12 *Spatial representations of island worlds*

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'Where are you going?'
'From whence do you hail?'

These are English translations of everyday greetings commonly exchanged among consociates living in Pacific Island societies.[1] They elicit in response placenames, directional indicators or relational positions and facilitate a continual process of keeping track of one another's movements and activities within culturally constructed territories. Masquerading as simple conversational openings or polite social acknowledgements, these discursive mechanisms have vital, potentially serious interactional consequences (Duranti 1994). No less is at stake in these exchanges than positioning oneself in recent moments in terms of cosmological, social and material orders.

Locating oneself or others in territorial webs of significance is not unproblematic. Nor is study of the significance of places and spatial orientation straightforward. In contemporary anthropology both space and place are contested notions. The world's populations are taking shape as often in diasporas and doctrinal allegiances as in localised communities. However paradoxical, it may be this very tension between locale and identity that has re-awakened anthropological interest in the connections between the physical world and its human occupants. Whatever the impetus, perspectives on space and place are rapidly multiplying in contemporary scholarship (Basso 1996; Bennardo 1996; Bloom, Peterson, Nadel & Garrett 1996; Feld & Basso 1996; Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 1997; Levinson 1992, 1996; Senft 1997; Stewart 1996).

The present volume contributes importantly to this effort in two major regards. It adopts a regional perspective on cultural topography. An Oceanic orientation to space and place is proposed. The premise here is that properties of island geography, Oceanic linguistic devices and Pacific culture histories offer candidate tenets for spatial reckoning and landscape

[1] Acknowledgments: The research of Stephen Levinson and the Max Planck Cognitive Anthropology Research Group inspired many of the contributions to this volume. I would like to acknowledge this intellectual debt and my appreciation for the research program the group has opened. I also thank Giovanni Bennardo for inviting me to pull together ideas stimulated by the papers collected here. Giovanni, Kris Lehman, Charlie Keller, and David Herdrick read early drafts of the summary chapter and their insights have helped me make more sense of the diverse issues intersecting in current research on the language, culture and cognition of space than I might have otherwise. The comments of one anonymous reviewer were also helpful. Still the subject matter is one in which it is easy to become disoriented. I offer this concluding essay as a preliminary step in our investigative wayfinding.

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construction. These resources are selectively adapted and developed in local settings. The result is a series of particular systems in which landscapes are given local meaning, location and direction uniquely configured; and yet which ultimately draw on a set of features attributable to patterns in Pacific island life. This volume is the second collection to include a focus on spatial analyses in Oceania. The initial publication (Senft 1997) is somewhat broader including Austronesian languages from Tonga to Madagascar as well as non-Austronesian languages of Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. However, comparing the Austronesian data and contributing authors' observations for Oceania and Indonesia, both books support an argument for regional tendencies evidenced in spatial coordinate systems, grammars, house and village designs, and broader significances of place. As the first world area to receive such attention, Oceania should serve as a valuable precedent for stimulating comparative study within other geographical or cultural groupings.

The book also

absence of this dimension in the grammar of directional deixis discussed. Both topics are worthy of future study. Sperlich's discussion of environmental features that might motivate the Tongan and Niuean systems, especially the brief reference he makes to the path of the sun and directions of the wind, stands with Hyslop's reference to the importance of elevation for Ambae speakers in anticipating Palmer's comprehensive treatment of environmental influences on the language of space.

Sperlich's is the first chapter in the book to make an explicit connection between language and culture. He points out that Polynesians enrich their environments with numerous named landmarks (Krupa 1982; Loeb 1926), and that they personify place in grammar, cultural practices and emotional attachments (see Cook this volume as well). Sperlich goes on to elaborate aspects of the construction of cultural geography. His attention is focused on selective dimensions of the linguistic side of a process of taking identity from the land and reciprocally infusing identities into the landscape (Rodman 1985:68; see also Kanahele 1986; Bonnemaison 1984; Lindstrom 1990; Dominy 1999). This turn in his work anticipates the integration of language and culture through place naming which is the subject of the next chapter.

Cook provides a detailed analysis of the syntactic treatment of locative nouns and placenames as a single class in Hawaiian. He motivates this class semantically—in that both refer to locations; structurally—in that both lack articles; and culturally—in that both are used in metonymical reference for people who reside in a particular place referred to. Cook outlines the contrastive patterns for case marking of personal names versus common nouns in Hawaiian. He goes on to show that both placenames and locative nouns are treated as personal names when they occur as participants to a reported event and are cast as subject, object or stative agent. On the other hand, when places serve as settings—locations, destinations or sources—they are only weakly individuated, and as thus backgrounded, they are marked for case as common nouns (see Hopper & Thompson 1980).

Echoing Sperlich, Cook goes on to remark the profound cultural significance of place in traditional Hawai'i and refers to the work of others (Kanahele 1986; Luomala 1949; Pukui, Elbert & Mookini 1974; and Pukui 1983) who have previously noted the personification of landmarks and the importance of place for Hawaiians. Ancestry and residence literally 'ground' identity. Everyday experience is understood in the context of historical and cosmological orders associated with a sentient land. The grammar of case marking combines with the mythical origins of Hawaiian life and lyrical references to place in a rich tradition for expressing ties of people with their places.

Ozanne-Rivierre's claim that 'oral texts can often only be properly understood when the spatial context of an utterance is precisely known' (1997:84) is amply supported in these early chapters. A listener or translator must be able to follow references to location and direction imposed on three-dimensional space while also recognising the cultural and conceptual significance attached to place in general and to the mention of specific sites in particular. Texts draw on cognitive preferences, linguistic orders and cultural meanings that independently and in conjunction locate events and suggest their significances.

The three chapters of Section Two (Space in mind) explore cognitive representations of three-dimensional space. Palmer's contribution is fundamental. In comparative study of Oceanic spatial grammars he finds provocative correlations between properties of environments and the logics of absolute frames of reference. Palmer goes on to demonstrate the role of perceptual salience in prioritising spatial coordinates. Without claiming universal patterns in the contrasts made by particular systems, his argument provides a universalist

approach for the investigation of spatial coordinate systems. In achieving this he works out the mechanisms for pursuing research that will elucidate the significance of a general claim which appeared previously in Blust (1997:50): 'Experience is shaped by the physical (and cultural) environment, some parts of which are available to all (e.g. the path of the sun), while others are available only to those who inhabit particular environmental niches'.

In island communities, Palmer argues, the land/sea contrast is perceptually salient and typically (but not exclusively) provides the cognitive anchor for spatial reckoning (for possible exceptions see Keesing 1997; Sperlich this volume; Bennardo 1996). The idealised line of the coast, points of sunrise and sunset, wind directions and the vertical axis may be used as opposing axes, orthogonal to or otherwise complementing the land/sea contrast. Many permutations are possible in building systems of spatial coordinates from the perceptually salient axes. One such possibility is conflation of the vertical axis with the land/sea opposition as illustrated for Ambae where the topography is precipitous.

Palmer distinguishes primary and secondary axes of spatial coordinate systems defining the

interaction. Lived space, patterns of significance that emerge in routine behaviours at home, in the village and on the land, is the expression of relational status in context specific forms. As did Keating, Toren points to the importance of above/below, facing, and land/sea oppositions as spatial metaphors of both equality and hierarchy. Toren gives a child's-eye-view of socio-spatial constructs and documents the child's construction of culturally appropriate senses of social positions and relationships. Children become members of social categories through acquiring the characteristic postures, gestures and interactional patterns that typify relational possibilities. The behavioural repertoires enacted by children (and adults) constitute a subjective dimension of social order. Cultural logic is experienced, felt, expressed and manipulated in manifold configurations of the body and self.

Guernsey Allen, in the last chapter, develops associations between architecture and socio-cultural concepts central to Samoan life. She ties architectural terminology to the family, descent lines, social processes such as conflict and cooperation, and chiefly influence. The tension noted by Keating between hierarchy and equality is present in Allen's discussion as well. The metaphors based on the house are ubiquitous and serve to capture the essences of kinship, village and island life. These metaphors symbolically unite the Samoan principles of sociality with material structures of daily residence, thereby reproducing social and spatial orders in concert in a form constitutive of everyday living. The macrocosm of Samoan life takes shape in the microstructures and spatial relations within the house (Bowden 1997).

Interestingly, Allen is able to tie the house as protective dwelling for the family, to the placenta perceived as protective source for the individual to the land designated *fanua* (a synonym for placenta). This gives additional weight to the proposal in Cook's chapter for integral connections experienced by islanders with their environment, tradition and identity; connections that warrant interdisciplinary study attune to ramifications everywhere from grammar to placenames to posture to ritual exchanges and conventions for drawing. Through these webs of significance, peoples of Oceania are integrally constituted by the very land/sea worlds they construct.

Allen's study resonates with the rest of Bennardo's volume. Her attention to the symbolism of architecture reintroduces the significant dimensions of spatial cognition and spatial reference in language and nonverbal practice. Issues of centre, vector and the problematics of boundaries are recurrent, recalling Lehman and Herdrich's attention to point-field semantics. Family encompassed by architectural space and the individual encompassed by the placenta suggest bounded containment. Perhaps through additional studies on the model of Allen's work, the respective contributions of these larger schemes for representing three-dimensional space may be more clearly articulated and their selective relevance for Oceania discerned.

In summary, Bennardo's volume unites a wide-ranging yet coherent set of contributions. For all their diversity the chapters are well chosen. The authors speak individually and collectively to the promise for triangulating research on language, mind and culture. These chapters transcend the debates opposing interpretive and scientific analyses by focusing on dynamic relations among public acts (verbal and nonverbal), structural logics, and mental representations (Shore 1996) that can be researched through diverse methodologies. Disciplinary traditions aside, study of mental, linguistic or other ethnographic phenomena is demonstrably enhanced in this volume by integrating complementary sets of data and articulating arguments from complementary perspectives.

Taken together the chapters of the volume strongly support the claim that spatial reference, spatial arrangements and spatial concepts are critical components of cultural events and

artefacts. As many have argued recently (Duranti 1994; Basso 1996; Lindstrom 1990; Farnell & Graham 1998), spatial relations are shown to be constitutive of social relations and substantive ideas. Sophisticated means for the analysis of expressions of spatial relations must be available and these chapters provide an inventory of research tools that will prove useful in this regard.

Beyond this general call for increasing, interdisciplinary attention to spatial praxis, Bennardo's volume begins to unify hypotheses relevant to Oceanic spatial reckoning. Palmer's contribution stands out in this regard for he makes a number of claims with respect to the underpinnings of Oceanic spatial coordinates. Of singular importance is his claim for the primacy of a land/sea axis in absolute frames of reference, a position supported directly from evidence for Longgu, Nemi, Tolai, Kokata, Manam, Tokelau, Alune and Ambae. The data presented in other chapters from Tonga, Niue, Samoa and Fiji provide suggestive evidence that the land/sea axis is central to these islanders' systems of orientation although richer descriptions need to be brought into the discussion and exceptions to Palmer's claim (Keesing 1997) need to be examined.

In conclusion, this collection of papers sets out several paradigms for future research. The role of perceptual salience and topographic properties in motivating conceptual logics has been effectively argued. Comparative study should now be informed by the physical and cultural influences noted here and move increasingly toward a universalist approach to spatial reference. This does not mean that explanatory logics sought by researchers will be substantively the same across societies, but rather that interactions of human beings with their environments hold the key to explaining particular coordinate systems. It should be possible to explain the universal process by which perceptual salience selects candidates for the formation of spatial coordinate systems while researchers simultaneously account for particular systems in terms of their unique histories and influences.

Secondly, Oceanic regional studies have been given a huge boost that should inspire continuing investigation. Of highest priority for this world area is clarification of the absolute frames of reference predominating in spatial descriptions and the complementary roles of relative and intrinsic alternatives. It will also be important to address the distribution of spatial referencing tasks over selected resources of Oceanic languages while simultaneously addressing the productive, strategic mustering of these resources in performance.

Bennardo and his colleagues challenge researchers to continue their advances both theoretically and empirically. With respect to theory, the contributions demand improved frameworks within which space and place can be integrally and integratively investigated. With respect to substantive observations, challenges will arise as we follow Oceanic systems of spatial reference now documented or soon to be described. As Pacific islanders continue westernising or modernising in their own terms and increasingly join diasporic movements, spatial analyses will only grow in importance. How will local systems influence the cardinal logics with which they come into contact and vice versa? How will new balances between mobility and residence encourage islanders to reimagine artefacts, places or geographic realms and the values attached to them? How may new forms of multilingualism support new forms of spatiality? What role will space and place play in emerging Pacific identities? The present volume offers a foundation for proceeding.

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