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OBLIGATIONS TO THE WORD: RITUAL SPEECH, PERFORMANCE, AND RESPONSIBILITY AMONG THE WEYEWA

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Introduction

In the Weyewa highlands of the eastern Indonesian island of Sumba, elders say that, long ago, the ancestors gave their descendants their "word, voice" (*li'i*). The enduring wisdom and valued knowledge of these words is embodied in a poetic couplet style of "ritual speech" (*pan-ewe tenda*). In exchange for periodically re-enacting and fulfilling the promises and obligations these words entail, Weyewa are blessed with prosperity, fertility, and well-being. When such "words" are inevitably neglected and misfortune ensues, specialist performers of ritual speech are hired to recover it through a culturally recognized and indeed admired "path" of atonement and feasting. Spokesmen begin with divination, then re-state the neglected promises or "words" in placation rites, and finally fulfill these promises in celebration and house-building feasts. This ritual acknowledgment of responsibility to maintain, reproduce, and abide by the "words of the ancestors" (*li'i marapu*) is a key symbol of Weyewa collective life.

Over the course of this prolonged ceremonial process of atonement, speakers of this couplet style gradually transform the highly situated, dialogic discourse of the initial divinatory inquiries (*urrata*) into relatively de-contextualized, monologic accounts of mythically established order (*we'e maringi*). Reported speech is particularly frequent in the earliest stages of the healing process, in which it serves to individuate, particularize, and situate discourse; in the later stages, however, reported-speech frames become less frequent as the speaker constructs an image of monologic, authoritative "words of the ancestors." The result is a stretch of talk which appears to be detached from the immediate "here and now" of performance, even though in many ways it is not. This process of "entextualizing" discourse (Bauman, 1987b) is depicted in Weyewa ritual ideology with botanical and genealogical imagery as a relation between multiform "tips" and a single, authoritative "trunk" of knowledge.

In ritual contexts, the use of reported-speech verbs ("locutives") indexes the nature of responsibility for the "word." In divination, locu-

tives frame the individual voices of particular spiritual agents of calamity, as well as isolating and identifying the neglected words of promise made by forgetful descendants. The absence of these verbs of reported speech when directly transmitting the words of the ancestors in the final stages of the atonement process, on the other hand, collectivizes the speaking voice, assigning the responsibility for the "words" to the source of all tradition: the "ancestral spirits" (*marapu*).

Ethnographic setting

Until the last decade, the Weyewa notions of responsibility and obligation were organized primarily around traditional kinship ties, and sanctioned by the ancestral spirits and their "words." In part because economic opportunities on the island were limited largely to subsistence cultivation of rice, corn, and root crops, and some livestock breeding, the Dutch, and later the Indonesian bureaucracies maintained a relatively low profile on Sumba. Christian missions, despite nearly a century of effort, could claim only about 20 per cent of the population as converts in 1980. As a consequence, these "modernizing" influences did little to establish new lines of obligation to written laws, formal bureaucratic regulations, and foreign religious beliefs, or any of the rights those might engender.

But while the island of Sumba was spared most of the extreme depredations of the Dutch colonial system, the responsibilities and obligations of the ordinary Sumbanese under the kin- and village-based system can be demanding and even harsh. The poor, the marginal and the weak are often deeply obligated to various "big man" figures, self-appointed leaders whose charisma, economic strength, and high status permit them to extract tribute in ritual feasting. Indebtedness to these men – usually by giving one's "word" of promise in exchange for cattle, land or protection – can lead to a lifetime of subordination and dependency. Regarded as sacred covenants, these exchange obligations are fulfilled in the context of ceremonial exchanges of goods and verbal performances. Neglected exchange responsibilities are passed down according to a rule of agnatic descent. Weyewa men often find themselves held responsible for damages, commitments, or obligations engendered by their fathers and grandfathers.

Weyewa regard the failure to fulfill one's word of promise as a breach of morality, a neglect of tradition, and a cause for supernatural retribution. For them, living up to one's promise is not simply an expression of a reliable personality; in ritual contexts it is depicted as "following in the path, following in the tracks" of the ancestors. To fail to do so is to deviate seriously from that inscribed path. The inevitable misfortune that results from such deviation is represented with metaphorical imagery

depicting the isolation, vulnerability, and exposure felt by those who pursue individual interests. Myths, folktales, and daily admonitions relentlessly drive home a point about the dependency of children and their responsibility to follow the words of their ancestral forebears.

Ritual reproduction of the "Words of the Ancestors"

When Weyewa experience sudden and shocking calamities such as a flood, a devastating fire, or an untimely death, the misfortune is believed to occur as a result of a broken promise, or "word, voice" (*li'i*). "Divination" (*urrata*) is the first stage of atonement in which specialist speakers try to identify the broken "word" or promise to the ancestors. The second stage, if the victims have the feasting resources and the determination, usually occurs a few hours or weeks later, and is an all-night ritual dialogue in which the broken promise is reaffirmed and reproduced, although not actually fulfilled. The final, climactic stage is when the promise to feast in honor of the ancestors is fulfilled and some components of the charter myth of the founding of the agnatic clan are told. It is here that the "true voice of the ancestors" is revealed.

These performances are conducted in "ritual speech" (*panewe tenda*). This poetic style consists of conventional couplets in which the first line parallels the second line in both rhythm and meaning. The specialist spokesman draws from a stock of thousands of these traditional couplets, and links them together according to the appropriate genre conventions in particular situations. Speakers engaged in performance accept responsibility for the fluent, accurate reproduction of these couplets, as well as for the suitable organization of such units according to discourse conventions. Failure to do so properly may result in a fine of a cloth or knife or animal, or even supernatural retributions.

Although most Weyewa adults claim some competence in ritual speech, not everyone in Weyewa society has equal access to, skill or interest in, these verbal resources. Since this style is required for all communication with the ancestral spirits, specialist ritual spokesmen are regularly hired, particularly for events involving prolonged public performance and communication with the spirits. These mediators are typically males, in their forties or older, and they are hired for the purpose of speaking on behalf of someone else. The couplet phrase used to describe this role is:

(1) *a kandauke kambu wiwi*	he who talks beneath the lips
a panewe kambu nganda	he who speaks beneath the mouth.

This may be glossed as meaning "one who speaks under the auspices of someone else." In rites of misfortune, marriage negotiations, litigation, even courtship, this role may be invoked to permit the reporting of one's

speech to another party. These specialists are traditionally compensated with a large portion of meat from whatever ritual sacrifice follows the ceremony. Additional gifts may include a knife, a bolt of cloth, and a small, live piglet.

The job of the spokesman is to report the speech of not only his client, and sponsor, but also the ancestral spirits. In both cases, the "source" of information is represented as a "trunk" (*pu'u*). The word *pu'u* itself is richly polysemous, and also means "center." For instance, another way of referring to the source of speech is "lord of the center" (*mori pu'u*); such usage can be further expanded in couplet terms:

(2) *pu'u-na wazu*	trunk of the tree
mata-na we'e	well-spring of water.

For Weyewa, this "source" imagery is the idiom for a broader ideology of communicative interaction which explains differences in authority. For them, authority is represented as a source, a place, a central foundation, from which derivative, secondary, and subsequent components (or "tips") develop. Their ancestors are the ultimate "source" (source of the water, trunk of the tree), and the authority of the descendants is measured in a kind of spatial relation to the source. Thus ancestors are identified with particular holy places, say the ruins of a particular ancient village, and descendants trace their relationship to that ancestor as a kind of migration outward from it, towards the "tip."

In general, people who claim a direct line to that source have the most "authority." In the Sumbanese context, this might be defined as a quantity of legitimacy which imbues certain persons, places, and performances with a right to define and construct certain historical, political, and religious realities in a particular way and have those constructions accepted as true. In Weyewa, such definitions are usually played out in the context of ceremonies I describe below.

Such authority implies certain liabilities regarding the propriety and efficacy of the verbal performances. One is the requirement that such performances be appropriately carried out. Errors in performance – failure to complete the speech event, inaccurate recitation of names of people and places, failure to reach consensus – all can result in a call for the invalidation of the event and requests that it can be repeated. In extreme cases, errors may result in supernatural retribution against those responsible – the sponsor and performers. More generally, the "sources" and/or originators of ritual performance may also, to varying degrees, be responsible for the efficacy of the event. If a ritual speech event does not result in fertility, prosperity, health, or at least cessation of calamity, then the sponsors or "sources" may be accused of leaving out some crucial detail. On one occasion, for instance, a man staged an expensive feast

following the sudden death of his wife and daughter. While his crops improved the next year, several of his cattle died. He suspected that his ancestral spirits had not been forthright with him during a divination performance, and that some outstanding word of promise had been kept hidden from him, causing continued calamity. Other participants in the event suspected that he had neglected some critical element of the performance.

Divination

The first step on the "ladder" to atoning for neglect of the word is "divination." Cognate with the Indonesian word for "letter" (*surat*), the Weyewa term *urrata* "divination" stands for a verbal performance in which specialist speakers attempt to inscribe and thus "fix" the uncontrolled, disorderly communication between humans and the spirit world so that the source of misfortune can be identified, and the true "word" of promise to the ancestors can be reaffirmed and fulfilled. By using a rhetorical strategy emphasizing segmentation, differentiation, and contrast, Weyewa diviners attempt to sort out the lines of responsibility for this communicative breakdown, narrow down the number of relevant "voices," and arrive at a single "path" which explains how the victims arrived at their present predicament (Kuipers, 1990:81).

Although there is only one human performer, Weyewa explicitly describe divination as a dialogue. It is an effort to regulate and normalize communicative exchange between humans and the spirit world. In ritual speech, Weyewa vividly depict the dreadful state of emptiness and loneliness following misfortune, when they feel singled out and isolated from communication with their ancestral spirits. It is an experience they liken to that of an abandoned or orphaned child attempting to communicate with its parents. The diviner seeks to rectify this situation by reconstructing a dialogue.

In example (3) below, a specialist spokesman proposes to the ancestral spirits scenarios which would account for a misfortune, in this case the serious injury of a man struck by a motorcycle driven by a Javanese civil servant. By stretching his arms along a spear which is stuck into the ancestral house-post, the diviner receives responses to questions he poses to the spirits. He keeps his left hand tightly gripped on the handle of the spear while he stretches his right hand towards the post. If he is able to touch the post, this is taken as a positive sign, and confirmation of the scenario; otherwise it is a negative response.

In example (3) below, the spokesman begins by proposing a scene: during a "chicken and rice" feast (staged by the clients in the previous week), perhaps certain portentous signs were overlooked:

(3) *Noto-ngge hiti manna-na*	perhaps last week
bana muttu-na manu	when the chicken was roasted
ángu tollu kaddo ngguku-ko-wa	maybe the egg omen was not positive
hitti manna-na	last week
ba na-mummu-ni ngge nga'a	when the rice was cooked
ángu manu ngguku wewala	perhaps the augury was not earnest

But the interesting but very characteristic thing is what he does next: after providing this scenario, he quotes the ancestors as claiming responsibility for the speech (lines 7–8), and then asks them whether they agree (line 9):

"lunggu	"I say [that]
lunggu-nggu"	I say [that] to you"
lummu takka-wu?	Do you say that?

Having posed the question, he gets a positive response. The "yes" he frames as a quotation as well:

"O-O," ba	"yes" if that is said
lummu takka-ngga	truly by you to me
"O-O," ba	"yes" if that is said
lummu takka-ngga	truly by you to me
wa'i takka-ko-ngge	there really is
a zele ngadi ngara	a complicated path
wa'i takka-ko-ngge	there really is
a ndeinda tungga ndara	a tangle in the horse's mane;

In lines 10–17, the diviner explains that, like a tangled horse's mane, and like a complicated path, the route to discovering the source of responsibility for the broken "word" of the ancestors is difficult. To sort out this complexity, the diviner represents himself as differentiating, sifting, and selecting among a variety of possible explanations and voices. By identifying the components and structure of participation in the calamity, he seeks to construct a dialogue which will lead to reconciliation.

To understand how the diviner has constructed the image of dialogue, it is important to examine his use of reported speech. As V.N. Voloshinov ([1929–30] 1973:117) has remarked, the "productive study of dialogue presupposes ... a profound investigation of the forms used in reported speech, since these forms reflect basic and constant tendencies in the active reception of other people's speech, and it is this reception, after all, that is fundamental for dialogue." Deborah Tannen (1986) observes that such encoding of another's speech through quotation is a way of creating and maintaining involvement in narrative discourse rather than making an exact copy of what was said. Reported speech, she argues, is in fact "constructed dialogue" (Kuipers, 1990:66).

An important verbal device through which these attributions of responsibility for discourse are acomplished in Weyewa is a category of verb I have come to call a "locutive." These verbs frame an utterance as directly reported speech: e.g.

(4) *"kako-nda" hinna-ngge Mbulu*
"let's go," said Mbulu.

These reported speech phrases are also a way of talking about intentions. In the example above, the sentence implies that Mbulu plans to depart.

These locutives contrast with the "quotatives" described by Whorf (1956:119), which refer to a distinct class of uninflectable particles whose import is to collectivize the responsibility for speech rather than individuate it; e.g. "they say [i.e. the ancestors, not I]." Unlike Weyewa locutives, quotatives do not usually attribute agency. Nor can Weyewa locutives be considered evidentials in the sense described by Chafe and Nichols (1986). Their use does not depend on the nature of the evidence on which a statement is based, nor on the sensory modality through which the information was received. Choice of whether to use a reported-speech frame in Weyewa is not related to whether the speaker received the information through hearsay, or through visual, olfactory, or tactile cues.

An important feature of choice in the use of Weyewa locutives is inflection for speaker and hearer:

(a) inflected for speaker:
lunggu "I say"
lummu "you say"
hinna "he, she it says"
limma "we (excl.) say"
hinda "we (incl.) say"
limmi "you (pl.) say"
hidda "they say"

(b) suffixes for hearer/recipient
-ngga "me"
-nggu "you"
-ni, *-na* "him, her, it"
-ma "us" excl.
-nda "us" incl.
-minggi "you all"
-ndi "them"

A sample inflection: *lummu-ngga* "you say to me"

This form of locutive is usually postposed to the statement which is being quoted. In most contexts, it can be glossed "say," or "will." This verb is optionally inflected for hearer, or recipient.

Regarded as the "words of the ancestors," ritual speech creates an interpretive frame in which utterances are seen as issuing ideally not from the actual sender, but from a collective source – the ancestral spirits. Thus to employ locutives in ritual contexts is, in some respects, situationally and culturally marked. The use of these verbs of speaking calls attention to the issue of responsibility for communication, and makes problematic the nature of communication. Rather than collectivizing discourse the way many Amerindian *verba dicendi* do, the import of Weyewa locutives in ritual speech contexts is to particularize and individuate it. This particularizing has the effect of heightening the connotation of personal responsibility for discourse.

The high frequency of reported speech in divination suggests an image of dialogue in which participants are not in a state of consensus. It connotes fragmentation into particulate components, lack of complete uniformity and unanimity, with multiple performers expressing unique, subjective perspectives in the context of interaction. While in some circumstances, such dialogue is positively valued, (e.g. *mbyali monno mbyali*; "one side then another [speaks]"), as in litigation, marriage negotiations, and in the *zaizo* case below, dialogue can also be a sign of disorder. I recorded one placation rite in which the sponsor warned before beginning it that he did not want "each man to speak his mind" (*tekki dou, tekki dou*) back and forth in a dialogue fashion. A common image for a lack of unity is dialogic genres of song and riddling used in the neighboring districts of Lawonda and Wanukaka:

(5) *ndau kedeka Lawondakana* do not make riddles like Lawondans
ndau lawiti Wanokakakana do not sing [cryptic] Wanokakan songs

Dialogue often accompanies conflict and disagreement.

In ritual contexts, dialogue is a ceremonialized form of interaction associated with instability and change in human–spirit, and human–human relationships. Dialogue does not occur in situations that emphasize completion, solidarity, or resolution but rather those that emphasize transition. Ritual dialogues, however, always seek to move *toward* solidarity. Inasmuch as the constructed dialogues of divination imply individuation and differentiation, it is something to be overcome in the search for stability and order. But dialogue is better than no communication at all. Talking to oneself is an image of utter desolation among Weyewa, a sign of total despair or even insanity. Thus dialogue, constructed through locutives, is a necessary first step toward the unification of different perspectives and voices.

Rites of placation (*zaizo*)

Following the approximately one-hour-long divination performance, the next stage is a "placation rite" (*zaizo*). These complex, all-night performances reaffirm the commitment of the clients to fulfilling the broken "word" discovered in the divination performance. To carry out these events, several specialist orators gather in the house of the victim. They make sure there is consensus on the allocation of responsibility and blame for the calamity, verbally expel the hostile spirits, and invite the ancestors back into their village and home. Like the diviner, they speak in couplets, but their rhythmically spoken accounts unfold in approximately twenty ten-minute-long speeches. At the end of each of these brief forays, a small orchestra consisting of four tuned gongs and two tuned drums strikes up, and a "singer" (*a zaizo*) sings an accompanied version of the preceding monologue up to the spirits.

The example below is typical of the orations:

(6)	*ho zaizo!*	hail singer!
	mbyali monno mbyali	on each side
	a kandauka wiwi-na	the lips have talked
	a panewe nganda-na	the mouths have spoken
	"'a mattu mata	"'all the faces
	a tanga wiwi	all the lips [agree]
	nda'iki bongga kedu ate	there are no coy dogs
	nda'iki manu basa koko'	there are no puffed-up cocks'
	lunggu"	it is said by me"
	ba limmi-ngge,	if you say that,
	na tena.	it is true.
	ne be hinna ne	Right now
	"nda ku tura tana pamba	"I don't cultivate new rice fields
	nda ku poka ala omba	I don't clear new jungle
	tana oro leduna inna waika	this is land trod by Grandmother,
	rutta oro iwwuna ama umbu"	this is grass trod by Grandfather"
	ka paukku Byenge Moddu-ko	[thus it is] according to the custom of Byenge Moddu
	ka papata Lero Dinga-ko	[thus it is] according to the tradition of Lero Dinga

In this speech, after greeting the singer, the speaker goes on to register his agreement with a claim he attributes to the singer, namely, that all the other participants to the event (i.e. "faces" and "lips"; lines 5–9) believe there to be consensus – i.e. there are no coy dogs or arrogant puffed-up cocks. He quotes the singer as taking responsibility for that claim, and says he agrees with it. Indeed, he argues, the discourse here is nothing new ("I don't cultivate new rice fields, I don't clear new jungle"), and ultimate responsibility for this discourse belongs not with him, but with their collective ancestor, Byenge Moddu, Lero Dinga.

Table 4.1. *The frequency of quotatives in three genres of Weyewa ritual speech (average number of occurrences in sample 100-word texts)*

Divination	5.67
Zaizo	2.50
Blessing	0.00

In this second stage of the atonement rites, the reporting of speech is increasingly associated with consensus, harmony, and cosmic order. What they seek to overcome is individualized speech, and spontaneous, novel discourse. When locutives are employed, they are used to frame the speech of another participant to the actual speech event; when ancestral speech is reported, however, it is typically framed not with a locutive, but with an elaborate phrase such as "[thus it is] according to the law of Byenge Moddu" (e.g. lines 17–18).

The use of reported speech in placation rites differs from that in divination in several respects. First of all, it is apparent that locutives are significantly less frequent in these *zaizo* placation rites than in divination ceremonies. This impression was borne out by statistical comparisons and word counts of several sample, 100-word texts (see Table 1). Furthermore, while a variety of reported speech frames are represented in rites of placation, there are certain types which are more common than in other genres of ritual speaking associated with atonement, namely couplet-type quotatives such as the one framing the quote on the last two lines of the example above.

In general, these two observations seem to be related to the fact that in placation rites, the focus is not so much on finding out *whether* something was said, but on *agreeing* as to what was said, and legitimating what was said. The speakers do this by using reported speech phrases which suggest a traditional, authoritative source, and by linking their discourse to general, collective categories, not by discovering new ones. They do this not so much by attributing speech to specific individuals in the speech context (as in the rites of the divination), but assigning it to a distant ancestral spirit shared by all, or to the group of participants as a whole.

The importance of this focus on consensus can be glimpsed when we realize that the stakes of placation rites can be quite high. Following these events, a large number of cattle and pigs are slaughtered; who contributes these animals, and who must repay the debt, depends to a significant degree on whose neglect of the ancestral spirits is considered to blame for misfortune, and how that blame is interpreted.

In one series of ceremonies I attended, two rival factions of a single agnatic clan presented interpretations on consecutive nights of the neglect

which caused the collapse of the temple headquarters. Singers and orators sought to expel the calamity-causing "hot" spirits from the village and invite the alienated ancestral spirits back in. An ancestral sign of approval in a bowl of ashes laid at the base of the newly rebuilt house was to indicate whose placation rites had been successful.

The sign not only meant financial responsibility, but also rights to farm rich, collectively-owned rice fields, a rare commodity on this dry island. After nine hours of singing and oration, the first night was considered unsuccessful – there was no sign. On the second night, although I confess I did not see any difference in the configuration of ashes, with a different speaker and singer, success was claimed by the sponsors and participants. While the reasons given for this success were complex, one factor consistently mentioned was the speaker's and singer's oratorical prowess. I compared the transcripts of the first and second night, and found differences not so much in the content of the discourse, but in the style of establishing the discourse's authority. The first night, the speaker's interpretation focused on the events of neglect, while in the second night, the speaker stressed the conventionality and authority of the interpretation. To do this, the latter made copious use of couplet-type locutive phrases.

Blessing song

If the sponsor of the ritual of atonement is sufficiently determined, and has the economic and political resources for it, he and his relatives may attempt to fulfill the *li'i* "word, promise" to the ancestral spirits by staging an elaborate feast. The three most important rites of fulfillment are dragging a tombstone (*téngi watu*), building an ancestral house (*rawi umma*) and staging a celebration feast (*woleka*). They are all elaborate feats of organization, involving complicated exchanges of labor, food, and material resources. None of these feasts is obligatory, and indeed only a few wealthy, ambitious, and status-seeking men manage to perform all three in a lifetime.

In these rites of fulfillment, ritual specialists re-enact a sacred lineage charter myth known as *kanungga* or "migration narrative" (Kuipers, 1990:138). These closely guarded genres consist largely of a list of place and personal names which evoke the tale of the settlement of the Weyewa homeland and its current social order. The example below is a short excerpt from one such narrative delivered in the context of a "blessing song" associated with a house-building ritual. In the final stage of the feast, just prior to the slaughter of the animals for the dedication of the houses, a spokesman – usually a clan elder – stands in the middle of the village courtyard at mid-day, and sings a song, unaccompanied by gongs or drums. At the end of each stanza, the singer prolongs the last vowel of

the last word, and a chorus of young men sings the formulaic phrase "cool water ooo-ooo," at which point the singer begins again:

Nyakka-na lolungo malawo-na Therefore they proceed like rats in a row
nyaka-na burungo tawewe-na Therefore they parade like a phalanx of pheasants
ngara ndukka ole inna-nggu all of my Mothers
ngara ndukka ole ama-ngguuu all of my Fathers

Chorus: *We'e Maringi O-oo* Cool Water O-oo!

Nyakka-na pa-zama-ko-ngge lawi-na therefore the tip is matched
nyaka-na pa-mera-ko-ngge pu'u-na therefore the trunk is parallel
newe wolo inna-ngge these deeds of the Mother
newe rawi ama-nggeeee these works of the Father

Chorus: *We'e Maringi O-oo* Cool Water O-oo!

teda-mu-ni nawwa-ngge wait for this one [named]
Mbulu Nggolu Wola-ngge Mbulu Nggolu Wola
a longge-na kadippu runda rangga whose hair is silver *dewangga* cloth
kadippu mbali mbonu-ngeee a piece of gold from abroad

Chorus: *We'e Maringi O-oo* Cool Water O-oo!

a mángu kangango aro umma who has a spirit altar in front of his house
a mángu katoda tillu natara who has a skull tree in the courtyard ...

It is clear from even this short excerpt from an hour-long performance that this is a highly formalized presentation. There were no locutives or reported-speech frames, but many neatly paired couplets. It is mostly monologic, with few opportunities for the audience's voice to intrude, and challenge or modify the authority of the text (see Jakubinskij, [1923] 1979). Even though a chorus ratifies the singer's speech, and helps to highlight the stanza structure of the song, the content of the singer's discourse is not contingent in any way on these responses.

But while Weyewa describe this performance as an ancient text, the "voice of the ancestors," in fact, it too is linked to its immediate context of performance, but in subtle ways. For instance, the speaker uses particles such as "therefore" and "so" and "this" in ways that presuppose audience understandings of prior discourse contexts. More importantly, performers often elaborate on the couplet names of certain key ancestors with whom the sponsoring family can trace a close connection, so as to emphasize the close relation between them and the source of authority.

In one performance I witnessed, for instance, the singer juxtaposed the name of the ancient mythical ancestor of all of Weyewa ("Lende Nyura

Lele") with the name of his own more recent ancestor. As he described the social order of the village in which he lived, he emphasized the role of his own ancestors in its establishment, thus neglecting the names of the ancestors of a number of people in the audience. Complaints immediately arose: some critics grumbled that his account was not "true" (*nda hinna takka-ki*).

Despite such apparent creativity on the part of the singer, these monologues typically contain many disclaimers of individual responsibility for the discourse, and assurances of the ancestral origins for the speech. In one chant I witnessed, for instance, the singer employed a couplet which assured the audience that no-one was "goofing off" and no-one was "playing around," i.e. engaging in playful repartee or joking. Instead, he sang, the discourse was following in the "tracks of the Mother, the trail of the Father." The responsibility for the "words" in these final stages of performance is supposed to lie with the ancestral spirits.

While the performances of the *li'i marapu* "words of the ancestors" in the final stages of rites of fulfillment are the most authoritative forms of ritual speech among the Weyewa, this claim is not based on the exact and precise replication of the "actual words" attributed to the ancestors. To claim to do so, one ritual spokesman told me, would be regarded as an arrogant usurpation of ancestral authority. Speakers cannot claim to *be* the ancestors, but they can claim to be *close* to them by performing their words. Speakers sometimes reluctantly admit that omissions or additions do occur in these performances; one singer who heard himself mispronounce the name of an ancestor during a playback of my tape recording of his performance suggested that he might have been temporarily bewitched. He would not, however, willingly lay the blame for the error on himself.

Responsibility to ancestral "words"

In Weyewa ritual ideology, the paramount responsibility of all members of their society is to the "words of the ancestors." Only by living up to, fulfilling, and re-enacting the promises those words embody can the disorder, neglect, and calamity be held in check. Those words and promises, in their broadest sense, represent the whole of the Weyewa tradition: the obligations that persons in that society bear to one another as members of a common culture. *Li'i inna, li'i ama* ("words of the Mother, words of the Father") is an expression describing the whole of Weyewa customary practices handed down from one generation to the next. In some very real ways, by reneging on these words, an individual is not just risking misfortune. It can be viewed as an act of turning one's back on what it means to be a Weyewa.

The dominant imagery of Weyewa notions of responsibility in this ritual context are the idioms of verbal performance and gift exchange. The use of linguistic imagery extends well beyond the attribution of "words" to the ancestral spirits. The responsibilities of specific spirits and individual descendants in rites of divination are explicitly framed as acts of speaking through the use of locutives. A diviner, for instance, typically reports his client's excuse for neglect to the spirits as follows: "'I received no message from my forebears,' he said." Not only is the excuse reported as an act of speaking but the reason given for the neglect itself is the lack of a communicative act ("no message"). The way to re-establish responsibility is to renew the reciprocal exchange of acts of speaking: "May you respond to my pleadings, may you answer my arguments." To describe the client's acknowledgment of his responsibility, Weyewa draw once again on the imagery of verbal expression: "He remembers the old song."

In Weyewa ritual ideology, responsibility is not a personality trait of an individual so much as an act of exchange *between* persons. When assessing responsibility, Weyewa do not dwell on a psychological vocabulary of motive or a legalistic idiom of liability; the prevailing metaphors draw from the domain of economic transactions. The "word," prosperity, health, indeed, life itself are gifts from the "trunk" of all Weyewa – the ancestors. This generosity requires a countergift from the descendants or "tips." When forgetful descendants neglect their responsibilities, the exchange relation is severed. Diviners attempt to mend the relation by establishing verbal exchange dialogue. By identifying the angry parties, and the source of neglect, they seek to establish a structure of responsibility for the creation of exchange relations. In *zaizo* placation rites, dialogue gives way to more harmonious forms of interaction. In these, singers and orators use music and narratives to expel the harmful "hot" spirits from the village, and in exchange, invite the alienated ancestral spirits back home.

The final stage of atonement is when the promise is fulfilled with an elaborate feast. By clarifying the structure of participation and responsibility through divination, and reaffirming commitment to the "word" in *zaizo* placation rites, Weyewa are able to give the "words of the ancestors" back to the spirits in unified and monologic form, at the same time as they provide them with offerings of the meat of water buffalo, cows, and pigs. In these celebrations, the focus is not on once and for all completing a deal and thus resolving the relationship, but on setting limits to the disorder that plagued the exchanges with the spirits. By reciting the "word" in the form of the charter myth and thus sending it back, they are not expunging their responsibility, but re-enacting their commitment to its orderly reproduction.

The "fixing" of responsibility: entextualization

In ritual contexts, Weyewa are preoccupied with the fleeting and transient nature of valued sociocultural knowledge symbolized by the "word." The effort to gain control of that knowledge by "fixing" it is a process Ricoeur has called "inscription" (Ricoeur, 1976:26–9). By this he means something considerably more than the literary activity of writing with a pen or the artistic one of etching into bark, or steel, or stone; the diviner's effort to gain control of the diverse points of view following misfortune, and to assign a structure of responsibility to the human and spiritual participants to the event, might also be called inscription in these terms (note that *urrata* "divination" also means "to etch, to carve"). Likewise, when singers and orators in *zaizo* placation rites and blessing songs describe their speech as following in the "tracks" and "spoors" of the ancestral spirits – ancestral "markings," as it were – they can be seen as trying to inscribe that ancient wisdom through their speech. In short, they seek to "fix" and stabilize the responsibility for the "word."

Since this process involves an active, creative relation between discourse structures and social practices, I refer to this conversion process as *entextualization* (Bauman, 1987b; Briggs, 1988). This term refers to the ideological and linguistic process by which texts come to be more thoroughly patterned linguistically and rhetorically at the same time as they are increasingly detached from their pragmatic context of performance, such that the resulting text is viewed as somehow transcendent, or separated from the vagaries of the immediate "here and now," even though in many ways it is not. It is a performance which denies its situated character.

This process of extracting, incorporating, and objectifying words has relevance well beyond eastern Indonesia (see Kuipers, 1989). In societies in which religious ideology draws on the authority of an earlier period of revelation and cultural grandeur, and in which privileged spiritual knowledge is believed to have been communicated in a special style of language, then the concept of entextualization is useful in explaining the extraordinary convergence of textual structures and religious authority. Among the Chamula of highland Chiapas, for instance, there is a "continuum of style" in speaking resources, in which the most formalized texts are those believed to be the most ancient and authoritative (Gossen, 1974). Briggs describes a similar arrangement among the Mexicanos of New Mexico, for whom the endpoints of formality are fixed texts of hymns, prayers, and rosaries believed to have been "handed down verbatim from the generations of *los viejitos de antes* [elders of the bygone days]" (1988:327; and see also papers by Du Bois and Chafe in this volume).

The entextualization process attempts to remove the responsibility for discursive meanings from the immediate situation of performance and to reassign them. For Weyewa ritual speakers, the process of creating formalized texts representing the "words of the ancestors" is an act of reassigning personal responsibility for discourse and "fixing" it with the ancestral spirits. By calling attention to the form of their language through repetitive structures and formal patterns, they evoke earlier forms of discourse, and suggest that their current performance merely follows the "tracks" and "spoors" of the ancestral spirits.

New responsibilities

As the Indonesian government advances its modernization programs, new responsibilities are increasingly demanding the attention of the Weyewa. Over the past ten years, school attendance has become mandatory, taxation has become more efficient, and participation in government-sponsored agriculture programs is often required. At the same time, there is a declining authority for the obligations attached to ancestral "words." Many new government programs in education, agriculture, and health directly and indirectly challenge the traditional ways embodied in the "words." When the local Indonesian government built a new irrigation facility at a sacred gushing spring, this device permitted a five-fold increase in irrigable rice fields, as well as double cropping. This posed an indirect challenge, because, as some young people told me, there were no "words" of the ancestors to guide the complex new responsibilities associated with the administration and organization of this new facility; the Indonesian government official instead stepped into the breach. A much more direct affront occurred in December 1987, when most of the ritual speech events considered in this paper were officially banned by the regent of West Sumba as "wasteful" and "backward." It is still too early to assess the precise impact of this ban on ritual speech.

The new structures of responsibility do not appear to be organized around a verbal idiom or that of dialogic exchange. In classroom exercises and political treatises, Sumbanese who are trying to learn how to be citizens in this new Republic are urged to take *personal* "responsibility." This is a trait of individuals, which can be taught in schools, and expressed in public duty. It is not primarily a matter of exchange, nor something assigned in ritual contexts as a verbal act.

Since the ban on the most prominent ritual speech events, other forms of ritual speech, associated primarily with women's discourse, are acquiring a new poignancy. These spontaneous, expressive, and personal songs (*lawiti tana dawa*) are not concerned with reproducing the ancestral "word" but with evoking emotional experiences of loss, alienation, and

ambivalence toward figures of authority. Often drawing on the imagery of "orphans," the songs are notable for their absence of reported speech. Although narrative in character, changes in speaking voices are generally not framed with locutives or other reported speech frames. Such ritual speech songs are not represented as part of a dialogic exchange.

The Weyewa case suggests that notions of responsibility, discursive practice, and social and historical processes are closely interrelated. Since the ban on the performance of the "words of the ancestors," some officials of the regency of West Sumba have suggested to me that it might be well to preserve the beauty of this ritual speech style in the form of elementary school textbooks for the children, or as part of folkloric performances for visiting dignitaries. This folklorization and estheticization of ritual speech, if it occurs, implies a radical agenda of compartmentalizing the "word," severing it from the social, ritual, economic, and political responsibilities it engenders. As this chapter demonstrates, verbal and ceremonial acknowledgment of those responsibilities are central to the collective life of this eastern Indonesian people.