very special, different from other events and from other individuals in the community. Within the event itself, however, native (competent) speakers differentiate between two speech genres: lāuga and talanoaga. Early in this section I discussed the native criteria for such a distinction; I also pointed out some other differences that can be found once the native distinction has been clarified.

In the rest of the chapter, I show that the terms used for this important distinction in the fono speeches (lāuga and talanoaga) also refer to speech genres found outside the fono. However, a lāuga in a fono differs from a casual conversation or discussion outside a fono. We need, then, the event as a "frame" to interpret these genres in each case. Finally, I provided a list of several important differences between a lāuga in a fono and a lāuga in a ceremony. I also discussed those differences and explained them on the basis of the different nature of the social event in which they are performed. In so doing, I employed
the notion of "verbal art as performance" in the sense suggested by Bauman (1977). I showed that, despite their structural similarities, the fono läuga and the ceremony läuga are performed by the speechmaker and perceived by the audience in a different way. The social and cultural significance of the event (fono vs. ceremony) was used to explain the differences. The social event is thus a "frame" for performing and interpreting speech.