condemned such acts and interpreted the ills fallen on those who desecrated the chiefly burials as punishment. In the decision to have the kāʻai placed in the Bishop Museum, anthropologists and Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole desired that the kāʻai be preserved to demonstrate the unique and high levels of skill Hawaiians achieved. Others such as Queen Liliʻuokalani wanted the remains entombed in the designated royal burial site at Mauna ʻAla. Kūhiō eventually had the kāʻai placed in the Bishop Museum, where he felt “they [would] have the best care” and where they could be “restored” and “preserved” (30, 31). Bishop Museum archaeologists later, in the interest of scientific study, “opened a small hole in each casket in order to remove and examine the bones and other contents” (34).

In the same way Rose chose not to offer his personal views regarding this history or to draw the implications from the facts, he did not comment on questions his study raises among his readers. Could it have been purposeful on the part of a knowing few to keep the identities of the chiefs in the kāʻai ambiguous? Is it necessary today to know the name of a deceased individual, chiefly or otherwise, in order to provide a respectful burial treatment (especially since chiefs were sometimes placed in hallowed, naturally protected sites outside their homelands and birth sands)? And what is the significance of the fact that only two kāʻai remained accessible by the close of the nineteenth century? Perhaps in being consistent in his respectful handling of the subject, Rose chose to avoid these issues and allow others more closely connected to the remains to engage in debate. In any case, Rose’s documentation of the kāʻai provides a valuable contribution to such discussions.

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We hear a lot these days about culture as “discourse.” But few take the issue as seriously or as literally as Alessandro Duranti, who has written an excellent and theoretically provocative account of several important aspects of political speech in Western Samoa. Duranti’s study deals with the political implications of “speech” in several senses of the term. Starting with a close analysis of political speeches in the context of the Samoan fono, the book goes on to consider how some of these rhetorical strategies are also part of everyday speech interactions.

The first half of the book is an extension of his earlier monograph on the Samoan fono viewed as a speech event. The earlier work focused on the general social and linguistic structures of the fono and the sequence of formal speech genres that made up a Samoan chiefly meeting. This time around, Duranti takes us into some of the rhetorical strategies that speakers have at their disposal for dealing with the
often-delicate issues of assessing responsibility and placing blame in a public meeting.

Since Felix and Marie Keesing’s early study, *Elite Communication in Samoa* (1966), scholars have noted how elite discourse is a highly developed and central part of the complex and dynamic political landscape in Samoa. Yet, unlike earlier studies, Duranti’s work brings to the study of political communication in Samoa an ethnographic sensibility combined with sophisticated linguistic competence. With this combination Duranti is able to take the study of the relation between language and politics to new levels of subtlety by showing us how political process involves some rather subtle grammatical manipulations. For Duranti, language is considerably more than a means of expression or communication of meaning. Using a framework derived from Austin, Searle, and others interested in the pragmatics of language, Duranti proposes that we view speech from an “ethnopragmatic” perspective. This means that political relations emerge in part from negotiation in which the linguistic framing of reality plays an important constitutive role.

Traditionally, macro linguistic issues such as register use, the use of oratorical and other formal linguistic codes, strategic uses of topic control, and turn-taking dominated discussions of political rhetoric. The first part of Duranti’s book is a useful summary of some of these more conventional dimensions of analysis of political rhetoric in the Samoan *fono*. But in chapters 5 and 6 Duranti introduces his most illuminating analyses, as he attempts to show how strategic uses of rather subtle grammatical resources of Samoan contribute in significant ways to what he terms “moral flow”: the ongoing coproduction by speakers of a moral order in which notions of responsibility, agency, and blame are constructed, muted, redirected, asserted, and denied. Samoan chiefly meetings are good places to study moral flow because, as Duranti notes, they tend to be occasions in which sensitive moral issues are discussed, and where praise and blame are assessed.

One area of analysis I found especially useful in Duranti’s book was the importance of what is not said or what is said only obliquely. In *fonos*, as in many other discourse contexts where participants bring a lot of tacit contextual information into discussions, what is not said is often as significant as what is. Specifically, Duranti shows convincingly how politically sensitive agendas may be indexed by certain speakers not speaking, or by a deliberately vague statement of agenda. This was certainly the case in my experience in Samoan *fono*, where the most politically sensitive meetings were often marked by a kind of diffused focus and exaggerated formality, at least initially. Often these oblique exchanges were followed by quite heated debate and discussion in the middle part of the meeting, where more open discussions (*talanoaga*) took place.

In chapter 5, Duranti shows elegantly how responsibility is often negotiated in Samoan *fonos* through subtle grammatical shifts in how agency is marked in speech. Linguists studying Austronesian languages have long been interested in grammatical
marking of agency because many languages in the region mark agency through a grammatical form known as ergative absolute markings. Languages such as these make a range of fine distinctions in marking agency, distinguishing between subject as the "source," of an action and as the "patient" of an action. Ergativity marks a subject as the active and deliberate agent of a transitive verb.

What makes Samoan especially interesting is that it permits the complete omission of the agent, or the object, or even the verb, a situation known as zero anaphora. Samoan thus offers speakers a spectrum of possibilities for grammatically marking agency, ranging from a highly salient attribution of agency through ergative marking all the way to the complete linguistic masking of the agent. Duranti is able to show through examples of dialogue how speakers deploy these grammatical resources in struggles to construct a reading of a situation where responsibility for positive or negative actions is at issue. In chapter 6 he extends his analyses to texts collected from everyday speech interactions, providing at least a suggestion of the applicability of such ethnogrammatical analysis beyond explicitly political arenas.

Duranti's monograph is an important contribution to the ethnography of speaking, particularly to the study of pragmatics, where it effectively demonstrates that people do things not just with words and speech registers, but also importantly by deploying slight shifts in grammatical forms as part of the production of social and political meaning. Duranti's study is also an effective introduction to anthropological linguistics from which students at all levels can benefit. He presumes relatively little background for his readers and clearly sets out for beginners how anthropological linguists go about collecting and analyzing their data. In putting together a text useful to both beginning students and scholars in the field, Duranti has done a major service to the field.

In my 1982 monograph analyzing a murder in a village in Western Samoa, I commented that I was struck by what appeared to be the absence of interest in placing blame for the murder, at least in the usual western sense of focusing on its immediate cause and agent. I proposed then that this omission might suggest for Samoans greater attention to the social affects of the murder than to placing blame. But reading Duranti's penetrating close analyses of his meeting transcripts, and the way in which subtle shifts of grammatical agency (depending on how a speaker was ranked and politically positioned) indexed a great deal of tacit awareness of blame and responsibility, I am now convinced that a closer look at my own transcripts with a closer attention to the rhetorical implications of grammatical shifts might be very illuminating.

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