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REPORTED SPEECH AND AFFECT ON NUKULAELAE ATOLL

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Introduction

Reported speech is both the representation of linguistic actions and commentaries about these actions. This chapter investigates how the "representation" and the "commentary" may interact with each other in the structure and use of reported speech on Nukulaelae Atoll, a Polynesian community. In this study, I address the following questions: (a) What are the different ways of expressing reported speech? (b) What are the preferred strategies for reporting speech? (c) How is affect communicated through reported speech? (d) How do the quoted speaker and the quoting speaker share responsibility for the information communicated in reported speech? (e) How do all the above factors reflect the speech community's attitudes towards the speaker's responsibility in talk? I shall show that, on Nukulaelae, a tension exists between the (perhaps universal) need to communicate some affect in everyday communication and the local norms against communicating affect overtly. This tension is resolved through the simultaneous use, in reporting activities, of overt keys that are affectively neutral, and covert keys that are high in affective content. The strategic choice of keys in turn correlates with relative degrees of evidentiality: affect is communicated through keys which allow speakers to present themselves as minimally accountable for the content of their talk.

Reported speech

Reported speech has been studied by researchers from a variety of perspectives. Literary critics have looked at the significance of reported speech for questions of authorship and narratorship. Linguists and philosophers of language have concentrated on technical structural questions. Until recently, anthropologists and ethnographers of speaking had paid little attention to reported speech as a social tool, despite the importance of reporting activities and other types of "replayings" (Goffman, 1974:530) in ethnography.

Early in this century, Bakhtin ([1934] 1981) and his collaborators, Voloshinov ([1929] 1978), and Medvedev ([1928] 1985),[1] in the process of laying the foundation of a Marxist theory of literary semiotics, addressed the literary problem of the relationship between narrator and text. Bakhtin was concerned with the ways in which the narrating voice and the narrated voice influence each other in literary discourse. He established correlations between various reported speech strategies and their semiotic functions. Consider, for example, the following contrast between directly quoted discourse (sentence (1)a) and indirectly quoted discourse (sentence (1)b):

(1) a.   She stopped and asked, "Is that the car I saw here yesterday?"

    b.   She stopped and asked if that was the car she had seen there the day before.

(adapted from Pascal, 1977:8)

According to Bakhtin and his followers, the use of direct quotes reflects a concern for the integrity and authenticity of the quoted message (Voloshinov, 1929[1978]). Direct quotation is characteristic of a *linear style*, in which the author of the quote and its reporter are kept maximally distinct from each other. Indirect quotes, in contrast, are characteristic of a *pictorial style*. The indirect quote merges with the ongoing discourse, thus allowing for greater manipulation of the meaning and interpretation of the quote. The interplay of voices in reported speech is an instance of the "heteroglossia" that Bakhtin and his followers claim permeates all social discourse.[2]

Bakhtin shows how the quoting styles that novelists give to their characters are semiotically significant. The choice of a quoting strategy indexes how reporters wish their audiences to feel about the meaning and significance of the quote. Furthermore, Bakhtin claims, the range of grammaticalized reported speech strategies, which differs widely from language to language, reflects speech communities' ideologies of communication, knowledge, and interaction.

To date, few linguists and anthropologists have taken up the challenge of testing Bakhtin's hypothesis. While Bakhtin's theoretical agenda has informed the foundation of the "reflexive" or "critical" school of anthropology (e.g. Clifford, 1988), it has yet to influence the more microscopic concerns of the field, even though the notions of "voice" and "heteroglossia" are useful tools in the analysis of ethnographic data (Trawick, 1988). Linguistic approaches to reported-speech phenomena have largely been confined to the study of finer structural questions: whether indirect quotes can be derived from direct quotes (Banfield, 1973, 1982; Kuroda, 1973; Wierzbicka, 1974); the extent to which quotes are structurally and

semantically integrated into the framing discourse structurally or semantically (Davidson, 1984; Partee, 1973); whether a quote functions grammatically as the direct object of the quotation verb (Munro, 1982); whether lexico-semantic universals of speech-act verbs can be established (Verschueren, 1984); and when and why tense and deixis shift in indirect quotation (Comrie, 1986). With a few exceptions (e.g. Silverstein, 1985; Tannen, 1986, 1988; various contributions to this volume), linguists have focused their attention primarily on the grammatical structure of reported speech construction, rather than on the meaning of reported speech in linguistic performance.

Affect and evidence

The grammatical bias which characterizes this literature is a symptom of the neglect by linguists of the affective component of language. That affect plays a leading role in language rests on the recognition that, in addition to its referential and social communicative functions, language communicates feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes toward the propositional content of the message, the situation, and the social context of the interaction (Irvine, 1982a; Ochs, 1982, 1986).[3] Affective meaning is thus a "metacommunicative commentary on a referential proposition" (Irvine, 1982a:32). Affect may be lexicalized (i.e. communicated through lexical devices whose sole purpose is to communicate affect); but it may also be communicated, less overtly, in the prosodic structure of an utterance (through intonation or stress, for instance), or in its syntactic structure (through the marking of pragmatic salience, for example). The communication of affect is thus a multi-channel phenomenon (Irvine, 1982a:38–9), which is intertwined in a complex manner with referential and social meanings.

The channels through which affect may be communicated have different characteristics. An affective interjection (e.g. "alas!" "hurray!") communicates affect more *transparently* (Silverstein, 1981) than syntactic or prosodic devices with equivalent meanings, in the sense that an interjection is typically recognized, in many folk linguistic ideologies, as the primary locus of affect in language. Thus an interjection of excitement or sorrow will place the speaker's excitement or sorrow on record, while an excited tone of voice is likely to be less readily identifiable as the vehicle through which these emotional states are communicated. Furthermore, there is a correlation between relative transparency and communicative efficiency. The less transparent an affect-communicating strategy is, the more efficiently the affect will be communicated. For example, the primary function of the syntactic structure of a sentence is to communicate referential meaning (which noun-phrase is the agent, which is the

patient, etc.). If an affective component is superposed on this referential function, it will be processed by the recipient at the same time as the referential component; affect, thus, will come "for free." In contrast, an affective interjection does not have a significant referential function and thus will be perceived solely as an affect-communicating device. In the first instance, the affective component is processed less consciously than in the second instance, and often lies outside the limits of awareness (Silverstein, 1981) of both encoder and decoder. Thus the choice of "keys" (Goffman, 1974) that speakers of a language make in communicating affective meaning is a loaded factor in and of itself.

To the dimension of transparency we can add a further dimension, that of evidentiality. Evidentiality, which may be defined, for the purpose of this discussion, as the expression of "the kinds of evidence a person has for making factual claims" (Anderson, 1986:273), is recognized as an important component of speech reporting by such scholars as Goffman:

> When a speaker employs conventional brackets to warn us that what he is saying is meant to be taken [...] as mere repeating of words said by someone else, then it is clear that he means to stand in a relation of reduced personal responsibility for what he is saying.
>
> [1974:512]

It is important to distinguish the different components of "what a speaker is saying" and to understand patterns of preferred usages in the context of the speech community's norms of responsibility and accountability.

In this chapter, I shall attempt to establish explanatory links between the structure and the cultural meaning of reported speech. I shall show that the choice of channels for the communication of affect in reported speech is a reflection of local theories of information, authorship, and meaning.

Reports and authorship on Nukulaelae

This section presents the ethnographic background of this study. I stress the cultural salience of speech-reporting activities on Nukulaelae, and then present the main feature of Nukulaelae ideologies regarding the nature of information, of authorship, and of epistemic authority. These remarks are based both on ethnographic observations and on inferences from discourse data. I shall show that reported speech is a culturally salient speech device on Nukulaelae. It is acquired early and is used in a wide variety of contexts. I shall show also that Nukulaelae islanders avoid issuing interpretations and inferences from other people's behavior and speech. Furthermore, knowledge on Nukulaelae is owned communally, and the individual has little power to modify that knowledge. Finally, I shall point out that the boundary between linguistic action and social action is not clearly defined on Nukulaelae.

My data were collected on Nukulaelae, a small and isolated atoll of the

Tuvalu group (formerly the Ellice Islands). Its population of 310 is predominantly Polynesian in origin, culture, and social organization. Nukulaelae social structure is one of the most egalitarian and least stratified in Polynesia.

Cultural salience of reported speech

Speech reporting plays an important role in everyday interactions on Nukulaelae. It plays a crucial role in gossip and story-telling, two highly salient speech events. Typically, Nukulaelae conversationalists construct their stories almost entirely as a string of reported turns:[4]

(2) *Koo fakafetaui ifo Samasone au. 'sss!*
Samasone came down to meet me. (He said,) 'Hey!
Au e ssili atu hua kia koe i te:: fekau nei a: Luisa
I just want to ask you about Luisa's request
ne hai mai kee taaofi koe i te:: te faamanatuga.' 'Io?
that you should be prevented from (taking) communion." (I said,) 'Oh?
I te aa?' Me i te tala teelaa ne hai i: i: i
And why?' (He said that) it was about the story to the effect
futi kolaa o: laatou ne taa nee au.
tha:t tha:t I chopped down some banana trees of theirs.
Aku muna 'ttaa, a ko au nei e- e(i) he tino fakavalevale?'
I said, 'Come on, am I crazy or what?'

Reported speech is used as a story-telling strategy even when verbal actions play a secondary role compared to nonverbal events in the report. Furthermore, reported speech can be used even when the reported events were not witnessed by the reporter. Reported speech is thus the most important action-reporting device in Nukulaelae discourse.

Reported speech skills are acquired early. From a very early age, Nukulaelae children are sent on errands (*fekau*) from one household to another; they are expected to convey complex verbal messages, repeated exactly as uttered by the sender. If children modify the content of the message in any way, they may be punished. Thus, very early on, children learn to repeat another person's speech exactly as originally uttered and to follow metalinguistic directives.

Instructions for errands are not the only context in which children are exposed to directives to repeat speech strings. Teasing often consists of one person "feeding" lines to another, who then repeats the utterance exactly as uttered by the prompter. Children and adults take part in these events, both as teasers and victims:

(3) [Tuufue and Sina, two female caretakers, are teasing 3-year-old Vave
     about not knowing who his blood parents are. T first prompts S,
     who then prompts the author to ask Vave who his parents are.]
 → T: ((prompting Sina)) *Ssili laa: mo ko(o)i tena tamana*
                          Ask (him) who his father

     mo tena maa:tua.
     and his mother (are).
     S: ((to V)) *Kooi tou tamana mo tou maatua?*
                 Who (are) your father and your mother?
     V: (   )
     T: ((to Vave)) *KOOI TOU TAMANA!*
                    Who is your father?
     [...]
 → S: ((prompting Niko)) *Ia, hai! hai te fesili EE Niko!*
                         Now, ask, ask the question, Niko!
     N: ((to Vave)) *KOOI!*
                    Who (are they)?

Knowledge and inference on Nukulaelae

Nukulaelae islanders are remarkably wary of voicing conjectures, inter-
pretations, and inferences from observable facts. Interpreting and conjec-
turing are behaviors that children, adolescents, and irresponsible gos-
sipers engage in; they are two components of *fakavalevale* ("irresponsible,
demented, asocial") behavior. Similar restrictions exist against inter-
preting the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others. As in Samoa (Ochs,
1982), meaning is rarely assigned to the babbling of infants, other than as
being responses to physiological stimuli like hunger. While "conver-
sations" between preverbal infants and adults do occur, turn-taking is
manipulated so that the child's turns appear to be repetitions of the
adult's turns, rather than original contributions to the "conversation."
While individuals are occasionally recognized as having intentions
guiding their verbal and nonverbal behavior, the nature of these inten-
tions is not commonly speculated upon. Intentionality is infrequently
considered in the evaluation of behavior (see Duranti, 1983b, for similar
remarks about Samoa).

One consequence of avoiding inferences about the behavior and speech
of others is that thoughts are almost exclusively self-reported. The
thoughts of others are generally not reported. Furthermore, when
thoughts are self-reported, they are constructed like reported speech; the
boundary between reported thought and reported speech is marked
neither lexically nor grammatically.

Knowledge, including inferential knowledge, is owned communally on
Nukulaelae. It is not up to single individuals, whatever their status, to
assign meaning to an event. Individuals inherit knowledge from the
group. As a single member of the group, one does not have the power to
modify or add to that pre-determined knowledge. Only socially-
recognized knowledge and inference are acceptable. For example, in
narrating traditional history, Nukulaelae islanders are always careful to
frame[5] their narratives as reports of what others have told them; they
stress that they are conveying public knowledge and not their own
interpretation of the story:[6]

(4) [Beginning a historical narrative]
    A te tala ne lagona nee au mai i toeaina i ttaimi teelaa
    [This is] the story that I heard from old men about
    maafai koo oko ki te aso fakamanatu o Niuooku.
    the period of commemoration of the Niuooku [affair].
    Teenaa laa e maasani saale toeaina o ttuu i loto o te
    Now, old men usually get up in the   .
    maneapa o fakamatala nee laatou a te tala teenaa [...]
    maneaba and they re-tell this story [...]

By using such frames, the speaker signals that the legitimacy of the
discourse stands on collective, rather than personal, authority. As will be
seen below, reported verbal interactions must similarly be presented as
faithful, integral, and authentic renditions.

Finally, linguistic action and social action are seen as one and the same
on Nukulaelae. The islanders are concerned with the contextual appro-
priateness of speech, and with its consequences, as much as with its
descriptive uses. Social performativity (in status negotiation, in the
management of identity, etc.) is as important a component of speech as its
indexicality.[7] In the context of this fact, the productive use in everyday
talk of reported speech, as the linguistic representation of both linguistic
and social actions, can be seen as a reflection of the intimate relationship
of linguistic and social action in Nukulaelae culture. The identification of
linguistic action with social action also implies that both are on a par with
respect to evidentiality and responsibility: individuals are as responsible
for their speech (even when they are merely reporting someone else's) as
they are accountable for their social deeds.

I have described how reported speech activities play an important role in
Nukulaelae verbal interactions, and have made a number of ethnographic
observations as background to the linguistic analysis to follow: Nukulaelae
islanders avoid interpreting one another's linguistic and nonlinguistic
behavior; knowledge on Nukulaelae is owned communally; and no clear
boundary exists on Nukulaelae between linguistic action and social action.

The structure of Nukulaelae reported speech

I shall now describe the strategies used in framing reported speech and the ways in which affective meaning is communicated in reporting speech. The goal of this discussion is to analyze how the ideologies described in the previous section are reflected in the linguistic organization of reported speech.

Reported-speech frames

Nukulaelae Tuvaluan has grammatical strategies to express both direct and indirect quotation. As in English, indirect quotation is syntactically more "fused" (Givón, 1980) or "bound" (Haiman and Thompson, 1984) to the non-quoted environment than direct quotation: an indirect quote is generally subordinated to the framing clause; and it depends on the non-quoted discourse for intonation, pronominal reference, and time-and-place expressions (but not tense, as will be seen later):

(5) [Elicited examples]
  a. *Muna mai a Ioane 'au kaa fano maataeao'.*
      word Dxs of Ioane I Irr go   tomorrow
      "Ioane said to me, 'I am leaving tomorrow'."

  b. *Muna mai a Ioane iaa ia kaa fano i te suaa aso.*
      word Dxs of Ioane that he Irr go on the other day
      "Ioane said to me that he was leaving the following day."

In Nukulaelae discourse, there is a clear preference for direct quotation over indirect quotation. Indirect quotation is most often utilized to embed a quotation in another quotation. It is sometimes used to quote a communicative act which the reporter did not witness. Indirect quotation, furthermore, is restricted to one-sentence, one-turn quotations; for quoted discourse that consists of more than one sentence or turn, direct quotation must be used. Thus Nukulaelae speakers prefer a linear style (Voloshinov, 1929[1978]), which allows them to maintain a clear distinction between authorial voice and reported voice. This reflects the Nukulaelae concern for the *presentation of reported speech as an authentic reflection of the original utterance*. This concern, however, only dictates that the *wording* of the quote be an accurate (or at least plausibly accurate) rendition of the original utterance,[8] thus leaving other aspects of discourse structure open for manipulation.

Speech-act expressions

The same concern is reflected by the form of speech-act expressions which frame reported speech. Quoted discourse, whether direct or indirect, is typically introduced by an expression which identifies the quoted voice and marks the boundary between the quote and the rest of the discourse. The most common such expression is a noun phrase, consisting of the noun *pati* or *muna* "word" in the plural, modified by a possessive noun-phrase or pronoun referring to the quoted voice. The speech-act expression and the quoted string form an equational structure (equivalent to copular uses of *be* in English):

(6) *Muna a Tito 'Ia, naa ttoki laa ttuaakoi!'*
      words of Tito OK do plant then the + boundary
      "Tito said, 'OK, get that boundary planted, then!'"

Hence a reported-speech string is typically presented as being *equal to the wording* of the original utterance. Reported-speech strings may also be introduced by the polysemic verb *fai* (in free distribution, in the Nukulaelae dialect, with the form *hai*) "to say, to tell, to do, to make, etc."

Occasionally, when the identity of the participants in the reported conversation has been clearly established in the previous reported turns, the speech-act expression is omitted between two turns of a directly reported conversation. In such cases, the change of turn is marked by changes in pitch and volume from one turn to the next:

(7) [Reporting an interaction that had taken place in Funafuti, Tuvalu's capital]
      Ana muna ((whispered)) '*sss*!
      my speech   Exc
      ((creaky voice, mid-high pitch)) *taaua   kaa alo!'*
                                        we-2-i Irr go
      ((normal voice and pitch)) *Muna a Moose*
                                  speech of Moose
      ((mid-high pitch, rising)) *'Ki fea?'*
                                  to where?
  → ((creaky voice)) *'Taa   alo ki te malae.*
                        we-2-i go to the green
      ((loud, addressing a third party)) *Tautai!*
                                          Tautai
      MAAUa nei kaati   kaa ttipa aka peelaa,'
      we-2-e here perhaps Irr stroll please thus
  → ((loud, asking for clarification)) *'E   AA?'*
                                          Nps what?

→   ((slightly creaky)) *'Maaua nei   kaa ttipa aka*
                         we-2   here Fut stroll please
peelaa ki te   airport i   koo'
thus   to the airport at there
→   ((high pitch, low voice)) *'Io!'*
                               yes

"He said, 'Hey! Let's go!' Moose then said, 'Where to?' (He answered,) 'Let's go to the village green. [Addressing a third party] Tautai! We are going off to stroll this way.' (Tautai asked,) 'What (did you say)?' (He answered,) 'We are going off to stroll this way to the airstrip.' (Tautai then said,) 'All right.'"

In any other circumstances, when the framing verb is omitted, a self-repair is commonly triggered:

(8)   *'Heki TAA:Itai-'   MUNA a: Tito me   heki taaitai*
       Neg anywhere-near word   of Tiki Cmp Neg anywhere-near
eiloa   ki loto.
indeed to center

"'[The fish] was nowhere near-' Tito said that [it] was nowhere near the center [of the fishing net, and they were already folding the net up]."

An important characteristic of the speech-act expressions used in framing reported speech is that most are straightforwardly descriptive. Both *muna* and *fai*, for example, can introduce statements, questions, commands, and interjections. Unlike speakers of many other languages, Nukulaelae Tuvaluan speakers rarely make use of "graphic introducers," i.e. speech-act verbs which describe the manner in which the quoted string was originally uttered (Tannen, 1986, 1988).[9] The most commonly used speech-act expressions convey little information about the manner in which the quote was originally uttered and are devoid of overt affective meaning. When reporters wish to describe lexically the manner in which the quote was originally uttered, they usually do so before the speech-act verb:

(9)   [Narrating a net-fishing expedition.]
       Au e   mmiti   atu ki ei, ((whisper, high pitch)) *aku mu(na)-*
       I   Nps whisper Dxs to Anp   my word
'sss-! Te kogaa   kanase!'
Exc   the school-of trevally

"I whispered to them, and here were my words, 'Psst! A school of trevallies!'"

The primary role of speech-act verbs is to mark the boundary between the quote and the rest of the discourse.

Quoted discourse is thus most frequently framed by a speech-act expression. The canonical expression used for this purpose is a nominal expression, which is apposed to the quoted string in an equational structure. A number of other framing strategies exist, some of which are more specific in meaning. Speech-act expressions are neutral in affective meaning; their role is limited to marking the boundary between non-reported and reported speech (or between two quoted turns), and between the reported voice and the authorial voice.

Tense

I shall turn now to non-lexical framing strategies and show that, while tense frames reported speech in a transparent but affectively neutral manner, deixis, intonation, and discourse organization are highly sensitive to the affective design of the reporter.

The tense of quoted speech, whether reported directly or indirectly, is always in reference to the situation in which the discourse was originally uttered. Nukulaelae Tuvaluan has no temporal concord system (see Comrie, 1986) regulating the tense of indirect quotations:

(10)   *Ne hai mai mo   ko te kau   kolaa e   olo o   pei   tili.*
       Pst say Dxs Cmp Foc the group those Nps go   Cmp throw fishing-net
       "He told me that it was those guys that were going [lit. are going] net-fishing."

Tense thus functions as a marker of the change in temporal perspective that accompanies changes from non-reported to reported discourse. At the affective level, however, tense does not fulfill any discernible function. In particular, the absence of a tense-concord system does not allow the tense–aspect–mood variations which can be manipulated for affective purposes in many other languages.

Adverbial Deixis

In contrast to the two framing devices seen so far, adverbial deixis has both referential and affective functions. In Nukulaelae Tuvaluan, there are two major deictic adverbs: *mai*, whose unmarked meaning is "towards the current speaker" and *atu* "toward the interlocutor, away from the current speaker." Examples (5), (9), and (10) include occurrences of these adverbs which illustrate their primary use.

Mai and *atu* are also used in many contexts in which neither the speaker nor the interlocutor is involved as a participant in the discourse. Their meaning is thus broader than their directional meaning (see Hohepa, [1981], for similar remarks on the Maori cognates of these two adverbs). The following illustrates such a context:

(11)   *Kaa ttogi atu   nee laatou, kaa ttogi mai*
       Irr barter thither Erg they-3 Irr barter hither
       te lua sefulu seeleni teelaa ki laatou, kaa talia eiloa
       the twenty   shilling that to them-3 Irr allow indeed
       laatou o   olo ki olotou manafa.
       they-3 Cmp go to their land

       "If they exchanged [their land] away (*atu*), and they exchanged [got
       in exchange] (*mai*) the twenty shillings, they'd surely be able to go
       to their land."

This example is taken from a narrative of an early episode of contacts
with Europeans in the nineteenth century (described further in Munro
and Besnier, 1986), in which neither speaker nor interlocutor was
involved. *Mai* and *atu* in such contexts denote, respectively, direction
toward and away from the point of highest empathy (Kuno, 1976) from
the speaker's point of view. In the above example, *mai* is used when the
action if directed towards Nukulaelae people (with whom the narrator
empathizes most), while *atu* is used when the action is oriented away from
them or towards the Europeans.

Deictic adverbs often modify speech-act expressions in reporting
speech, where their affective use is commonly exploited, as illustrated in
the following example:

(12)   *Fakalogo au nei* ((chuckling)) *ki te mea a Mele*
       overhear I   this   to the thing of Mele
       e   fai mai   kiaa Saavave, [...]
       Nps say hither to   Saavave

       "I [then] overheard what Mele told hither (*mai*) to Saavave [...]"

Adverbial deixis, which is common in reported-speech contexts, is a
device that has the dual role of marking directionality (its referential
function) and focus of empathy (its affective function). Note, however,
that to arrive at the affective meaning of deictic adverbs requires inferen-
cing. It is thus covert and indirect, and places the speaker in a position of
diminished responsibility for meaning.

Prosodics

As Bolinger (1982) points out, intonation, and prosody in general, is
"fundamentally emotive" (1982:530). Not surprisingly, in many speech
communities, prosodics is privileged in the communication of affective
meaning. On Nukulaelae, it is readily exploited as an affect-communicat-
ing channel in reported discourse.

As discussed earlier, Nukulaelae islanders overtly prescribe that
another person's speech must be presented as the faithful rendition of the
original utterance. Nukulaelae reported speech is seen as a change of
voices where the voice of the quoted party takes the floor, thus back-
grounding the voice of the reporter. This norm appears to have a direct
effect on the prosodic structure of reported-speech constructions: tran-
sitions from non-reported to reported speech (and vice versa) are accom-
panied by sharp prosodic changes, as the reporter strives to present a
quote as originally uttered. In the following excerpt, the quoted discourse
is strikingly divergent from the rest of the discourse in its intonational
contour and pitch:

(13)   [Narrating a land-boundary dispute.]
       ((slowly falling pitch)) *Muna a Tito,* ((high pitch, rising)) *'Ia!*
                                 word of Tito   well
       ((high pitch, falling)) *naa ttoki laa ttuaakoi.'*
                                do erect then the + boundary
       ((mid-low pitch)) *Tafuke aka a   Tautai, puke te lau paepae,*
                          move then Cnt Tautai grab the boundary + stone
       palele   ne ttoki.
       finished Pst erect

       "Tito say, 'OK, get that boundary marked!' Tautai then moved
       forward, grabbed the boundary stone, and (before you know it) he
       had (the boundary stone) erected."

Prosodics thus serves as a framing device for reported speech.

But the affective content of prosodic structure also plays an important,
off-record, and covert role in Nukulaelae reported speech. Like members
of many other speech communities (Davitz, 1964), Nukulaelae islanders
associate subjectively active feelings with high pitch, flaring timbre, and a
fast rate of speech, while passive feelings are associated with low pitch,
soft voice, and a slow rate of speech. As discussed elsewhere (Besnier,
1990b), the overt display of subjectively active feelings of any kind is given
a negative evaluation on Nukulaelae. Responsible adults do not let their
emotions and internal states interfere with their social relationships and
affect others. A responsible person is calm and unemotional.

Nukulaelae speakers exploit these norms in reporting one another's
speech. In reporting the speech of a person whom they wish to present in a
negative light (as often happens in gossip), Nukulaelae speakers attribute
to the quoted speech the prosodic structure of a less than rational
individual. Observe the pitch, tempo, and voice quality of the reported
string in the following example:

(14)   [Narrating a first acquaintance with a flush toilet.]

((normal pitch, normal tempo)) *Muna mai*
                               speech Dxs
((high pitch, animated tempo)) *'PPAKI-! PPAKI-!*
                               pluck   pluck
((whisper)) *Taapaa ee!*
                Exc
((very high pitch)) *A te mea laa maa ppuna mai kia AKU!'*
                   Cnt the thing then Prc jump Dxs to me

"(She) tells (her), 'Flush! flush! Hey! But the (water) is going to jump at me!'"

Prosodic structure is indeed one of the primary means through which Nukulaelae speakers communicate affect in reported discourse. Crucially, it is also one of the levels of linguistic structure that are most elusive to conscious metapragmatic awareness (Silverstein, 1981) and, in consequence, one for which speaker responsibility is least imputable. Prosodics is a level of linguistic structure at which the voice of the reporter is allowed to infiltrate the reported discourse.

Pragmatic organization of quoted discourse

Similarly, the pragmatic organization of quotes (length, degree of planning, rhetorical style) carries affective meaning in Nukulaelae discourse. Contrast the two following quoted turns, taken from the report of a confrontation between the reporter and a third party (the transition between the turns is indicated by the arrow in the left margin):

(15) *Aku muna 'Luisa, lle:i,* (0.3) *i   au ne m- manako*
      my speech Luisa good   because I Pst   want
      kee:fetaui taaua i Fagaua kae:- mea aka laa koe
      Sbj meet we-2-i at Fagaua but   thing then then you
      koo tele mai ki Olataga. (1.2) *Ko au fua e: faipati atu*
      Inc run Dxs to Olataga   Foc I just Nps speak Dxs
      kiaa koe ki luga i te: (0.3) *peelaa mo tau: fekau*
      to you about the   like   your message
      ne avatu   nee Samasone.'
      Pst transmit Erg Samasone
→ (2.2) ((high pitch)) *Muna mai 'io-,* ((fast)) *io- io-!'*
                  say Dxs yes   yes yes
      ((laughter)) *(Muna) hh a tou fafi(ne)!*
               say   Cnt your woman

"I said, 'Luisa, good [I am glad we are running into each other], because I very much wanted to meet you on Fagaua but – the thing

---

is that you had come over here to Olataga. I just wanted to talk to you about, like, your complaint [that I heard about] through Samasone.' She says, 'Yes, oh, yes – yes –!' That's what she said, the woman!"

The speaker's self-quoted discourse has many features characteristic of planned discourse (Ochs, 1979): the turn is long, the sentences complex, and repetition of words and repairs is kept to a minimum. The turn also has the prolix quality characteristic of rhetorical speaking on Nukulaelae.

In contrast, the other quoted turn is highly unplanned: it is short, erratic in tempo (which speeds up half-way through the turn), and full of repetition. The following are two further examples of the same speaker as in example (15) reporting the utterances of two other speakers to whom he strives to attribute, as in (15) above, emotional, unpredictable, and generally negative character traits:

(16) *Muna mai. 'Koo hee:ai- HEE:ai he: mea*
      say   Dxs Inc Neg   Neg   a thing
      e: (0.7) *onosai   e:i-'*
      Nps   suppress-feeling Anp

"[She] says to me, 'there is nothing – no harbored feelings between us any more.'"

(17) ((high pitch)) *Muna mai 'heeai laa hoku ssee   i ei,* (0.5)
                     say Dxs Neg then my wrong in Anp
      ((mid-high pitch)) *e   ssee   eiloa ko: ko laatou'*
                  Nps wrong indeed Foc Foc they-3

"She says, 'I did nothing wrong, they were the ones that did something wrong.'"

The rhetorical style of a quote is a tool exploited by the reporter to communicate affect. The work of Sapir (1927) and of Friedrich and Redfield (1978) has shown how rhetorical style is an important communicative index of personality. By attributing the rhetorical features of the styles of presentation that are evaluated either positively or negatively by members of a speech community, the reporter attributes certain personal characteristics to the quoted individual. The rhetorical style of quotes allows the reporter's voice to "leak" onto the quote, and yields what Bakhtin ([1934] 1981:364) calls a *parodic stylization* of the quoted voice. This parodic stylization enables the reporter to manipulate the audience's perception of the quoted individual.

Table 7.1 *Structure and function in Nukulaelae reported speech*

Framing device	Example	Referential function	Affective function
quoting strategy	direct, indirect	neutral	socially acceptable reporting
speech-act expression	*muna* 'word', *fai* 'say'	boundary marking	neutral
tense and mood	*e* "present", *kaa* "irrealis"	shift in point of reference	neutral
deictic adverb	*mai* 'hither', *atu* 'thither'	direction of action	focus of empathy
prosodics	intonation, pitch	boundary marking	presentation of quoted speaker
reporting style	lengthy/planned, brief/unplanned	description of quoted turn	presentation of quoted speaker

Reported speech: overt and covert meaning

In the previous section, I presented various features of the structure of Nukulaelae reported speech. I illustrated how each functioned as a key that can communicate referential meaning, affective meaning, or both. Table 1 summarizes the main points that were made in the discussion of these features.

What transpires from the overview of these features is that they do not communicate referential and affective meaning to the same degree. As Du Bois (1986) shows, quoting involves a transfer of control (and of the focus of scrutiny) over some (but not all) levels, the affective level being, in the case study I have presented here, the one level over which control is not transferred to the quoted voice. While some linguistic strategies clearly function as keying devices that signal whether a particular string is reported or not, others do not have such a function; while some keys are affectively neutral, others are deliberately used by speakers to communicate affect. Contrast, for example, the quotative verb or expression (shown to function in most circumstances as a reported-speech key devoid of affective meaning) with prosodics, whose primary function is to communicate affect. Reported-speech keys thus vary in the extent to which they allow leakage of the quoting voice onto the quoted voice.

Of the various keys which communicate affect, one generalization can be made: they do so in a covert and non-transparent fashion. Instead of communicating affect in reported speech through lexical means or through indirectly reported speech (cf. Bakhtin's pictorial style), Nukulaelae speakers communicate affect in prosody, deictic adverbs, and the

rhetorical style of the quote, while maintaining every appearance, at more overt and transparent levels, of presenting an exact rendition of the quoted voice. While adhering to the cultural norm dictating that speech be reported faithfully, Nukulaelae islanders can also superpose affect in a covert off-record manner, in a manner that is also most likely to escape scrutiny. Thus Nukulaelae speakers betray an intense awareness (whether conscious or unconscious) of the relative evidential load of various keys in reporting discourse.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to exploit insights from Bakhtinian literary theory on reported speech in an analysis of the use of reported speech in Nukulaelae everyday discourse. I have shown how, like the Western novelists upon whom Bakhtin focuses, Nukulaelae speakers exploit the inherent polysemy of linguistic signs: not only does language carry informational value, but it is also used to pass judgments, to present personalities, and to negotiate the degree to which one is accountable for these. Many, if not most, units of linguistic structure can be used for far more than one communicative purpose at the same time, and successful communicators in particular speech communities constantly exploit this polysemy. How different linguistic signs may be exploited for each of these purposes appears to be culture-dependent, and merits further investigation.

My analysis of fragments of Nukulaelae discourse has highlighted the relationship between the quoting voice, the quoted voice, and selected formal features of the discourse, particularly those that are foregrounded in the communication of affective meaning. I identified several pivotal aspects of the structure of Nukulaelae reported speech, some of which "overlap" with one another in real time, others of which occur in close proximity to one another. These formal features, which can be isolated through a close, grammatically informed microanalysis of natural discourse, provide a certain polysemic "density" to moments in the interactional space where reported speech becomes salient, in that the meaning of what is said becomes complex and multiple when speakers use reported speech.

Furthermore, formal features of discourse are tied in a complex manner of the polyphony of voices that pervades all discourse (as Bakhtin tells us). This polyphony is particularly complex in reported speech. What I have shown here is that the relationships that are thus established between voices and formal features place the former in different positions of responsibility *vis-à-vis* meaning. In everyday talk on Nukulaelae Atoll, the more affectively charged features are also the least transparent, and thus

the least likely to become the target of interlocutors' scrutiny. Features which remain in the foreground, which are left open to scrutiny, typically are affectively neutral. They are also, in some sense, the least "interesting" aspects of the discourse from both the native interlocutor's and the analyst's points of view. Thus, in the same discourse "move" (e.g. the act of reporting what someone else said), speakers can negotiate the degree to which they take responsibility for different aspects of meaning (Hill and Irvine, this volume), and the way in which they do so will be highly constrained by societal norms: how and when one should communicate affectivity, the extent to which interactions in particular contexts are viewed as "on record," and so on.

I am not of course suggesting that Nukulaelae islanders are unique in the ways in which they negotiate responsibility for the affective components of reported speech. In fact, the patterns described in this chapter may be found to various degrees in many cultures. I have attempted to describe reported speech and affect in one cultural setting as a plea for further research in other cultural settings. Much research remains to be done before a typology of reported-speech framing strategies and of "affect-leaking" strategies can be established, and before general correlative patterns can be sought that link cultural ethos and symbolic form. This research will need to address also how such categories as gender and age are interwoven with issues of language ideology and language structure in particular speech communities, questions which I have ignored in this preliminary effort.

Further work needs to focus on the relationship between language structure, language use, and sociocultural ideologies of discourse in other contexts which centralize "replaying" and the communicative "embeddings" that characterize replays, of which speech reporting is but one instance (Goffman, 1974:530–1). Indeed, replaying activities are central to the ethnographic experience, which typically relies heavily on informants' descriptions and interpretations of everyday events, cultural concepts, and ideologies, and the representation of social action by native · actors (Briggs, 1986). How responsibility, affect, and language structure are intertwined in these replays deserves the sort of scrutiny I have given to Nukulaelae reported speech in this chapter.

APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS

Transcription conventions

(1.2)	length of significant pause in seconds
word-	abrupt cut-off
word	forte volume
WORD	fortissimo volume
hhh	exhalation
.hhh	inhalation
wo::rd	non-phonemic segment gemination
?	rising pitch (not necessarily in a question)
,	slightly rising pitch
.	falling pitch (not always at the end of a sentence)
!	animated tempo
=	turn latching
//	beginning and end of turn overlap
((*text*))	information for which a symbol is not available
((high))	dominant pitch level of utterance string
((creaky))	voice quality
( )	incoherent string
(word)	conjectured string
→	position of illustrative element

Interlinear morphological glosses

Anp	anaphoric pronoun	Nps	non-past
Cmp	complementizer	Prc	precautionary
Cnt	contrastive marker	Pst	past
Dxs	deictic adverb	Sbj	subjunctive conjunction
Erg	ergative case	2	dual
Exc	exclamation	3	plural
Foc	focus marker	i	first-person inclusive pronoun
Inc	inchoative	e	first-person exclusive pronoun
Irr	irrealis	+	morpheme boundary
Neg	negative (ad)verb		

NOTES

1 Many questions remain unanswered regarding the extent to which Bakhtin was himself the author of volumes published under Voloshinov's and Medvedev's names. The controversy is summarized in Clark and Holquist (1984).

2 A third major reporting style is free indirect quotation ("She stopped; was that the car she had seen yesterday?"), the nature of which has been the topic of much debate in literary circles (e.g. Cerquiglini, 1984). In free indirect quotation, the two voices are maximally blurred, thus allowing for even greater manipulation of the quoted message. Although there are instances in my corpus of Nukulaelae texts of constructions which resemble free indirect discourse, I shall not discuss them here for lack of space.

3 While some writers (e.g. Burke, 1935) merge the social and the affective components, Irvine (1982a) presents convincing arguments for treating them as distinct categories.

4 The examples cited in this paper are taken from a corpus of texts from various Nukulaelae spoken and written genres, amounting to approximately 500,000 words of text. Most example used here are from unelicited conversations and elicited oral narratives. A key to abbreviations and transcription conventions is provided in the appendix. Most of the personal names that appear in the examples have been changed.

5 "Frame" refers to the communicative signals indicating how an utterance or action must be interpreted (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974).

6 Occasionally, narrators or conversationalists will express their own opinions about a particular event in overt ways. These will be carefully marked as distinct from the event narration and will occur only in private off-record contexts.

7 This is reported to be also true of other Pacific cultures like Samoa (Duranti, 1983b), and the Ilongots (Rosaldo, 1982).

8 It is significant that, when Nukulaelae islanders speak about language or utterances, they speak of it as a set or string of words (*pati* or *muna*).

9 Graphic introducers do exist in Tuvaluan (see Verschueren, [1984] for a partial list). However, they differ from their English counterparts in at least two ways. Firstly, they do not have the evaluative function which English graphic introducers have (Tannen, 1986, 1988). Secondly, their number is more restricted; witness the phenomenally large inventory of English graphic introducers described by Wierzbicka (1987).

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Hogbin, H. Ian (1936) 'Mana', *Oceania*, 6 (3): 241–74.
Howard, Alan (1985) 'History, myth and Polynesian chieftainship: the case of Rotuman kings' in *Transformations of Polynesian Culture*, ed. Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, Auckland: Polynesian Society Memoir no. 45, pp. 39–77.
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Valeri, Valerio (1983) 'Review of *Anuta: Social Structure of a Polynesian Island* by Richard Feinberg', *Pacific Studies* 7(1): 163–5.

Woolf, Henry Bosely (ed.) (1973) *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam.

3   Authority and Egalitarianism: Discourses of Leadership on Nukulaelae Atoll

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Polynesian societies are commonly represented in traditional anthropological depictions as founded on highly visible systems of hierarchy and stratification. While cross-societal differences are acknowledged in the degree to which hierarchy is elaborated, and while the reasons for this elaboration are the subject of debate, Polynesia, as typified presumably by such societies as Samoa and Tonga, remains a textbook case of centralized chiefly systems. In recent publications, some scholars have subjected these traditional characterizations to critical scrutiny (see Howard and Kirkpatrick, 1989; Marcus, 1989, for overviews), and these re-evaluations have mitigated the classic depiction of Polynesian social structures. For example, even in societies of the region where chieftainship (and hierarchy in general) is most elaborated, it rests on at least two broad parameters, which Marcus (1989), echoing analyses advanced by Firth in past decades (1949, 1960a, 1979), terms *kingliness* and *populism* (see Feinberg, Chapter 2 this volume, for further discussion). In a particular society, more weight may be given to one parameter than to the other, and each parameter may manifest itself variously across the societies of the region. An important consequence of this account is is that Polynesian chieftainship and its concomitant categories are not monolithic entities, but multidimensional concepts.

Delving further into the ideology and praxis of Polynesian chieftainship and hierarchy, some researchers have identified ambiguities and contradictions, even in Polynesian societies traditionally recognized as highly stratified. The resulting conflicts undermine the textbook presentation of Polynesian chieftainship as essentially stable over time and space. Shore (Chapter 5 this volume) presents a compelling example from Samoa: there, the social order is constantly

subverted by its very own fracture zones, and consequently break-downs, stresses and negotiations keep disrupting social life, a state of affairs that the kingly–populist model fails to account for.

There are also Polynesian societies where chieftainship and hier-archy are so fundamentally problematic that, at first blush, contem-porary views of Polynesian leadership and social order do not even seem to apply. This chapter focuses on one such case. I shall investi-gate here the historical antecedents and contemporary ideologies of leadership and authority on Nukulaelae, an atoll of the Tuvalu group on the fringe of Polynesia, populated today by about 350 people. Discourses of leadership and authority on Nukulaelae present ten-sions and contradictions, the resolution of which makes the business of being a leader in this community a very difficult task. The last century of Nukulaelae's history is characterized by political and social reversals, a symptom of the ambivalence towards authority extant in contemporary Nukulaelae culture. This ambivalence is created by a basic suspicion of authority offset by a frequently articulated longing for a strong leadership. I shall suggest that the coexistence of these two apparently contradictory discourses is related to (but not neces-sarily caused by) the traumatic upheavals that Nukulaelae experi-enced in its relatively brief history of contact with the outside world. I shall also show how discursive contradictions are dealt with in the practice of leadership as I have witnessed it since beginning fieldwork on the atoll in 1979.

The arguments I develop in this chapter rest in large part on analyses of Nukulaelae discursive practices. My use of the term 'discourse' is inspired in part from the meaning which post-modernist thinkers have attached to the term (see Foucault, 1969, 1980), i.e. a corpus of ideas that represents the normalization of a community's institutionalized notion of truth. Discourse is articulated most ex-plicitly, although not exclusively, in talk. I will thus seek an under-standing of political organization and practice in talk produced in political contexts (e.g. in meetings of various sorts) and in talk reflecting on political practice (e.g. gossip focusing on the political action of leaders, accounts offered to the ethnographer). The atten-tion I pay to Nukulaelae discursive practices may be criticized as too literal-minded, too 'surface-structure' oriented. However, with many theoreticians (e.g. Ortner, 1984), I maintain that much of culture resides in the articulation of explanations, in the verbal construction of reality that members engage in for themselves, for each other, and for outsiders. In short, to paraphrase Foucault (1969: 39), why a particular set of discursive practices should exist rather than

alternative practices is highly significant in and of itself, in that their existence is constitutive of the structure of society. In addition, a discursive approach is particularly appropriate here, given the very nature of the data. Indeed, Nukulaelae discourses of authority, egalitarianism and leadership are fraught with apparent contradic-tions and mapping problems between ideology and praxis, a state of affairs that a discursive approach is particularly well suited to analyze.[1]

Nukulaelae discourse on political action is dominated by two ideological undercurrents, each of which calls for distinct social action. On the one hand, Nukulaelae people express the need for a strong authority structure for their community; on the other, they maintain a strongly egalitarian ideology, at least among members of the same age and gender group. This chapter opens with a historical survey of Nukulaelae social and political life since contact, which has been characterized by major demographic, social, political and eco-nomic discontinuities. This overview will serve as the background for an understanding of contemporary ideologies of leadership, which I then describe. Lastly, I show how the conflictual nature of Nukulaelae political ideology is dealt with in political practice.

I will illustrate the practice of Nukulaelae leadership in two differ-ent contexts. In the first, leadership is enacted, at a very microscopic level, in the action of the president of the highest-level organization of the atoll's women, the Women's Council. The second concerns the leadership structure of the entire atoll, which is predominantly under the control of older men, namely the chief and the Council of Elders. The presidency of the Women's Council and the chieftainship of the island community are only two instances in which questions of leadership arise in contemporary Nukulaelae society, and there are many other areas of social life in which struggles over the meaning of leadership are enacted. Numerous organizations emerge and fade away in rapid succession on the atoll (in the same manner that the leadership of the atoll community itself is in constant state of flux, as will be discussed presently). The membership of these organizations cross-cuts the community in complex patterns. (Hooper (1969) and Huntsman (1969) describe similar patterns for Tokelau, suggesting that they may indeed be characteristic of atoll societies.) Some of these institutions occasionally attain such importance in the social and economic life of the community that they can overshadow, for a while at least, the most fundamental organizational institutions. While this study focuses on only two institutions, the patterns described here are characteristic of leadership in all others as well.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Because Nukulaelae (and the rest of Tuvalu) was not missionized by Westerners, and because it stands apart from major Pacific trade routes, it was never subjected to the large influx of literate eye-witnesses from whom we have inherited voluminous accounts of life in other parts of Polynesia around the time of contact. Consequently, information on the atoll's pre-contact social organization is extremely scant. Even oral traditions are remarkably uninformative on the topic; contemporary Nukulaelae Islanders' representations of their pre-contact past are heavily laden with Christian ideology. Events reported to have taken place in pre-Christian days are presented as 'preparations' for the advent of Christianity; Nukulaelae accounts, be they oral or written (e.g. Tinilau, 1983, and other chapters in the same volume), bear suspicious resemblance to the type of discourse one finds in journals of the more rigid and ethnocentric missionaries who roamed the Pacific frontiers in the nineteenth century.

In addition, Nukulaelae historical memory underwent a major discontinuity around the time of contact. In 1863, four decades after initial contact with the Western world (in 1821), approximately 250 islanders, out of a total estimated at 300, were carried off by Peruvian slavers ('Blackbirders') to the island mines of Sala y Gomez, off the coast of Peru, from which none ever returned (Maude, 1981: 74–82; Munro, 1982: 63–79). Other islands of the region suffered greatly at the hands of these slavers in the early 1860s, but probably none was as devastated by slaving as Nukulaelae. According to a missionary who visited Nukulaelae in 1870, most able-bodied adults were taken away, leaving only older people and children: '[T]he strong men and women were advised to leave their small children in charge of the aged. In some cases they did not; in others the men went, and left their wives and children behind' (Whitmee, 1871: 11).

The raid was followed by further hardship not unrelated to the difficulties involved in maintaining a stable system of production with the tiny remaining population: Nukulaelae people became involved in an unfortunate contractual relationship with the German firm Godeffroy & Sohn, which deprived them of the largest islet of the atoll between 1865 and 1890 (Munro, Iosefa and Besnier, 1990); the atoll was devastated several times by major hurricanes in 1883 and 1886 (McLean and Munro, 1991); and the survivors of the Peruvian raid suffered several waves of famine, to which all other factors probably contributed directly.

In the midst of these traumatic events, the London Missionary Society dropped off the first Samoan religious teacher on the atoll in 1865. As elsewhere in Southern Tuvalu, traditional tokens of chieftainship, such as the wearing of precious pearl-shell fish-lure necklaces (*paa kasoa*) and the right to the head of any turtle caught, were soon transferred from the chief to the pastor. As Goldsmith (1989: 226–76) argues, the arrival of Samoan pastors in Southern Tuvalu had some of the trappings of that of the stranger-king – to use Sahlins' (1981) appropriation of Dumézil's (1949) metaphor. Thus, while Samoan pastors established a hegemonic relationship over their adoptive communities, the extent to which they were able to appropriate power and authority for themselves is open to question. Today, the extent of the pastor's influence on community politics and everyday affairs is carefully and subtly controlled by the community. Equally open to question is the extent to which the social changes associated with the pastors' arrival were locally motivated or coerced by the pastors, who, in true Samoan fashion, saw themselves as infinitely superior to the heathen atoll-dwellers.

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, it remains the case that Nukulaelae experienced major demographic, social, political and probably cultural discontinuities between 1860 and the turn of the century.[2] These discontinuities not only explain why contemporary Nukulaelae historical memory begins abruptly with the early 1860s, but also have implications for a reconstruction of the historical trajectory of the atoll's leadership structure. What can be pieced together of Nukulaelae's pre-Christian past suggests a loosely hierarchical social structure headed by a chief, selected from among the members of one particular clan or kin group, who ruled with the help of a council of elders. Chieftainship was based on a mixture of ascription and achievement, and chiefly as well as non-chiefly descent was reckoned bilaterally with a patrilineal bias. In short, Nukulaelae society was structured like other atolls of Western Polynesia (cf. Sahlins, 1958), exhibiting the least amount of hierarchical elaboration in the spectrum of Polynesia's systems of social organization.

There is evidence that Nukulaelae's political structure, along with every other aspects of social life, was seriously affected by the events of the early 1860s. First, the personnel associated with high-ranking positions was seriously reduced by the Blackbirding raid. While there is a place in contemporary historical memory for Tafalagilua, the chief during whose tenure the event took place, and while Tafalagilua himself was probably not kidnapped,[3] the chiefly descent group to which he belonged was undoubtedly as decimated by the kidnapping and other disasters of the period as any other descent groups. Today, no one on Nukulaelae claims direct descent from Tafalagilua, who

probably died childless.[4] Tafalagilua was succeeded by his classifica-
tory sister's son (*tuaatina*) Laapana, who was in turn succeeded after
his death in 1897 by the Protectorate-appointed magistrate Malaki.

Second, Nukulaelae's workforce must have been so decimated that
the land tenure system needed to be completely revised. Significantly,
this task was accomplished by two strangers. According to a record
of genealogies (*tusi gafa*) I was fortunate to be able to consult on
Nukulaelae, two men from Funafuti, Vave and Taupo, arrived on
Nukulaelae in the years following the Peruvian raid, and the task of
dividing up the land among 28 remaining Nukulaelae men was
entrusted to them. This turn of events suggests that the Blackbirding
raid and other late-nineteenth-century disasters left the atoll's author-
ity structure so weakened that the task of redistributing the land had
to be entrusted to strangers. For some reason, these strangers appear
not to have established hegemonic control over the rest of the popu-
lation, even though the situation was ideal for a stranger-king
scenario.

Further hardship was created two years after the Blackbirding raid
when Goddefroy & Sohn, a large Hamburg-based corporate venture
that would soon dominate trade in the Pacific, established a coconut
plantation on the largest islet of the atoll, which today is called
Niuooku (i.e. 'New York'). The islet, to the islanders' surprise,
became off-limits to them; since it represents a fourth of the atoll's
total land mass, the local population was deprived of substantial
food-gathering grounds, which accentuated the food crisis already
engendered by the lack of hands to continue the traditional exploita-
tion of land and sea. There were also disagreements between planters
and islanders about the terms of the lease, a classic case of cross-
cultural misunderstanding aggravated by the German planters'
opportunistic duplicity.

However, the plantation left an indelible positive mark on the atoll.
As was customary in nineteenth-century plantations in the Pacific and
elsewhere (cf. Wolf, 1982), the planters did not hire labor locally (in
this case local labor was probably not even available), but imported
contract workers from other Pacific islands, including the Gilbert
Islands, Kosrae, Niue, Rotuma, Samoa and the Marshall Islands.
Many of these workers did not return to their home islands at the end
of their contracts, establishing instead affinal ties with the Nukulaelae
Islanders who had been spared by the Peruvian raid, amongst whom,
conveniently, women predominated. Thus the plantation conve-
niently provided what Nukulaelae was in dire need of, new blood.
Consequently, contemporary inhabitants have numerous kinship ties

on several Pacific islands, many of which are still maintained to this
day.

The situation in which the atoll found itself at the end of the
nineteenth century is thus unusual: virtually every inhabitant was of
non-local ancestry. The Nukulaelae community therefore faced the
task of constructing a common culture despite heterogeneous identi-
ties. All one can say today is that it was achieved with a great deal of
efficiency, as contemporary Nukulaelae society and culture retain no
trace of their eclectic origins.[5] However, one is tempted to speculate
that the heterogeneity of Nukulaelae's population at the turn of the
century must have had some structural impact. For example, it may
have served to undermine decisively the mythical, usurpatory origin
of authority which appears to have worked so well elsewhere in
Polynesia (Sahlins, 1981), in that this type of legitimization would
have been difficult to claim in a context where everyone is of foreign
origin, and hence has the potential of claiming it. However, this
hypothesis remains entirely speculative.

The historical picture that can be reconstructed points to major
disruptions in every aspect of life at the end of the nineteenth century,
followed by a gradual (re)construction over several decades. Little is
known about how the leadership structure fared in this reconstruction
process, although it is likely that it needed as much reinventing as any
other aspect of social life. Tafalagilua's successor Laapana was the
last holder of the pre-contact chiefly title, and his tenure marks the
end of hereditary title holding, even though Nukulaelae people still
speak (in very vague terms) of a chiefly kin group. The identity of this
kin group differs across contexts and persons, but no one expresses
much concern about these discrepancies. In short, whatever remains
of Nukulaelae chieftainship has lost all traces of the kingliness asso-
ciated with chieftainship elsewhere in Polynesia (Marcus, 1989), which
foregrounds the exclusivity, absoluteness and divinely legitimated
character of the chief's person, rank and authority. However, the
kingly attributes of Nukulaelae chiefly authority are very much alive
in what I refer to presently as Nukulaelae's discourse of nostalgia.

In 1892 Laapana signed with his mark a treaty of cession to Britain.
Nukulaelae, where the Samoa-based London Missionary Society
mission was now well entrenched (Brady, 1975: 125), was henceforth
subject to yet another force from abroad – the colonial administra-
tion; it was absorbed into a protectorate in 1892, which became the
Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1916. The colonial authorities
administered Nukulaelae and the rest of the colony with a painfully
meager understanding of their sociopolitical circumstances (cf. Lüem,

Chapter 4 this volume). In particular, colonial authorities at first insisted on seeing a highly hierarchical structure where it might not have existed (Macdonald, 1982: 69–78), at least as long as it suited their purposes (Goldsmith, 1989: 274–5).

During the seven decades of colonial administration, numerous changes took place, of which space precludes a complete description here (for details, see Brady (1974), Macdonald (1982), Munro (1982)). The now defunct chiefly structure was first replaced by a six-person body called the *kau pule*, literally 'group of rulers', a word which in colonial papers appears as *kaubure* or *kaupuli* – mistranscriptions by administrators unfamiliar with (and totally uninterested in) the Tuvaluan language. This body consisted of four appointed elders (*toeaina*) and a colony-appointed magistrate (*faamasino*), and headed by an elected 'chief' (*aliisili*). That the names of these various roles are all borrowings from Samoan is indicative of the influence that the Samoan mission exerted by the turn of the century. Later, wavering between 'traditional' and 'progressive' colonially inspired systems of leadership and political organization, the atoll on several occasions reinstituted and did away with chieftainship, which alternated with an acephalous organization in a pattern strangely reminiscent of Leach's (1954) classic description of the *gumsa* and *gumlao* organizational cycles amongst the Kachin.

The rapidity and ease with which these seemingly fundamental changes took place pose particularly thorny questions, which the dearth of data on the socioeconomic background of these changes makes it impossible to answer. How did these changes take place? What triggered them and who enacted them? Are we dealing with a 'closed' cultural system akin to Leach's representation of the Kachin *gumsa–gumlao* cycle? Or should these changes be understood in terms of Nukulaelae's political and economic relationships with the outside world, particularly with colonial authorities and patterns of labor trades, as Nugent's (1982) compelling reanalysis of Leach (1954) suggests in the case of the Kachin (Leach's 1983 rejoinder notwithstanding)? Does ideology derive from political economy in the Nukulaelae situation, or is it the reverse?

The glimmer of an explanation emerges from recent history. In 1983 yet another change took place in the political organization of the atoll, which has had important implications for present-day political life. A 'traditional' chiefly system was reinstituted yet once more, in which an island head (*ulu fenua*)[6] presides over a Council of Elders (*taupulega*, yet another term borrowed from Samoan). The relationship of this organization to the political structures of former

days is very difficult to assess. Suffice it to say that Nukulaelae Islanders speak of it as a re-enactment of the political structure of former times, and that it derives much of its legitimacy, like other instances of invented traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983), from the continuity with former times it allegedly represents. Today, all Nukulaelae political discourse is suffused with talk about the Council of Elders, *tuu mo aganuu* 'customs and traditions', and the *maneapa* (a large, centrally located meeting house in which the Council of Elders sits and which often serves as metonymic reference to the Council),[7] whereas many of these were absent from or incidental to comparable discourse before 1983. The impact of the change goes beyond discourse. For example, after several years of failure of the universal suffrage system, which invariably produced major factional conflicts, elections of the Nukulaelae representative to the Tuvalu national parliament have in recent years been elected *faka-maneapa* 'in the way of the *maneapa*' (i.e. by the Council of Elders). The authority vested in the newly (re)constituted tradition is far-reaching, and receives some legitimization from Tuvalu's central government.

The return to a 'traditional' authority structure was strategically timed. Indeed, in the early 1980s, Nukulaelae began experiencing rapid social and economic changes, some of which resulted from Tuvalu's recent accession to independence. Suddenly, Nukulaelae began having much greater access to 'non-traditional' resources through its links with Tuvalu's central government, which devotes itself principally to redistributing foreign aid, and through young men from the atoll being hired by overseas shipping companies, income from which greatly exceeds the sums which Nukulaelae Islanders were used to handling. The symptoms of change were clear: the traditional open-wall houses, thatched with pandanus leaves, gave way to cement-block houses with corrugated-iron roofs, many of which are still unfinished at the time of writing; in a matter of months, outboard motors and aluminum dinghies almost completely replaced dug-out canoes for transportation and fishing; and cash became an increasingly conspicuous feature of exchanges. These changes introduce tokens of wealth (e.g. money, imported goods) that are more conspicuous than the 'traditional' tokens (e.g. exchange networks). They favor the creation of capitalistic inequality and private enterprise, which, when in the 'wrong' hands, are potentially disruptive of the traditionalism embodied in the revived chiefly system.

Furthermore, beginning with the 1980s, control over resources, principally monetary wealth, gradually shifted to groups over which the 'traditional' economy had least control. Most prominently,

young seamen have suddenly become the key to monetized economic power. Upon their return to the atoll, these men are increasingly reluctant to participate in a political structure which places them at the bottom of the hierarchy, under older people's authority. They raise far-reaching questions about the status quo, demanding a political voice which they did not have in the old order, thereby creating much tension in meetings of the Council of Elders. Because their numbers are still small, their actions remain covert and sabotage-like, as is typical of the political action of powerless groups around the world (cf. Scott, 1985; Comaroff, 1985). Yet the current holders of positions of power and authority view these young men as extremely threatening and disruptive of social order, as will be illustrated presently; and the re-establishment of a more blatantly hierarchical political system has close links to the emergent possibility of a power struggle associated with changing economic conditions. What better way to detract attention from threatening socioeconomic change than to reinvent tradition? However, these changes are also steeped in the discursive contradictions to which I now turn – whether these contradictions antedate changes in political economy, whether they are the result of these changes, or whether they are constitutive of them.[8]

DISCOURSES OF AUTHORITY AND EGALITARIANISM

Nukulaelae people of all ages and both gender groups frequently voice the belief that their community prospered when it was ruled with an iron fist. (The use of the past tense in this characterization will be motivated presently.) I use the term 'prosper' to translate several notions which go hand-in-hand in Nukulaelae discourse: the community prospers when *fiileemuu* 'peace' and *feaalofani* 'mutual empathy, harmony' reign amongst people, and when things are *ttonu* 'right, straight' and generally *gali* 'beautiful'. These vignettes, which are familiar from other Polynesian contexts, compose an idealized picture of life in the best of times. While contemporary Nukulaelae Islanders do not generally talk about the *mmana* of those in authority (the term is reserved for religious contexts), their accounts of the relationship between authority and prosperity indicate that it is mediated by the same processes as are termed **mana* in other Polynesian societies (Firth, 1940; Shore, 1989). In the past, prosperity legitimized authority, while legitimate authority engendered prosperity (cf. Feinberg, Chapter 2 this volume).

The constitutive association of authority and fecundity is mostly

evident in discourse about the past: with surprising unanimity, Nukulaelae people reminisce longingly about the days when any command issued by the chief or the council would be cheerfully complied with by everyone. In those days, they maintain, one heard none of the grumbling and negotiations one witnesses today whenever a community decision is made. (Whether these days ever existed or not is of little relevance here: the important point is that the state of affairs represented by these reminiscences is seen as desirable from a contemporary perspective.) The same metaphors and rhetorical structures emerge over and over again in discourse about the authoritarian past. The rhetorical parallelism of the last three words in following excerpt (*'Fai!' fai eiloo!* ' "Do [this]!" and [it] was done!'), in which a command is reported in direct speech and echoed by a description of the action that followed from the command, is particularly conspicuous in such discourse (it is also frequent in certain other contexts, as when adults *polopolooki* 'admonish' younger people):[9]

> *Peelaa foki laa i aso kolaa, peelaa me e muna tasi fua, nee? Kaafai e muna peelaa, 'Taatou koo- koo ssai te koga teelaa, see- see faaika ki ei', peelaa me seeai ne manatu foki e fai ki ei, nee? 'Fai!' fai eiloo!*
> [T 1991: 1:B: 214–217]
> Like, in those days, only one [imperative] sentence [was needed], you see? If it was said, 'We will reserve that area [of the lagoon], no fishing is to be done there', no one ever voiced an opinion about it, see? *'Do [this]!' [and it] was done!*

In the past, legitimate authority brought *manuia* 'prosperity, fortune' to the atoll, in a pattern reminiscent of ideologies extant elsewhere in Polynesia (Firth, 1940). Under the authority of the right individual, the sea yielded its bounties, so that dolphins and whales, neither of which is consumed as food, were the only things that remained at the bottom of the sea. The land was equally bountiful, coconuts fell like rain, and rats did not reproduce. In short, the principal measurement of the legitimacy of the authority structure is the abundance of food; as in the case of Rotuma and other Polynesian societies (e.g. Feinberg, Chapter 2 this volume), an abundance of food 'is indicative of a proper political order, its scarcity indicative of political malaise' (Howard, 1985: 67).

According to this discourse, the olden days contrast with the present time, when the chief and the Council of Elders have no authority. Today, men in positions of authority 'allow' younger men to voice dissenting opinions, to challenge their authority, and to negotiate orders. According to critics of the contemporary state of

affairs, the elders' words are no longer deeds, they are open to challenge.

Significantly, this *discourse of nostalgia* (a term I am borrowing from Harris, 1989) is not an exclusive characteristic of talk produced by members of the group most likely to be in a hegemonic position in the old order. Rather, it is characteristic of private and public contexts alike, and of opinions articulated by the least powerful as well as by those with the most secure claims to power. The discourse of nostalgia is maintained by everyone on the atoll, including those who are most likely to be barred from political power in a geronto-cratic and gendered authoritarian system, namely women and youn-ger men. Witness how a 25-year-old interviewee, who has established for himself a reputation as a trouble-maker, narrates some of his recent counter-hegemonic exploits, ending with the familiar rhetorical parallelism described earlier:

> *Peelaa kaafai foki e fai peelaa se mea peelaa, 'Taatou e taki taattasi kaauli!', peelaa me se tii s-, te mea teenaa- te mataaupu teenaa e faigataa o fai peelaa, 'Ikaai, kee fai se manatu ki ei'. Kaa fai peelaa, 'Taatou e taki taattasi kaauli moo fai te mea teelaa!' 'Teenaa!', teenaa eeloo!*
> [T 1991: 1:B: 196–200]
> Like, when [someone] says, 'We'll [contribute] a swamp-taro corm each!', there isn't any-, this- [in] this type of event, it was impossible to answer, 'No, let's discuss it [first].' When [someone] says, 'We'll [contribute] a swamp-taro corm each!' *'This is [what's going to happen]!', this is [what happened]!*

Importantly, in the views of the powerless, what the discourse of nostalgia depicts is an ideal state, even though it defines their power-lessness, and not simply the price one has to pay to maintain prosperity and social order.

The positive image of the olden days as a time when authority was strong and, as a result, when life was good is held by every member of the community, including those who would have most to lose in a hypothetical return to authoritarianism. The major difference be-tween invocations of the discourse of nostalgia by the less powerful and by the more powerful is connotational: for the powerless, the deterioration of the authority structure is blamed on the chief and the elders. Thus those in positions of authority do not have much author-ity nowadays because they are not capable of exerting control. In this discourse, there is little room for attenuating circumstances deriving from changing social and economic conditions. However, this

difference is peripheral to the fundamental similarities in the discourse of nostalgia, which is maintained across all segments of the community.

In the very same breath as they articulate the discourse of nostal-gia, Nukulaelae Islanders can also be virulently critical of anyone with pretensions of rising above others. Those whose actions or words suggest even remotely that they see themselves as wealthier, more powerful, better informed or otherwise superior to others are greeted with scorn, mockery and suspicion. Such individuals are considered dangerous, and, in the words of one of my respondents (himself extremely ambitious in the political arena), is *alamati* 'watched in ambush' by everyone else on the atoll:

> *Te fenua teenei ne faaite ki luga i kau papa o mea konei, faaite ki luga i kau papa o mea konaa, paa, e ita ssuaa tino i ssuaa tino maa fano ki luga, e nofo faeloa i te lamatiiga, nee? A ttino teelaa, kaa tasi, sae aka loo se tino, 'Aa!, ko- kooi teelaa?'. 'Ee! Fai (kee) maasei!'. Te- te uiga o te fenua teenei, te mea koo iloa nee au. [. . .] Te mea teenaa ne faanau mai loo mo te fenua teenei. Se uiga tuutuumau eeloo o te fenua teenei. See manako se tino Nukulaelae kee maaluga aka ssuaa tino Nukulaelae iaa ia.*
> [N 1991: 1:A: 591–5, B: 001–005]
> This atoll is made of coral reefs fashioned out of such material, like, people do not want other people to rise above [others], *they keep watching in ambush*, right? That person, one person, who rises to the top, [everyone says], 'Oh!, who's he [to do such a thing]?'. 'Hey! Try to tarnish [him]!'. That's the- the way of this atoll, the way I know it. [. . .] That trait was born with this atoll. It's a trait that's deeply ingrained in this atoll community. Nukulaelae people do not want another person to be higher up than themselves.

These statements are evidence of another set of discursive practices, which I refer to as the *discourse of egalitarianism*.[10]

The discourse of egalitarianism proclaims that everyone in the community is on the same footing, and that no one is entitled to exert any type of authority over others, thus leaving little room for hierar-chy and the exercise of leadership. This discourse can take a variety of forms. For example, it can be articulated in statements about the importance of equality between members of the community, as the last quote illustrates. In addition, in recent years, it has manifested itself in arguments that rest on the constitutional protection of human rights, as I shall illustrate in the next section. Most saliently, the discourse of egalitarianism surfaces in the manipulation of symbolic

tools commonly associated with counter-hegemonic action: ridicule, gossip, contempt and spoofing (cf. Shore, Chapter 5 this volume). For example, whenever the chief himself or the Council of Elders as a body attempt to exert control over the atoll community, they are reproached and ridiculed for being too bossy. The ridicule can be sharp and personal. Any public action by the chief which might betray a claim to power and authority is torn to pieces in gossip, in which Nukulaelae people are particularly adept at casting one another in an extremely negative light (Besnier, 1989a, 1990a, 1994). At times, criticisms of those in positions of authority are clearly motivated by the simple fact that being in that position raises one's station above that of others. Witness the following tirade, in which the speaker rails against the atoll's current authority structure:

> *Nei laa i aso nei, koo tino lima matai o Nukulaelae, kae isi e tino lima matai foolliki, kae toko tasi te matai putaputa, ka ko ia eeloo e lasi kae puta, teelaa e aumai ki te pou i te kogaa loto, fakasagasaga i ei, te mea kee kai saale, kee lasi tena laulau, kee fai ana laauga kee ggali, [. . .]*
> [N 1991: 1:A: 239–45]
> These days, there are [about] fifty heads of household on Nukulaelae, there are fifty small heads of household, and one plump one, the latter is big and fat, he's brought to the post in the middle [of the *maneapa*], he's made to sit there, so that he can keep eating, so that he gets a big leaf tray [during feasts], so that he can make nice speeches, [. . .] [The rest of the sentence contains expletives]

In short, in the discourse of egalitarianism, leaders are reproached for being leaders, because being a leader places them in a higher position than the rest of the community.

Nukulaelae Islanders thus present to themselves and to outsiders a complex discursive field, in which two seemingly incompatible discourses coexist. It is important to emphasize that framing the problem posed by the discursive contradictions in terms of tensions between different contexts does not solve the problem. First of all, Nukulaelae Islanders can switch very quickly, within a single interaction, from one discourse to the other, without any observable change in other aspects of context. The discourse of egalitarianism and the discourse of nostalgia sometimes reinforce one another, even though the enactment of one makes the enactment of the other impossible. Second, discourse and context are in a constitutive relationship: accounting for the coexistence of conflicting discourses

in terms of tensions across contexts only shifts the locus of the problem, because the coexistence of conflicting contexts still remains to be accounted for. Thus, for both descriptive and theoretical reasons, the ideological problem presented here remains a problem of discourse.

The characterization of Nukulaelae's discourses of authority and egalitarianism as 'contradictory', 'incompatible', and 'conflicting' needs to be qualified. Throughout this chapter, I hedge these qualifiers with modifiers like 'seemingly' and 'apparently', because they raise an important problem of representation: to what extent are these discourses contradictory for Nukulaelae Islanders themselves? There is strong evidence that the coexistence of these discourses is as problematic from an emic perspective as it seems from the outside. Indeed, Nukulaelae Islanders themselves talk about this coexistence as a *fakalavelave* 'problem, cause for preoccupation'. Furthermore, the coexistence of two discourses presents serious problems for the practice of leadership and authority, as I shall illustrate in the next section. Contradiction, tension and ambivalence are best viewed as constitutive of Nukulaelae political ideology and practice. Viewing the coexisting discourses as contradictory does not preclude management in praxis, even though the resolution of contradictions might never be achieved.[11]

The coexistence of discourses of nostalgia and egalitarianism is of course not particular to Nukulaelae or to Polynesian atoll societies. Even in Samoa, traditionally viewed as exhibiting one of the most stratified social structures of the Polynesian region, tensions exist between dignified and elaborated manifestations of the political process on the one hand, and a distinctive taste for off-stage satire which caricatures the dignity and elaboration of political life (Shore, Chapter 5 this volume). Shore shows that what takes place off-stage in Samoa is not just a marginal aspect of political life: rather, the tension between on-stage and off-stage social action is constitutive of political life (an analysis also advanced in much of the resistance literature, e.g. Scott, 1985, 1990).[12] The parallel between Shore's description of political action in the Samoan village and certain aspects of the Nukulaelae situation is striking.

What Nukulaelae lacks in comparison with the Samoan village is a built-in system of inequality in the inheritance of chiefly prerogatives and the complex system of entitlement one finds in Samoa. While kept more or less honest by the off-stage presence of potentially subversive satirical discourses, the Samoan political system still guarantees the presence and survival of hierarchy and the ensuing system

of inequality. In Nukulaelae's case, the legitimation of power and authority is considerably more problematic. Authoritarian action and the exercise of power lack a solid foundation, which, even if it existed prior to contact, has been thoroughly undermined by the tormented history of the atoll since contact. As a result, the discourse of egalitarianism has the potential of gnawing at the very base of the authoritarian edifice called for by the discourse of nostalgia, as I shall show in the rest of this chapter. Consequently, being a Nukulaelae leader is no easy task.

NUKULAELAE LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

The coexistence of the two discourses I described in the previous section has obvious but complex implications for the practice of leadership on Nukulaelae. How can leadership function and what shape does it have against a background of discursive contradictions? In this section, I shall explore several ways in which Nukulaelae leaders more or less successfully negotiate the trappings associated with their social roles.

One of the most common ways in which Nukulaelae Islanders in positions of leadership negotiate their difficult station is by avoiding at all costs presenting themselves as speaking or acting on their own behalf. Instead, they invariably present themselves as *sui* 'representative' of a group. The term *sui*, a borrowing from Samoan, has many referents. It is applied to any element of a set which stands in a metonymic or metaphorical relationship to the entire set; possible translations are 'representative, delegate', 'illustration, example', or 'replacement'. Acting as the *sui* of a group has positive connotations: it implies that one is willing to place the concerns of the polity before one's own selfish priorities or before the localized interests of one's kin group. Comparable strategies are found in other communities which emphasize egalitarian ideologies, such as various groups in the Papua New Guinea Highlands (Goldman, 1983: 134; Rumsey, 1986: 290; Strathern, 1975: 199).

The groups which individuals can claim to represent vary in nature from context to context: a person can claim to represent part of the atoll community (but, interestingly, generally not the entire community), small subdivisions of particular groups, or anything in between. The position of *sui* is stressed whenever a leader uses his or her position to take the floor. For example, the chief during my 1991 field sojourns invariably prefaced his speeches in the *maneapa* with some variation of the following utterance: '*e tuu atu moo fai te sui o maaua nei*', 'I am

getting up [to make a speech] as the representative of the two of us here', in which the first-person dual exclusive pronoun *maaua* refers honorifically to the elders seated in his vicinity. This strategy became so much his stock phrase that he was constantly ridiculed about it behind his back. His constant references to the fact that he was speaking as a representative came to be seen as yet another index of the poverty of his speech-making skills and of his inappropriateness in a position of leadership.

Similar patterns are found in expressions referring to *groups* in positions of authority. All members of the community commonly refer to the Council of Elders as *te fenua* 'the atoll community'.[13] Similarly, the Council of Women is not referred to as a council, but as *faafine o te fenua* 'the atoll community's women'. Yet the membership of the Council of Elders excludes most adult women, all children, as well as everyone classifiable as a 'young man' (*tamataene*) or 'young woman' (*tamaafine*). In the same vein, the Council of Women mostly comprises the wives of members of the Council of Elders; younger married women do attend meetings of the council, but are under much pressure to be seen and not heard, to acknowledge and respect the older women's authority with their silent presence. Referring to these bodies with metonymic labels has a legitimizing function: it provides the illusion of adhering to egalitarian ideals, while covertly facilitating the authority of a small subgroup over the rest of the group's membership.

Labelling is a powerful manipulative tool in that, like other features of language, descriptors are in a constitutive relationship to the social categories and institutions they refer to: not only do they reflect these categories, but they also create them, reinforce them and present them in a specific light. However, descriptive labels are not enough; to be maximally effective, the institutions thus labelled must be associated with discourses which confirm, reinforce and reify these labels and their connotations. And indeed, decision-making on Nukulaelae is invariably framed so as to create the illusion that decisions are reached by corporate entities, even when a small group or single individual is ultimately in charge.

The example I use to illustrate this point is extracted from a meeting of the Council of Women, a group which was constituted after the 1983 re-establishment of the 'traditional' political structure, in overt emulation of the Council of Elders. Once a month, this council meets and negotiates such issues as how the next round of feasts should be run, or the number of mats women will have to weave for an upcoming gift to the pastor. The unifying characteristic

of all topics broached during these meetings is that they concern *mea a faafine* 'women's things', the exact definition of which is a complex question beyond the scope of this chapter. The extract I present here is of a meeting during which the president of the council announces the 'program' (*polokalame*) of the Women's Day celebrations to be held the following August. Such programs include fairly rigorous dress codes and regulations of the type of food that should be brought to and consumed during the feasts (words in bold will be analyzed presently):

*(Ei!), i te taeao, lanu tasi katoa eiloo. [. . .] Ttaeao, (taki ttunu mai eiloa te) vai vvela, (kae aumai kkonei kee palu i ei). [. . .] Ia, **gatu lanu tasi!** Heei loo he gatu lanu tasi kee- kee matea atu, peelaa, e isi he mea maasei i ei. A-. Mata eeloo! A ttino teelaa e matea atu he tamaa ila me he taelagoa i tena lanu tasi, **sala**. Tasi ttaalaa. Taatou lanu tasi, **ggali** katoa katoa katoa eiloo. Lanu tasi konei e pei nei, hee toe matea kee pei mai i te- te Aukuso teelaa, nee?, i te Aukuso. Fai eiloo fakallei ttou gatu kee **ggali** taatou.*
[Fono o Faafine 1991: 1:B: 588–600]
(Hmm,) in the morning, everyone will [wear] solid colors. [. . .] In the morning, everyone will boil her own hot water, (and bring it here [to the *maneapa*] for it to be steeped and sweetened). [. . .] So, *clothes of solid colors!* No clothes should be seen with, like, a spot of dirt on it. Hmm. I'm not kidding! Whoever is seen with a spot of dirt or a stain on her solid color *[will be] fined*. One dollar. We all wear solid colors, everything everything everything will be *beautiful*. These solid-colored clothes, they should be different from the ones that were worn last August, right?, last August. Let's get our clothes ready so we can all be *beautiful*.

Several characteristic patterns emerge from the above extract. First, as in many other Nukulaelae contexts, authority is presented as having one purpose: that of enforcing conformity, equality and uniformity, the achievement of which is equated with beauty (*gali*). Second, authority is frequently agentless (cf. Duranti (1990) on Samoan political meetings); authoritative commands sometimes have the structure of statements (e.g. *gatu lanu tasi!* 'clothes of solid colors!'), or bear no overt subject (e.g. *sala* 'will be fined'), in which case I have used in the above translation a passive construction – the closest English equivalent to the original construction. So the voice of authority, which is typically impersonal, owes its existence to the furthering of egalitarianism, the very value which disenfranchises authority. What we are witnessing here is a clever resolution of the

potential conflict between egalitarian and authoritarian ideologies, a resolution in which the latter neutralizes the former by appropriating it. This resolution then becomes political practice, as Foucault (1969) would have predicted, in the service of those that control it.

When the voice of authority is named, it is attributed to the group, and not to an individual: decisions are not made by any single person, but by the entire group. As is the case of political talk in Western societies (Seidel, 1975; Urban, 1986; Wilson, 1990: 45–76), pronoun choice is a particularly rich area in which those in control of the floor can manipulate authority and agency in general, because the indexical nature of pronouns makes them potentially less open to accountability and scrutiny than more straightforwardly referential areas of language structure (cf. Besnier, 1990b). In the following aside, which the Council of Women's president utters between the two halves of the last quote, a sharp contrast is drawn between *taatou* 'we [inclusive]' and *maatou* 'we [exclusive]', the former being a reference to all women present, the latter to the council's governing committee:

*I mea oki loo a **taatou**, heeai ia **maatou**, e ia **taatou** fakatasi, kolaa ne iku foki i te fono.*
[Fono o Faafine 1991: 1:B: 595–7]
These are things *we [inclusive]* all decided, it wasn't *us [exclusive]*, but all of *us [inclusive]* altogether, what was decided in the [previous] meeting.

Further on, as she 'displays' (*folafola*) the details of the program, the president states that all women must wear new undergarments, which will be 'examined' (*aasi*) on Women's Day to ascertain that they are indeed new:

A mea konaa e aasi. E olo atu eiloo a faafine, a- a mea konei o- o fakamasuesue peelaa ttou gatu, maalie ua peelaa, kee lavea ttou sooti, nee?
[Fono o Faafine 1991: 1:B: 601–3]
These things will be examined. Women will go around and- and lift up our skirts, just a bit like that, so that our shorts can be seen, right?

Newness and cleanliness, concerns for which echo directly nineteenth-century missionary discourse,[14] together with uniformity and equality, are the ingredients of that sought-after state, 'beauty' (*gali*).

Again, the authoritarian control of intimate details of people's lives is legitimized by the fact that it was *taatou* 'we [inclusive]' that made up these rules; and when these rules are made up, they must

immediately be obeyed, as prescribed by the familiar rhetorical parallelism:

> *Pati a taatou ne hai, fai eiloo.*
> [Fono o Faafine 1991: 1:B: 603–4]
> What we [inclusive] said [should be done], that's what will be done.

As in talk in the egalitarian communities investigated by Brenneis (1987), the overt message is that 'no single voice has control, and no individual is responsible' (1987: 506).

At stake here is not simply the extent to which agents control symbolic forms of authority like cleanliness. A more important aspect of the authority being exerted in the Women's Day 'program' is economic and practical. Indeed, the 'program' required participants to obtain new garments in order to display their willingness to contribute to the spirit of togetherness (and to avoid being fined). Because new garments are usually not available for purchase on the atoll, many women have to rely on whatever reciprocity network they have previously established with the outside world to procure these goods. Many personal letters written around the time of such events include panicky requests for money, clothing and whatever else has been made *de rigueur* for these events (Besnier, 1989b). Last but not least, women have to deal with timing problems: ten ship visits a year do not lend themselves to a rapid turnover of goods. Thus the economic and logistic hardships created by such 'programs' can be extremely burdensome, as several women asserted to me in reference to this particular instance. However, the alternative to not finding a way of procuring new outfits is to face both shaming and further economic hardships in the guise of fines.

I have illustrated here how the authority structure seeks legitimacy by invoking and appropriating for itself a discourse of egalitarianism under many different guises. These invocations not only provide the desired legitimacy, but also ensure that overt opposition in the name of the egalitarian ideology will not be possible. These strategies work in many cases, particularly when the motivation for authoritarianism is of relatively little consequence. However, there are contexts in which authoritarian discourse simply does not work. The case I describe next illustrates the fragility of Nukulaelae's authority structure.

The case in question concerns attempts by the Council of Elders to enforce prohibition on Nukulaelae. This case is complicated by the fact that prohibition has historical antecedents, and that this particular attempt to impose prohibition is embedded in a background of intense social change, characterized by a complex struggle over power

and authority. Of its historical antecedents, suffice it to say that Nukulaelae has a long history of being dry. The control of alcohol consumption was inspired by the stringent regulations that the colonial government imposed on the Tuvalu group from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s. While most other islands of the group did away with prohibition in the 1960s, Nukulaelae remained dry until the late 1970s, at which time prohibition simply died out for lack of enforcement (although the moralistic discourse on drinking did not change much). However, in 1988 again, the newly (re)constituted Council of Elders voted to outlaw drinking altogether, after observing what it judged to be an increase in drinking-related violence on the atoll.

The outlawed activity consists principally in the production and consumption of sour toddy (*kao*, *kamagii*), a rather potent wine comparable to West African palm wine, obtained from the natural fermentation of coconut sap, which, in its unfermented state, is a major ingredient in the everyday atoll diet. The production of fresh coconut sap (*kaleve*) is the prime responsibility of younger men, who are also the consumers of the fermented drink. Recall that this group in recent years has also acquired a pivotal economic role by becoming the prime producer of the commodity which is now central to Nukulaelae's economic life, namely money. It is also when drinking that this group behaves in ways that are seen as most visibly threatening to the 'traditional' order: as elsewhere in the Pacific (cf. Marshall, 1979), drinking is associated with displays of bravado, fist fights, assertiveness towards women in public, and damage to property, all of which are seen as threats to communal *fiileemuu* 'peace'. In short, drinking enables a normally voiceless group to claim a voice.[15] The meaning of the newly reinstituted prohibition and of the conflict that ensued is not difficult to read: prohibition is a symbolic attempt to maintain a power differential across age groups that is increasingly threatened by changing economic conditions. (The dynamics of Nukulaelae prohibition offer many striking parallels with attempts to impose prohibition on Namoluk atoll in Micronesia (Marshall, 1975).) The logic at play here relies opportunistically on the cultural definition of drinking as constitutive of the displays of bravado, the verbal and physical violence and other antisocial behavior that accompany liquor drinking by young men.

In the course of the mid-1980s drinking became one of the central concerns of the Council of Elders. Few meetings were held during which the issue was not discussed. The rod that the Council of Elders uses in enforcing prohibition is referred to as *faleesea*, a Samoan

borrowing rarely or never heard on other islands of Tuvalu (well-informed people from other islands frequently do not know the word), which I translate loosely as 'ostracized'. When one is *faleesea*, one is barred from partaking in community feasts and events, forbidden to enter the *maneapa*, forbidden to take part in games, including games where young men and young women get together, and prohibited to work for money, although one is still required to take part in unpaid communal work. By all accounts, *faleesea* is serious business in a society whose members learn early in life that a sense of self-worth can only be derived from partaking in communal activities. The economic implications of being *faleesea* are also severe: while the Council of Elders can no longer block the hiring of seamen from abroad, it can close the doors to the meager local employment opportunities (e.g. working on sea-wall construction for minimal wages).

The problem is that, without young able-bodied men, the community cannot function, a fact that the young men themselves were prompt to note. Almost as soon as prohibition came into effect, ostensibly to cut down on the amount of fighting and vandalism that drinking was 'causing', the new law was broken. One by one, no matter how careful they were, young men were discovered drinking, either because of tattling or the potent smell of fermented toddy, coupled with the tiny size of the land mass on which the village is built. One by one, they came before the Council of Elders to ask for forgiveness (*fakatooese*). One young man was asked to pay a A$500 fine, an enormous amount of money by Nukulaelae standards. The Tuvalu Government's judicial branch got wind of the affair and sent word to Nukulaelae that the fine was illegal, and the money was returned to the young man. Others were required to *faagai te fenua* 'feed the atoll community', i.e. throw a feast for all 350-odd inhabitants, which places a substantial economic burden on the young men and their families. Others still were severely *polopolooki* 'admonished' in public. The Council of Elders' debates turned to whether or not ostracized young men should be allowed to 'return' to the community at all, and at what cost. And these debates continue, engendering factionalism within the Council of Elders between traditionalists on the one hand and younger, better educated and more worldly members on the other. Indeed the clashes in recent months have been extremely heated.

Prohibition also raises a problem of some consequence, namely that of the extent of the Council of Elders' jurisdiction. Does the Council of Elders have the 'traditional' authority to enforce

prohibition it purports to have? Indeed, as everyone on Nukulaelae knows well today, Tuvalu's constitution calls for the protection of human rights (*saolotoga o ttino*), which can be argued to include the right to drink liquor (but, of course, not to disrupt community peace, a crucial factor if one defines drinking and disorder as constitutively related).[16] There is a government-appointed magistrate on Nukulaelae, as well as a policeman and, according to the opponents of prohibition (i.e. all younger men, some elders and many women of all ages), these are the bodies that should be in charge of controlling antisocial behavior, not the Council of Elders. For the Council of Elders, which has become more and more entrenched in its opposition to the abolition of prohibition, the situation has become a perilous test of the legitimacy of its authority.

And perilous it is. In 1989 a group of about twenty ostracized young men (a major proportion of the total number of young men) asked for a hearing in which they would have essentially questioned the authority of the Council of Elders to impose prohibition. Since they paid head taxes, the young men wished to argue, they could not be barred from government-funded work. The result was predictable: the Council refused to hear them, and dismissed them with the age-old parallelism:

> *Olotou pati, 'Teenaa te ttonu.' 'Teenaa', teenaa eeloo, kee olo maatou ki tua.*
> [T 1991: 1:A: 053–055]
> They said, 'That's our order'. 'This is [how it will be oone]', [and] this is [the way it's to be done], we should go away.

The young men, feeling angry (*kaitaua*) and hurt (*mmae te loto*, literally, 'the heart aches'), resolved that they would 'do something bad' to the atoll community (*fakamaasei te fenua*). After many debates held in the bush around sour toddy, they decided that they would set fire to the store's supply of benzene and to strategic houses, and set themselves adrift in the atoll community's catamaran, in a suicidal pattern that has historical antecedents on Nukulaelae and elsewhere in Polynesia (cf. Firth, 1961).

Predictably, word of these plans reached the rest of the atoll community. Even though the young men's plans had by that time died a natural death, the alert was sounded, and, according to all accounts (these events are known to me only through *post hoc* descriptions), daily routines were completely disrupted. The community was mobilized in round-the-clock patrols, some of whom guarded the benzene shed, while others patrolled the paths, stood vigil around key

targets, and spied on those who were perceived as 'gang leaders' (who were enjoying every minute of the panic they had created). The situation lasted several weeks, during which able-bodied men slept very little.

Finally, the pastor was brought into the picture. This move is a typical response to more 'serious' disruptions of social order; and, as on Namoluk atoll (Marshall, 1975), it demonstrates to everyone involved the seriousness of the problem, since the pastor, as a stranger, ideally remains peripheral to the daily lives of his flock, particularly when dirty laundry is being aired out. The pastor 'invited' (*aami*) the young men and 'helped' (*fesoasoani*) them by advising them to *faipati fakallei* 'speak properly' with the chief.[17] Subsequently the situation calmed down, and the young men were eventually readmitted into the atoll community after handing in a token apology. The main leader of the movement left the atoll for a year, and returned to nothing more than memories of the events in which he played a central role. Such is the course of the numerous conflicts that characterize daily life on Nukulaelae: extraordinarily disruptive events are left to fade away. However, the debate over prohibition is far from resolved.

These events demonstrate how a traditionally marginalized group has the power, in essence, to immobilize the Council of Elders. With a few carefully chosen tools, such as rumor, the ostracized young men managed to disrupt the life of the community in fundamental ways. While exhibiting all the deference expected of them in their dealings with the Council of Elders, they created a situation in which the very legitimacy of the Council of Elders' authority was questioned. The struggle for egalitarianism is of course framed differently in this situation. Since egalitarianism does not apply across age categories in the 'traditional' system, the young men invoked a discourse of human rights as protected by the constitution of the new state of which Nukulaelae is a part. In fact, this discourse is invoked more and more frequently in contesting the fragile authority of the Council of Elders. It is heard in other situations, the most prominent of which is a comparable case of ostracism decreed by the Council of Elders against a middle-aged man who has left the one Christian denomination to which all other members of the community belong (Besnier, 1994), and through which the Council of Elders justifies its claims to authority. In short, the coexistence of various discourses on Nukulaelae makes the exertion of authority a very hazardous enterprise. The power that even the most marginal individuals have to undermine the authority of leaders is simply too great.

Against this backdrop of normative indeterminacy, it should come

as no surprise that leadership roles on Nukulaelae are regarded with a great deal of ambivalence. On the one hand, individuals sometimes accept positions where they stand a chance to have their voice heard (if not respected) and their symbolic capital increased in terms of the prestige that they might accrue. On the other hand, Nukulaelae Islanders know the precariousness of positions of leadership, the stratagems leaders have to devise to make their authority appear to be something else (cf. Bailey, 1988), and the difficulties involved in maintaining a presentable image in the eyes of others. As a result, positions of leadership are frequently difficult to fill. For example, at the beginning of 1990, the chieftainship of the atoll was left vacant by a resignation; as the following account illustrates, the Council of Elders had difficulties finding a new chief:

> [. . .] *kae ona ko te mea e toko uke tino ne fai atu, see talia nee ttinoo. Fili atu ttinoo, see talia. Teenaa, e toko fia tino kolaa ne tuku atu ki ei, see talia, tuku atu ki ei, talia nee ia. Teenaa te- te- te mea ne iloa nee au, te filiga teenaa. Seeai ake foki se tino ne talia nee ia kee fano ia o ulu fenua, a koo tuku atu ki ei, mea loa koo talia nee ia.*
> [V 1991: 1:B: 102–8]
> [. . .] because many people were asked [if they could fill the position], but they all turned it down. Every time someone else was chosen, he refused. Who knows how many people were asked who refused. [Then] it was given to him [the current chief], and he accepted. As far as my understanding goes of that investiture. No one else would accept the position, but when it was given to him, he accepted.

Firth (1960b) describes comparable ambivalence at times of chiefly succession on Tikopia, but Nukulaelae differs from Tikopia both in the cause and procedure of ambivalence: while there is no instance of a Tikopian refusing a chiefly position, such instances abound on Nukulaelae. One feature of Nukulaelae chiefly succession (and of ascendance to any position of leadership) bears strong resemblances to the Tikopia material: enthusiastically welcoming the offer of a position of leadership is seen as evidence of a lack of humility and met with great scorn (see also Donner (1988) on Sikaiana).

And indeed, in the above quote, the speaker's contempt for the man who accepted the chiefly position after so many had turned it down is thinly disguised. The odds were against this particular Nukulaelae leader right from the beginning, and things have gone downhill ever since. Contempt for this man is shared by many in the atoll community; all quotes presented in this chapter in which the chief is ridiculed in fact bear on this individual. Lacking the *gravitas*

that Nukulaelae people, like other Polynesians (Firth, 1960a), expect of holders of positions of consequence, unkempt in his appearance (he is grossly overweight, his shirts are always torn, etc.), erratic in his decisions and actions, this man harangues everyone with his repetitive, unimaginative, and tactless public speeches, which he delivers at great length while constantly pulling down on his rent shirts in an attempt to cover his protruding belly. However, at the same time, the limelight in which his prominent position places him is wonderfully functional for the island community: his actions and words are mercilessly ridiculed in backstage clowning and gossip, even by his own close kin. When his verbal blunders and nonverbal improprieties are particularly blatant, ridiculing even takes place, more or less discreetly, right under his nose. In short, this leader's desperate attempts to claim for himself the attributes that the discourse of nostalgia associates with his social position constitute superb material for the discourse of egalitarianism.

CONCLUSION

I began this chapter with a historical overview. I showed how Nukulaelae had undergone major demographic, social and political changes during the second half of the nineteenth century, which, I surmise, must have affected every aspect of Nukulaelae culture. The atoll community emerged from these changes with a population which differed radically from the pre-contact and early-contact population. In addition, whatever mythical base on which the legitimacy of pre-contact chieftainship might have rested was severely undermined or forgotten altogether. The result is that, as it approached the turn of the century, Nukulaelae exhibited few of the political attributes traditionally associated with Polynesian political structures, even if these were present before contact.

The discussion then turned to an evaluation of contemporary discourse on leadership and authority. Here two major patterns are discernible. In the discourse of nostalgia, Nukulaelae Islanders long for an idealized past when the authority of those in power was absolute, and, as a result, when life was happy and resources abundant. According to this discourse, today's political structure is a deteriorated caricature of the 'true' thing. At the same time, Nukulaelae Islanders express a strong desire for a state in which everyone is equal, where no one rises above others, and where no one has authority over others. How can these seemingly contradictory discourses leave any room for a political structure?[18] Is structure what

one should look for in this situation, or should one rather search for some level of political organization without political order, to use Firth's (1954) classical distinction, or even for the 'complex mix of order, antiorder, and nonorder' that Moore (1987: 730) describes?

Nukulaelae's contemporary political organization is explicitly grounded in the first of these ideological undercurrents. Since the early 1980s, the atoll community has sought to 'revive' what it sees as a traditional chiefly system. Those in charge of this system are expected to find a balance between the two ideologies. They manage to do so in the practice of everyday political life by giving any authoritarian move the veneer of a move that furthers egalitarianism, a strategy in which political talk plays a central role. However, when more far-reaching issues are concerned, such as the imposition of prohibition, these strategies run aground.

The objective of this chapter is to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between ideology and social praxis. One important question which this chapter has not answered is where the discursive tensions described here take root. The most obvious place to search for these roots is in history. I have hinted at the potential role that Nukulaelae's tormented post-contact history may have had in the emergence of multiple discourses. However, the lack of precise historical data makes it impossible to prove or disprove this hypothesis. It is tempting to attribute an extraterritorial origin to one or the other discourse that I have identified as constitutive of political ideology, or to search for a link between one of these discourses and either Nukulaelae's pre-contact aboriginal culture or post-missionization religious ideology. Yet no such patterns are evident. While colonial authorities squeezed out of Nukulaelae and the rest of Tuvalu every evidence of rigid hierarchy that the pre-colonial system might have been able to offer, we know too little about political ideology and praxis in pre-colonial days to conclude that authoritarian discourses were post-contact introductions (even though it is commonplace for the incorporation of egalitarian societies into a larger state system to engender inequality and hierarchy, as demonstrated in Etienne and Leacock (1980); Flanagan and Rayner (1988); Leacock and Lee (1982)). For that matter, early colonial authorities were hardly dealing with a pre-contact social order, since missionization had already altered it fundamentally in the three decades that preceded the beginning of the colonial era.

The reverse hypothesis, in which contemporary discourses of nostalgia represent the pre-colonial situation, is equally difficult to support, in that we do not know whether chiefly authority was indeed

more firmly established in pre-contact days, or whether the discourse of nostalgia is simply an instance of invented tradition without much grounding in the past. Similarly, Christianity has penetrated every aspect of Nukulaelae life since the late nineteenth century, to the extent that it is not fruitful to attempt to distinguish Christian from other types of ideology on Nukulaelae. Rationalizations based on Christian principles are offered for both authoritarianism and egalitarianism. However tempting it is to hypothesize on the origin of multiple discourses, the exercise can only remain speculative.

My analysis of leadership and authority refers specifically to Nukulaelae atoll. The question arises as to whether similar dynamics are to be found on other islands of the Tuvalu group, which share so many social and cultural traits with Nukulaelae that it makes sense to speak of 'Tuvaluan culture' (as Brady (1970) does) – although regional variations within the group cannot be neglected (cf. A. Chambers, 1983). There is evidence that tensions between an egalitarian ethos and a stratified authority structure do exist on other islands of the group. For example, Nanumea, the northernmost atoll of Tuvalu, has known in the course of its post-contact history fluctuations among various forms of chieftainship and leadership similar to those that Nukulaelae has experienced (K. Chambers, 1984: 109–26). On Nukufetau, one of the southern atolls, in 1991, young men (*tamataene*) contested the hourly wages they were earning for work on development projects around the atoll, principally construction of sea walls to prevent the growing problem of sea-water seepage into taro swamps and to protect the atoll from rough seas. These projects are funded through grants from the Tuvaluan Government, administered by the Island Council. When the Island Council refused to give them a pay raise, the young men went on strike. At the time of writing, work on the sea-wall is being done by able-bodied women, probably a well-calculated move on the part of the Island Council to instill shame into the young men. In retribution, the young men take no part in feasts, dancing and other events that punctuate atoll life, thereby handicapping the conduct of such events in major ways.

Similarly, parliamentary elections have given rise to serious rifts on several islands of Tuvalu. The community of Nuui, in central Tuvalu, was torn in the late 1980s by a dispute over election results, in which a defeated candidate refused to accept his defeat. Other such problems are reported for other islands of the group, and have had major consequences for their social organization. Nanumaga, in the northern part of the group, is 'traditionally' divided into four

clan-like entities, called *fale*, literally 'house', membership of which is determined in part by residence patterns. In 1983, the village was redesigned by an American town planner funded by the Save the Children Fund. A disagreement arose among the members of one of the clans over details of the design of their part of the village. The clan failed to resolve the disagreement, and one group separated and created a fifth clan. The remaining three clans excluded both clans from community activities until they resolved the rift. In 1989 both the original fourth clan and the new clan were reintegrated into the community.

Thus the tension between egalitarianism and authoritarianism is not an exclusive feature of Nukulaelae atoll. However, it appears to be more serious on Nukulaelae than elsewhere. Why this should be so is a complex question. The social and cultural discontinuities that Nukulaelae experienced in the late nineteenth century are likely to have had a major role in the creation of multiple discourses. The tiny population of the atoll is another explanation that inhabitants of other islands of the group commonly invoke to account for the frequency of social disruptions which, in their eyes, characterize Nukulaelae life. Finally, Tuvaluans from other islands point to the obvious enjoyment that Nukulaelae people display in creating, managing, and kindling social tension as being constitutively related to the generation of ideological tensions on the atoll.

presented herein benefited from discussions with Alan Howard and Jan Rensel. In all cases, the usual disclaimers apply.

1 Earlier versions of this paper included a considerably richer textual body of materials than I present here. Regretfully, much of that material had to be omitted owing to lack of space.

2 As Sahlins (1957) notes, such radical restructuring of all aspects of social and economic life are not uncommon on atolls of Polynesia, which are vulnerable to dramatic population changes because of their small size and exposure to the elements. In Nukulaelae's case, restructuring was of course not solely a consequence of climatic and ecological vulnerability.

3 He appears in oral history both in 1861, when the first Christian missionary reached Nukulaelae, and in 1865, when the lease of Niuooku Islet was signed. Further confirmation that Tafalagilua was not enslaved is provided by visiting missionary Murray, who mentions that 'the chief' (whose name he does not provide), 'being a old man, had been rejected by the slavers' (1876: 382).

4 Nukulaelae genealogical memory for ascendants of every living person or every person known to living persons is normally very specific.

5 A likely area which might be expected to have been affected by history is marriage patterns. Nukulaelae society is significantly more exogamous than other islands of Tuvalu. However, this pattern has synchronic explanations: the tiny population, coupled with strong avoidance taboos between opposite-gender cousins, make *aavaga ki tai*, literally 'marriage to the sea', almost inevitable, and the lack of 'land hunger' (Brady, 1970, 1974) in comparison to other islands of Tuvalu poses few barriers to exogamy.

6 What I translate throughout this chapter as 'chief' is in fact any of several terms, some of which are used as synonyms while others characterize particular historical periods. The term *aliki*, cognate of terms usually translated as 'chief' in other Polynesian languages, appears to have been the original designator for the chiefly role; but a borrowing from Samoan, *tupu*, commonly rendered in English as 'king' (although the felicity of the gloss is debatable), is also used retroactively to refer to the chief of pre-Christian days. Nineteenth-century Western visitors commonly used the English term 'king' in their accounts of Nukulaelae social structure, which allowed them to deride the anachronism of a 'king' ruling over a few dozen subjects (e.g. David, 1899: 280–91). Today, the terms *ulu fenua* 'head of the atoll community' and, less frequently, *ulu aliki* 'head chief' are in common usage. Of course, whether or not one is dealing with a chiefly institution in the strict sense of the word is very much an open question.

7 The *maneapa* itself is an example of invented tradition in that it appears to have been introduced from the Gilbert Islands in post-mission days (Goldsmith, 1985).

8 Asad's (1979) remark that 'specific political economic conditions [. . .] make certain rhetorical forms objectively possible, and *authoritative*' (1979: 616, emphasis in original) is particularly relevant here.

9 Transcript excerpts quoted in this chapter follow a phonemic orthography, in which double graphemes indicate geminated segments; geminated oral stops are heavily aspirated, and other geminated phonemes are articulated for a longer period of time than their ungeminated equivalents. The letter *g* represents a velar nasal stop, *l* is a central flap, and all other letters have their

approximate IPA value. The transcripts represent an unedited rendition of what is audible on tapes, including false starts, repairs, etc; however, volume, tempo and voice quality are not indicated here. Parentheses indicate conjectured or inaudible strings, [. . .] indicates that a string of words has been left out of the transcript, and material provided in square brackets in a translation represent additions for the sake of intelligibility which are not present in the original text. Recording references (e.g. [L&S 1991: 2:A: 024–028]) are made up of the name of the tape (L&S 1991: 2), the side of the tape (A), and tape-recorder counter references (024–028). All names that appear in transcript excerpts are pseudonyms.

10 I stress here that I invoke 'egalitarianism' as *discourse*, not as a possible type of political organization. Problems with the belief that egalitarianism is a possible political type are well known (cf. Turton, 1975: 163–5, among many others). Under closer scrutiny, all societies which have been claimed to be egalitarian have exhibited blatant patterns of inequality across groups (e.g. between women and men, between younger and older people) and within groups (see Besnier (1994) for the discussion of the culturally constructed marginalization of a Nukulaelae elder).

11 The arguments presented here are strongly reminiscent of Shore's (1982) analysis of dissociation and ambivalence in Samoan ideologies of personhood and social action (also discussed in Shore, this volume). In a Samoan theory of social action, for example, there is room for *both* compliance with and rebellion against authority, and the coexistence of these ideologies, which has given rise to sharp debates amongst ethnographers, is rendered possible by a cultural conceptualization of the person as a bundle of more or less autonomous facets. I differ from Shore in viewing 'contradiction' as an appropriate characterization of the material I present here, maintaining, with Abu-Lughod (1991), that culture is often a system of unresolved contradictions.

12 See also Firth (1949, 1960b, 1975) for a discussion of the backstage aspects of Tikopia political process, in which individuals of non-chiefly rank exert sometimes considerable influence on chiefs.

13 The term *fenua* itself has telescopic meaning. Like its cognates in other Polynesian languages, its primary meaning is 'atoll, island, country'. It is also frequently used metonymically to refer to the inhabitants of an atoll or island as a corporate, bounded group.

14 For example, David, a late-nineteenth-century visitor to Nukulaelae (although not a missionary herself), devotes a significant portion of her account of the atoll to commenting on the relative cleanliness of things and people. She thus characterizes the 'king' as 'a dirty old man in a filthy shirt and lavalava, with his head bound up in unclean rags' (1899: 285), while she finds that 'the pastor's wife [. . .] set a splendid example of cleanliness and tidiness' (1899: 287).

15 Donner (1988) discusses the association between toddy drinking and egalitarian ideology on Sikaiana atoll. While evidence that this link also exists on Nukulaelae is more tenuous because drinking on Nukulaelae and Sikaiana have different characteristics, the Sikaiana case offers an interesting comparison.

16 Awareness of the concept of human rights was awakened on Nukulaelae in large part by the establishment in the mid-1980s of a People's Lawyer on Funafuti. In 1990, the People's Lawyer's office published and distributed

widely a booklet in Tuvaluan entitled *Ko Koe mo te Tulafono* 'You and the Law', from which many Nukulaelae Islanders learned that human rights are protected by Tuvalu's constitution. However, the country's constitution also calls for the protection of *tuu mo aganuu* 'customs and traditions', leaving much unresolved in cases where what is perceived to fall under the rubric of 'customs and traditions' (e.g. authoritarian control by the Council of Elders) is in direct conflict with human rights.

17 *Faipati fakallei* is a genre of conflict-management talk in which conflicts are talked out in a calm, therapeutic manner (hence *fakallei* 'properly'). See Besnier (1990a).

18 A Marxist understanding of structure as a structure of contradiction is better suited than other models to account for the Nukulaelae material. However, the lack of a clear pattern of distribution of the contradictory discourses across independently identifiable segments of the Nukulaelae population casts some doubts on the appropriateness of a classic Marxist account to these materials.

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4   A New King for Nanumaga: Changing Demands for Leadership and Authority in a Polynesian Atoll Society

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on Nanumaga Atoll in Tuvalu and a type of sacred chief known as *te tupu* (glossed here, following local usage, as 'king'). Despite disruption of the atoll by colonial authorities, and despite more than a century of Christianity, the office of *tupu* was maintained by Nanumagans until the time of Tuvaluan independence in 1978. Now, over a decade later, islanders appear determined to revive the institution.

Here, I explore the reasons for this office's remarkable resilience. I suggest that it has served as a mechanism through which Nanumagans have maintained their cohesiveness as a community and successfully adapted to a variety of internal and external pressures. While attempts to revive the *tupu* position inevitably raise questions involving the 'invention of tradition' (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), I prefer to see it as an appeal to a historically documented institution which has been flexible enough to endure repeated changes in response to a variety of new conditions.

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nanumaga is one of the eight inhabited atolls of the nation of Tuvalu, the former Ellice Islands. Although the culture throughout the archipelago is of a western Polynesian type, individual island traditions are remarkably distinct. Linguistic differences, characteristics of social and political organization, and oral history, indicate that the islands have been settled separately – not necessarily over the same period or by people of the same origin. Tongan influence seems to have been

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