

Dangerous Words

Language and Politics in the Pacific

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8. Lāuga and Talanoaga: Two Speech Genres in a Samoan Political Event

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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" (*fealofani*) 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, which is 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).

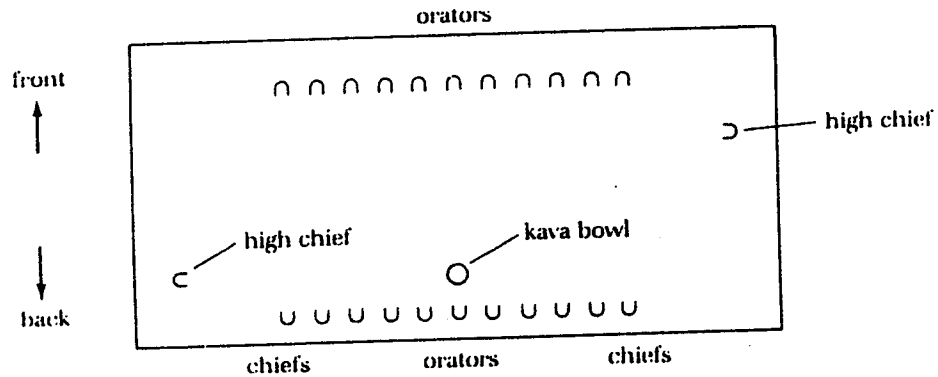


Figure 8.1

Seating arrangement of *matai* in a *fono*.

The symbol U, 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 orators³ 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." Figure 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

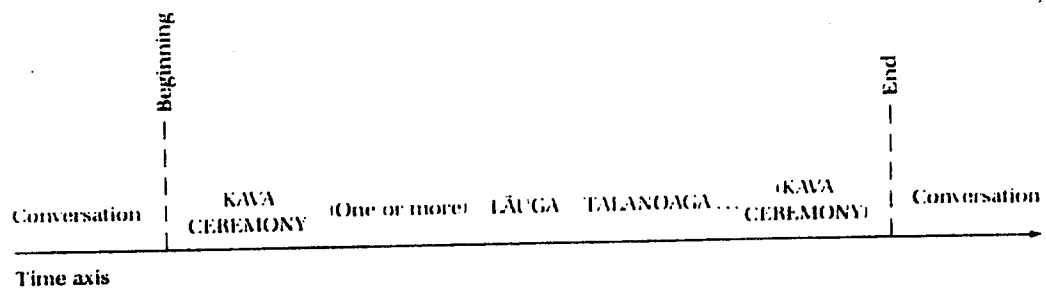


Figure 8.2.
Temporal Boundaries of a *Fono*.

from a particular subvillage⁵ 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 *lāuga* 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*⁶

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, *mālō fetalai!* (for an orator); *mālō saunoa!* for a chief; or *mālō 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.⁷

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

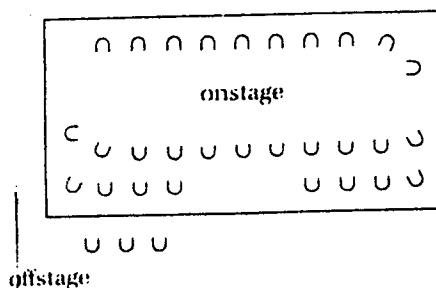


Figure 8.3
Onstage/offstage participants

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 *lāuga* 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 *tausī*. 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 Taofuailoa (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?"
- Taofuailoa: (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?"
- Taofuailoa: 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 Kevaseu
 "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."
 Uā 'o le maka'upu, 'o le maka'upu o lea 'ua-
 "Because the discussion, the discussion is about the fact that"
 'ua lafo kaofi iai le kalosaga iā Savea
 "Savea has already filed a request [to the court]"
 → iga 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).⁸ 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 *afio mai*, "come," in talking about a chief (Tevasau) and the verb *maliu 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" (*tāofi vaivai*).

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 *-C(i)a* 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 /t/ and /k/, and between /n/ 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.⁹

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,¹⁰ in fact, make a distinction between two genres *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* has a general, nonspecialized meaning and a context-specific, specialized one. Generally speaking, a *lāuga* 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 *lāuga*. In a more specific, technical use of the term, *lāuga* 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 *lāuga*. 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 *lāuga* 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 criteria¹¹ by which native speakers distinguish the two types of speech are the following: (1) topic choice and (2) sequential ordering.

Topic choice. In a *lāuga* 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 *lāuga*,¹² then *talanoaga* follow. Once the "discussion" has started there can be no more *lāuga*.

The end of *lāuga* and the beginning of *talanoaga* is announced by one of the two senior orators with a special formula (*fa'auso le fonò*); cf. (2) in the Appendix. Furthermore, at the beginning of a speech that

is not a *lāuga*, a speaker may remind the audience of the fact that he is going just to discuss, talk, and not perform a *lāuga*. 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 *lāuga*, that is, do not expect me to respect the format and rules of *lāuga*; 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 *lāuga* and *talanoaga* along the same lines as I described their similarities in the previous section.

Turn-Taking. The set of potential speakers varies from *lāuga* to *talanoaga*. Only orators who are sitting in the front row can give a *lāuga*. 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 *lāuga*,

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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* (e.g., *okaoka!*, 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 "view-points."

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 *lāuga*, the oratory becomes also *persuasive* and *manipulative* in the *talanoaga* (see Firth 1975 for these categories).

Forms of reference. Whereas in a *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga*, 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 *lāuga* is known beforehand (usually the two parties, e.g., hosts and guests, deliver one speech each).
3. The one who delivers the *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga*.
3. The one who delivered the *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* is not talked about subsequently. There is much less emphasis on the act as a display of oratorical skills.
5. The *lāuga* 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 (*gafa*), which should not be recited publicly).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.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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* 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 *lāuga* in a *fono* differs from a ceremonial *lāuga*. 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. *Lāuga* 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 *lāuga* itself, in a *fono*, is not the focus nor the climax of the social event. While the speechmaker routinely enunciates those very same expressions that are characteristic of a *lāuga* 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 ^{chapter} 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, ^{talanoaga} 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 lāuga* and the ceremony *lāuga* 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.