Knowing One's Place: National Language and the Idea of the Local in Eastern Indonesia

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If "identity" is not a given but an ongoing construction, under historically specific circumstances, then "local identity" is likewise not to be taken for granted. Local identity is not established by the mere facts of proximity. Concomitantly, being "out-of-the-way," in Anna Tsing's (1993) phrase, is not an objective fact of spatial location, nor is the experience of marginality necessarily and fully determined by the assumptions of those who inhabit the centers of power.[1] As debates about borders, economies, and even American states' rights make evident, one component of locality, the appropriate scale of reference, is itself a relative and a contested matter. Moreover, the historical record contains enough hidden pretenders to thrones, back-country claims to occult powers, and sheer provincialism to show that people have a fair capacity for strong alternative views, perhaps even self-deception, about their own importance and agency in the world. For example, when officials (by turns Portuguese, Dutch, and Indonesian) encountered the scattered settlements of Sumba, Roti, Timor, and other parts of eastern Indonesia, they did so as representatives of their respective political and cultural "centers," facing the subordinated "margins" of their domains. But the inhabitants of many of these settlements often saw themselves as "insiders," their apparent poverty actually a subtle proof of their superior ancestral authority. In their view, the brazen forcefulness of the intruders marked them as illegitimate outsiders (J. Fox 1982a; Traube 1986). On the larger stage of postcolonial nationalism, as Partha Chatterjee (1993) notes, "the local" is often portrayed in contrast to metropolitan powers as fragmentary, subjugated, resistant—but also as a reserve of unique spiritual virtues.

To "imagine" a "community" (Anderson 1983a), then, would entail a process of imagining its components as well. Thus, to the extent that a "center" defines itself and its authority by defining the "margins," we should be attentive to the assumptions that underlie our own concepts of "the local," and their possible complicity with the "center's" claims to legitimacy. To the extent that people

understand themselves to be "marginal," or simply "local," they may be accept-
ing at least some of the authority that makes somewhere else—the capital city,
the nation, the state, the global economy—a proper, even foundational, frame of
reference.

"Local identity" in the Indonesia of the present "New Order" regime is
bound up with troubled attempts to define and delimit what will count as "cul-
ture" (Indo. *kebudayaan*).[2] As many have pointed out, projects of national cul-
ture face a paradox. On the one hand, nationalisms commonly seek to lay claim
to rich cultural heritages with deep histories. On the other hand, the prototypes
for these heritages are often identified with the sort of local particularities that
seem most to threaten the nation with divisiveness (Anderson 1978; R. Fox
1990; Geertz 1973; Prakash 1990). In Indonesia, one way of dealing with this
problem has been to attempt to construct local identity in such a way that it can
be encompassed by national culture. How this works out in practice is not pre-
determined—to represent a national culture to several million Javanese is quite
a different matter than doing so to Islamic separatists in Aceh, Dutch Calvinists
in Ambon, or shamans in the tiny Wana settlements of Sulawesi.[3]

This article offers some reflections on how people in Anakalang and neigh-
boring districts of the eastern Indonesian island of Sumba might be in the pro-
cess of being persuaded of their marginality and what they might be coming to
imagine themselves to be marginal to.[4] It approaches this broad question in a
more limited way, by looking at certain uses of words that seem to suggest what
it can mean to perceive oneself as the speaker of a "local language" (Indo. *ba-
hasa daerah*), and correlatively, what the national language looks like viewed
from the edges of the national project.[5] Studies of national languages often focus
on their role in the construction of elites (e.g., Crowley 1989; Errington 1992;
Laitin 1992; Milroy and Milroy 1985; Sankoff 1980) or resistant enclaves (Gal
1987; Hill 1992; Woolard 1989). My concern here is with language ideology,
people's own beliefs or underlying assumptions about the nature of their lan-
guage. Such assumptions are often important components of national ideologies
(Anderson 1984; Fishman 1972; Ramaswamy 1993).[6] The practices that mani-
fest these tacit beliefs can be critical to the experience of national identity: as
Voloshinov (1973:19) observes, the ideological trappings of language are pow-
erful precisely because of the "social ubiquity" of speech, which is at once pub-
lic and intimate.

Institutions and economics may shape the conditions for linguistic hierar-
chies, but it is language ideology that makes sense of those hierarchies. Speak-
ers of Anakalangese, one of Sumba's half-dozen languages, refer to Indonesian
as "the foreign language" *(na hilu jiawa),* but many seem to accept its domi-
nance, as they also accept the legitimacy (if not always the actions) of the state.[7]
At the same time, many of these same people accept the authority of ritual
speech and the distinctive language ideology it entails. Moreover, ritual speech,
which is supposed to come from the ancestors, is deeply implicated in the emer-
gence of Anakalangese, and increasingly, pan-Sumbanese, ideas about cultural
identity. Therefore I look for evidence of language ideology in order to return to

the question of what it means to see oneself as the possessor of a local—or na-
tional—culture.

   If the sense of ethnicity is a function of specific kinds of encounters, the
relatively unformulated quality of Sumbanese "local identity" is partly a matter
of its history of interactions with contrasting others. Sumba's colonial period
was much shorter than that which shaped Java or the Moluccas. Unlike some
other parts of Indonesia, Sumba lacked an early involvement with nationalism
and has not felt the massive economic effects of multinational enterprise. (Un-
noted by all but the Sumbanese is the island's unrealized role in history as the
place from which the Japanese had planned to invade Australia. Perhaps its full
potential remains on tap: some people told me that they know the caves where
the Japanese tanks and planes remain hidden, awaiting their owners' return.)
Sumbanese communities have been relatively immune to such common spurs to
emigration as lost access to means of production, the quest for markets, or the
search for religious teachers. There are thus no significant Sumbanese commu-
nities in Indonesian cities, and few returnees to bring a sense of distinctiveness
back home. By the 1980s, tourism and with it, cash-fueled ritual efflorescence
and cultural self-marketing (Volkman 1990), were at a very preliminary stage.
As a result, Sumbanese, in contrast to people across much of insular Southeast
Asia, have not gone far in consolidating an "ethnic identity" or codifying a "tra-
ditional culture" with reference to the national scene.[8] In addition, some Sum-
banese, like many others (Benda 1958:88), resist being defined in terms of any
possible "local identity," welcoming what they perceive to be less restrictive al-
ternatives—such as social and economic mobility, marriage unconstrained by
traditional expectations, a global religion—supposedly offered by a more cos-
mopolitan modernity.

   Despite its apparent isolation, Sumba was drawn into the Dutch colonial
net early in this century, and became part of Indonesia soon after independence.
The relative lack of drama in Sumba's colonial and postcolonial history should
not lead us to overlook the more subtle, and perhaps all the more effective, ways
in which the authority of the nation, even without the support of direct interven-
tions by the state, can insinuate itself into people's self-understanding. In Indo-
nesia, a critical part of the process of constructing local identities has involved
the relationship between a remarkably successful national language and several
hundred "local" languages.[9] The unobtrusive but pervasive effects of national
language are especially important in those parts of Indonesia in which the state's
powers are manifest less through coercive force or economic interventions than
in a quieter percolation through schools, village meeting halls, minor bureau-
cratic offices, churches, and the like. Even before they can transmit the "Five
Principles" *(Pancasila)* of the state ideology, schools must teach the national
language, Indonesian. In doing so, they also implicitly convey various notions
about the nature of local languages. For their speakers, the difference between
Indonesian and Anakalangese languages, say, is not necessarily the same as that
between Indonesian and English—nor that between Anakalangese and the lan-
guage of the neighboring district of Loli.

In this essay I look at some of the ways in which Anakalangese and other Sumbanese juxtapose local and national languages. I speculate that immanent in these juxtapositions are views of language that have bearing on the authority of words (notably ritual speech) and, by extension, the formulation of "local culture." In the process, by suggesting that certain styles of translation imply distinct language ideologies, I touch on a point that is sometimes overlooked in cultural studies. People's understandings of representation—which are often silently embedded in practices—mediate between cultural artifacts and their social, economic, and political circumstances. The effort to gain social and historical insights from the interpretation of texts or other representations demands close attention to these mediating beliefs and practices as well. The student of culture should neither take the existence of "texts" for granted nor dismiss them prematurely. And when faced with "texts," the student of culture should not assume that "reading" is always the best model for understanding them.

In Other Words

At present (that is, in the 1980s and 1990s), a leading contender for the basis of Sumbanese identity is a shared "culture" or set of "traditional customs" (Indo. *adat*).[10] One of the most salient components of this emerging sense of local culture, and one that is strongly bound up with concepts of power and authority, is ritual speech (Forth 1988; Kapita 1987; Keane 1997; Kuipers 1990). Across Sumba, "ancestral words" *(li marapu)* comprise a special register that must be used for marriage negotiations, oratory and prayer of ancestral ritual, recitation of lineage history, funeral songs, and other formal occasions. Most of these performances take the form of stylized dialogues (Keane 1991). Speakers face interlocutors who should be equally authoritative and skillful, and each turn of talk elicits a reply. As used in dialogue, ritual speech aims to produce serious outcomes. It should have palpable effects in the world. If successful, performances of ritual speech foster strong ties with others, create debts, increase wealth and good fortune—and if not, the results may include dishonor, poverty, disease, and misfortune.

Most ritual speech performances are improvised by skillful speakers. The performances, however, are composed out of a large but fixed set of couplets, which are supposed to have been created by the first ancestors and transmitted along lineage lines to those living people most legitimately able to use them. This claim, that couplets form an unchanging text from the distant past, is given concrete support by their poetic form. The poetic structure of couplets and other linguistic properties of ritual speech (Keane 1997; Kuipers 1990) bring to the fore what has been called the "textual" dimension of language (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996). This dimension is what makes it possible to treat language independent of the context in which it is used—emphasizing, for example, context-free meanings (like those available in a dictionary definition) over the context-specific effects at play in any particular conversation. Bringing out what Derrida (1982) calls the "iterability" of language, textuality can help suppress the role of the speakers' personal intentions in giving

meaning to words. To speak in couplets can endow the speaker with the authority of one who is detached from the factional interests and personal desires of the here and now. Full command of this way of speaking testifies to one's strong links to its ancestral sources.

At the same time, speakers must be able to respond strategically to the demands of concrete circumstances through the astute selection and combination of canonical couplets. This combination of improvisation with fixed elements is critical for how ritual speech articulates an apparently timeless textuality with the particularities of social and personal experience. In full performance, ritual speech is embedded in its context of use, while simultaneously taking on the authority of words whose sources lie beyond the moment of speaking and the individual participants. The power of ritual speech thus rests less in the semantic content of couplets than in the intersection between their formal properties, which evoke the sense of timeless authority, and their speakers' capacity to mobilize them skillfully and performatively, to engage in dialogue with others.

In the Sumbanese couplet, each word must be paired with a word in the same position of the following line according to a range of possible semantic relations (such as synonymy, antinomy, and hypernomy). One way of forming couplets is to pair a word in one Sumbanese language with its equivalent in another, e.g., the word for "dog" in Anakalangese *(ahu)* and Lolinese *(bongga)*. Other couplets use words from other Sumbanese languages for stylistic purposes, e.g., the Weyewan "flint" *(tàkul)* and Laboyan "smoke" *(bubat)* in the Anakalangese couplet "cloaked flint, hidden smoke" *(tàkul ma regi, bubat kabuni)*. Like much esoteric speech, this indexes the fact that one is speaking in a special register. It is a style that is distinct from, and elevated above, everyday speech. To shift into ritual speech is to send one's words "borne loaded on a boat, borne mounted on a horse." In addition, the metaphors formed through pairing produce other semantic effects, such as a certain blurring of reference, which adds to the sense that this speech is indirect and therefore deferential. At the same time, because listeners can usually give ritual speech some semantic and pragmatic content, it creates the sense that things that could have been said in other ways have been translated to a distinct plane of expression.

The couplet form thus provides one possible model for the relation between languages and for the authority with which translation might be invested. If this is translation, however, it is of a special sort. The effect is to transcend the everyday and the context-specific, but it does so by treating various languages as equivalents—a Lolinese word is as good as an Anakalangese word. The translation is less significant for its *semantics* than for its contribution to the ancestral couplet *form* and its ability to *index* the fact that powerful words come from afar. These nonsemantic dimensions of speech provide much of the pragmatic force of the act of speaking as an exertion of authority. Anakalangese are very interested in when and how to use couplets, and what their effects might be, asking "where does it strike?" *(beya na pinya pawànanya?)*, but there are few ordinary situations in which they are likely to find the *interpretation* of couplets worth contemplating. Provoked by my own labors, a number of Anakalangese relished

telling me an anecdote—well-worn by the time of my departure—that suggests how the exegetical context arises in contact with outsiders. It is about a Dutch student who had done research there about 15 years earlier. Inquiring into ritual speech, he would first seek literal translations. For example, he elicited the fact that the couplet *jelineka na jara pakaletigu, laijuneka na ahu papawujiagu,* an expression that refers to one's act of oratory, could be rendered "my riding horse leaps, my summoned dog jumps." With this, to my initial bewilderment, the anecdote would end, with chuckles all around, everyone else finding the story vastly amusing. Eventually I concluded that the humor, so obvious as not to require stating, is that it expresses a faux pas: the Dutchman, normally associated with wealth, knowledge, and power, reveals his vulgarity by focusing on the obvious, misdirecting his attention from the real import of the expression. What is it that is lost by rendering the semantic content of a ritual text? The substitution of lexical meanings with equivalents in the vocabulary of another language captures everything but what counts—the ways in which poetic form lends ancestral authority to speakers, how the switch into a ritual register recasts the situation, the implications of choices among couplets, the demand for a response, and so forth. What cannot be captured by translation is the capacity of speech to create a context, give life to the speaker's authority, and carry out an act.

This anecdote reveals part of a pervasive and complex language ideology—that is, beliefs about the way language works. Elsewhere (Keane 1995) I have argued that changes in the workings of power are leading to a shift of emphasis in Anakalangese language ideology—at least with respect to the highly salient genres of ritual speech. This shift in emphasis is one way in which speakers understand the nature of the shifting sociopolitical conditions under which they speak. As Voloshinov puts it, a sign that is withdrawn from what he calls "social struggle . . . inevitably loses force, degenerating into allegory and becoming the object not of live social intelligibility but of philological comprehension" (1973:23). Indeed, as I have suggested, the possibility of viewing language as an object of "philology" is already latent in the decontextualizing authority of ritual speech. But to consider "philology" to be interesting and revealing, and to practice it, is a function of certain historical conditions. In Anakalang, for example, when ritual speech is used in power-laden confrontations, the practical emphasis is not only on its sources "beyond" the context, but also on its appropriateness when uttered in a particular context, the legitimate rights of particular persons or groups to use it, and the consequences of speaking it. In contrast, when ritual speech is treated as an emblem of traditional culture, the emphasis tends to be on semantic content (and, sometimes, aesthetics). In particular, the focus on semantics suggests that what is important are lexical meanings that can be held constant across languages.

It is this, the assumptions implicit in translation, that I want to address here. If people locate the authority of speech primarily in its semantics, and if the focus on semantics implies translatability, what does the translation from Anakalangese to Indonesian mean for the relation of local to national? What implications could this have for tacit assumptions that Anakalangese and other

Sumbanese might be developing about the potentials for action and self-definition available to them?

A "Foreign Language"

In Sumba, as elsewhere in the nation, Indonesian is the default medium of communication in the absence of some other language shared by speakers. Because of the linguistic fragmentation characteristic of eastern Indonesia (in parts of Sumba one can walk through the terrain of three different languages in one day), Indonesian is the preeminent language even of the small district market.[11] By association it is the language of speech to "outsiders" and of the money economy. It is also the language of school, government, and, to a large extent, the Dutch Calvinist and Catholic churches—in short, of political power, modernity, and literacy.[12] Institutional circumstances are such that very few Sumbanese are in a position to speak or write in the most authoritative genres in which Indonesian is used, namely, the speech, the sermon, and the official notice. Indonesian's position has a consequence for translation, which usually occurs between a "local" and the national language. Rarely is anyone called upon to translate from one local language into another. Translation is largely "vertical," not "horizontal" (and, viewed historically and biographically, it is also unidirectional: one moves from a prior mother tongue into a subsequent national language).

Like people in other plurilingual worlds, Anakalangese draw creatively on Indonesian as a resource. My concern here is not, however, with the full range of ways in which Indonesian words and phrases appear in Anakalangese discourse. Rather, I am interested in a few limited contexts that seem to bear, implicitly or explicitly, on perceived relations between languages. The occasional use of Indonesian vocabulary does not just provide names for things that would otherwise lack them, and the significance of the switch is not restricted to the semantic functions of language. Consider, for example, how Umbu Njara, a ritual specialist, momentarily switches into Indonesian during a long discussion that is otherwise almost entirely in Anakalangese. I recorded this during a village meeting held to decide the proper ritual response to a series of misfortunes. Here Umbu Njara explains the limits of his ritual responsibilities (the switch to Indonesian is italicized):[13]

> Na pa-auna duna na dewa parengu, dana tama ta doku na bokugu. Panewigu na ma padenung dumu—*bukan dia punya jurusan, bukan dia punya bidang.*

> As for the calling of the village spirit, that's not included in my grandfather's burden. I'm telling you the truth—*it's not his department, it's not his field.*

Even in Indonesian, Umbu Njara's words take the form that most distinguishes the register of ritual speech from that of everyday conversation. They create a couplet that follows the canons of semantic and syntactic parallelism. Through

such formal means, Sumbanese speakers with a strong feel for rhetorical power often appeal to the authority of ritual speech without actually using it.

Umbu Njara's switch to Indonesian has further resonances, however. It occurs as an emphasis added at the end of an already complete statement. This marked placement makes it highly salient. The repetition within the couplet highlights the manner in which the couplet repeats the previous statement. It is a repetition across languages. Umbu Njara's switch not only builds on the authority of conventional poetic structures but also allows him to use the Indonesian words *jurusan* ("department") and *bidang* ("field"), both strongly associated with bureaucracy. This does not provide him with meanings and referents that are unavailable in the original language. There are many ways to refer to ritual office, such as "burden" *(ḍoku),* "work" *(ràma),* "commitment" *(na pawolu),* or "pot-rest on the head" *(kaliangu ta katiku).* Rather, Umbu Njara seems to be taking advantage of a stylistic option, treating Indonesian not as competition with or replacement for the local language, but as a supplement. In displaying his knowledge of Indonesian, he—a middle-aged man who has never been to school—seems to use it as further evidence of his command of the powers of language. It manifests his ability to draw on resources across great temporal and spatial distance as befits his ritual position.[14]

Yet if this is so, Umbu Njara's robust use of Indonesian may bear other implications of which he is unaware. As in familiar descriptions of "diglossia" in which a "vernacular" language is juxtaposed to a sacred, official, or "translocal" standard, the relations tend to be constructed hierarchically (Ferguson 1959). Umbu Njara's stylistic switch has the force of an appeal to the greater authority of Indonesian itself, as if using the national language added greater weight to the statement. By combining translation with repetition, his switch further implies that the authority of a given ritual, or its language, can be enhanced to the extent that it can be shown to have denotations susceptible of rendering into Indonesian. The examples that follow suggest that Indonesian referents may be understood to be more general equivalents of specific local meanings.

Speaking as the State

Indonesian sometimes emerges in entire passages arising in the midst of Anakalangese. At sunrise one day, after a night of sacrifices, prayer, and oratory in preparation for an annual ritual, a hot dispute arose between two ritual specialists *(ratu)* about certain duties. The argument threatened to wind in circles, provoking at last the intervention of a leading ratu, who at this moment spoke almost entirely in the Sumbanese dialect of Indonesian:

> Kita omong abis suda ini. Jangan jadi masala lagi datang datang nanti! Bikin abis memang ini taun! Supaya abis memang, supaya taun datang jangan ulang ulang ulang lagi itu masala!

> Let's talk this out already. Don't let it become a problem again and again later! Finish it up for real this year! So it's really finished, so in future years that problem doesn't come up over and over and over again!

Unlike the specialists quoted above, this man, who is in his late forties, has had about six years of school. In addition to his ritual duties, he is also an official of local government, the village registrar. He is thus an active go-between for every directive—orders that usually emanate from the regency or provincial level—enacted in the village, directing matters such as fence-building and census-taking. At the same time, his task as ratu was to keep things moving and in order among an often contentious and recalcitrant group of characters, some of them testy, some passive. He was perfect for his role as their leader, for he was both willing to get out in front and brusquely unconcerned with delicacies when he judged them irrelevant to the task at hand. His principal stylistic objection to one man's ritual performance was that it was too slow. As a modernist, he wanted the rites to be efficient. But he insisted on the rites. And he would cite the Five Principles (Pancasila) of the official state ideology to effect. Thus, he would say that, in the interests of social unity, we must enforce correct ritual because of Principle number two, "Godliness": if you pray, it had better be strong. In the switch quoted above, his move into Indonesian coincides with the moment at which his own role takes on its greatest rationalizing authority. It is true that he does not command the "best" registers of official speech—his is a decidedly back-country style. But his harangue more closely resembles the ways government addresses villagers than it does the more deferential forms and stylized dialogues of Anakalangese debate.

With his active commitment to ancestral ritual, the registrar is a bit atypical for enthusiastic speakers of Indonesian in Anakalang. More characteristic is Pak Makal, who held a minor position in the regional government. In contrast to Umbu Njara's know-how, Pak Makal possessed a vocabulary that outstripped his practical abilities. He could hold forth at great length about "patrilineal" society and its "religio-magical" beliefs, but calls to put his knowledge into practice could spell disaster. I witnessed this on one occasion, when he was enlisted as a mediator in a marriage negotiation between families whose members came from several different districts. Matters took an odd turn from the start, when Pak Makal made a speech saying that this was an exemplary occasion since three "nations" or "peoples" (Indo. *bangsa*), namely Sumba and the neighboring islands of Timor and Flores, were to be united according to "Sumbanese custom" (Indo. *adat Sumba*). This kind of speech (Indo. *pidato*) is a distinctly "national" form of expression, and contrasts sharply with the dialogue structure of Anakalangese oratory in both the unitary authority it appropriates for the speaker and the lack of a respondent. To speak of a single adat shared by all Sumbanese in any practical sense is almost incoherent. And it is an act of hubris to claim that different "nations" could be subsumed under the adat of one of them. In the event, Pak Makal's command of Anakalangese ritual speech conventions proved incapable of doing the job. The negotiation began to break down early. One cause was the lack—in practical, if not ideological, terms—of an embracing "Sumbanese adat," and the two sides quickly began quarreling over basic procedural differences. Perhaps the inherent problems could have been finessed had Pak Makal been a more adept speaker. It soon became appar-

ent, however, that he lacked the necessary skills. Faced with the fluent stream of couplets spoken by the groom's spokesman, he responded in prose, mixing Anakalangese and Indonesian. As a result, the groom's party grew increasingly angry at the insult, for direct speech of this sort repudiates the sense of honor that the interactive use of ritual speech should construct. In the face of this, Pak Makal sought a more encompassing level, proposing that they move to "Christian custom" (Indo. *adat Kristen*). Pak Makal sought to stress the common denominator among those present, and at the same time to invoke the modern as both economical and encompassing. This led to furious objections from the other party that there is no such thing as "Christian custom." In response, Pak Makal suggested they dispense altogether with ritual speech. This would be permissible, he asserted, since "the king of custom is Lord Jesus" (Indo. *raja adat adalah Tuan Yesus*). Implying with this remark that Christianity encompasses divergent customs, he argued this would allow a suspension of ritual procedures. The participants in the negotiation could thus be released to take the shortcut provided by straightforward discussion in Indonesian. One man said, however, that with this kind of talk "we have already advanced to the national" (Indo. *kita sudah maju pada nasional*). The man who said this is himself a self-proclaimed modernist. Even he, however, draws limits on what "the national" can do. In this case, the use of conversational Indonesian is neither able to support the status claims that ritual dialogues support nor able to underwrite the sense of continuity and future obligations that successful marriage negotiations should produce.

Thinking Locally, Speaking Globally

Pak Makal's attempt to reach a level that could encompass and thereby neutralize the local failed, but the logic he was following is hardly unusual. The appeal to a transcendent language that can encompass difference is of course a common feature of the state's rhetoric. Indeed, as Errington's (1992) critique of Gellner (1983) points out, this appeal reflects an important feature of developmentalist views of language. The notion of a "rational" and "modern" national language rests on claims to a universality that transcends local particularities. This claim to universality is a function, in part, of the privileging of referential over pragmatic functions, which emphasizes the context-free semantics of vocabulary items. Thus, for example, in a speech to high-school students, Pak Makal proclaimed that Indonesian is the "summit" (Indo. *puncak*) of all the local languages.[15]

What this might mean is exemplified by the role of translation and glossing as forms of explication. Take, for instance, the first full-length treatment of Sumbanese culture written by a Sumbanese. The author is Umbu Hina Kapita, a scholarly nobleman, prolific writer, holder of an honorary doctorate from Amsterdam's Free University, and, for many years, a close colleague of the Dutch ethnographer and Bible translator Lois Onvlee. Here Umbu Kapita writes in Indonesian, along with the loan-words from English *institusi-institusi* ("institutions") and *aktivitas* ("activity"):

Dalam masyarakat Indonesia pada umumnya dan masyarakat Sumba pada khusus-
nya terdapat banyak lembaga-lembaga (institusi-institusi) kemasyarakatan. . . .
Lembaga-lembaga aktivitas masyarakat itu biasa dirumuskan dengan istilah adat
istiadat.

In Indonesian society in general and Sumbanese society in particular can be found
many social organizations (institutions). . . . These organizations of social activity
are usually formulated with the expression customs-and-traditions. [Kapita
1976:94]

In this characteristic passage, Umbu Kapita embeds Sumba within Indonesia as
an instance of the general. The glosses replicate this by grouping the particular
matters under discussion (e.g., clanship, kinship terms, exchange valuables) as
species of rational-bureaucratic institutions *(lembaga),* an explanation "clari-
fied" with a translation from *more* familiar Indonesian into a *less* familiar
English-derived cognate. The more common Indonesian term "customs-and-
traditions" *(adat-istiadat)* is only introduced as a third gloss, showing it to be
a particular manifestation of the more general expression.

Umbu Kapita's use of language here reflects, of course, certain conven-
tions of the genre of ethnographic writing, since he needs to take into account a
variety of possible audiences. But now consider another example of ethno-
graphic self-portrayal. Although its way of handling words differs from the con-
ventions of Western scholarship, it seems to share with Umbu Kapita's book
certain ways of imagining the relationship between local and national lan-
guages. The following example of the possibilities afforded by translation
comes from a short typescript discussing the essential nature of, in the author's
words, "Sumbanese culture, based on marapu belief (animism)" (Wohangara
n.d.). It was written by Bapak D.H. Wohangara, a thoughtful and learned Sum-
banese Christian who was living in the island's largest town on a civil service
pension, and who had been involved in government-sponsored efforts to ration-
alize customary law in the 1960s. In this excerpt, he analyzes the word for an-
cestor spirit (marapu) by examining it syllable by syllable. The underlined pas-
sages are in Kambera (east Sumbanese), the rest is Indonesian or languages from
which it has taken vocabulary. Capitalization, parentheses, and stress are his; I
have used square brackets to retain the original of some words so the wordplay
can be seen.

ANCESTOR-SPIRIT [MARAPU]: Composed of Three Spirits (TRIE MURTI
DEWATA)
   A. *ANCESTOR-SPIRIT—THE LIVING* (God of Life)
MA = *father [Ama]* = Father = Patrilineal = serves as foundation for family law.
RA = *infant [Ana Rara]* = Child (boy to perpetuate descent).
PU = *[Pua]*[16] = Woman = Mother = Completeness of the household.
   B. *ANCESTOR-SPIRIT OF THE DEAD* (God of ancestral soul)
MA = *First-born [Mamaaya]* = first-born = male symbol = strong.
RA = *Ritual Specialist [Ratu]* = religious leader [imam] = symbol of son.
PU = *[Pua]* = *(grandmother [Apu])* = grandmother.
While in the manner of carrying out bodily affairs this term is as follows:

> MA = *Lord [Maramba]* = King = general leader for regulating the life of the clan or nation and country.
> RA = *Ritual Specialist [Ratu]* = Religious leader = he who handles the manner of carrying out worship in each clan, specifically in praying *(diviner)* and *"prayer."*
> PU = *weaver of speech [Pa-unangu kareuku]* = braider of speech or spokesman [*ritual negotiator*] [Wohangara n.d.]

Pak Wohangara approaches the concept of marapu by decomposing the individual word.[17] His virtuosic analysis is striking in its excess: the word is decomposed in not one but three ways. In the process, a single word acquires totalizing possibilities, encompassing a wide range of social meanings and statuses. To do so, however, it must be treated as an elaborate acronym, as if, when a local term is decomposed into its apparently arbitrary constituents, one may discover meanings there that permit translation into the national language. This approach finds translocal meanings by increasing the semantically motivated—and thus, in Saussurean terms, nonarbitrary—character of a local word.

This example is admittedly unusual, but it seems to summarize some assumptions underlying more common ways of explicating the local. It suggests something about the way Pak Wohangara sees the relationship between local and translocal language. Like those given by Umbu Kapita, this translation seems to find equivalents in languages that transcend locality—there would be no point, for example, in translating from Kambera into Savunese. Once a local word is translated into the national language, it becomes commensurable with other global languages as well, such as English or Dutch (animism, in the Indonesianized form *Animisme*), Sanskrit *(Trie Murti Dewata)*, and Arabic (imam, now fully incorporated into Indonesian as "religious leader," here used to gloss ratu). The process of elevation to a translocal language is mirrored in the expanded scale of reference: thus Pak Wohangara promotes the Sumbanese rank of "noble" *(maramba)* to the status of "king" (Indo. *raja*), and assimilates "clan" or "tribe" (Indo. *suku*) to "nation" (Indo. *bangsa*) and "state" (Indo. *negara*). This is quite common: translations for Christian purposes often expand the scope of reference of pre-Christian Sumbanese terms as well. For example, the effort to show that ancestral ritual is fundamentally monotheistic identifies the shady apical ancestors, "maker(s) and plaiter(s)" *(mawulu—majii)* with God, denoted by both the Indonesian *Tuhan* and the Arabic *Alkhalik* (Kapita 1965:81; see also Forth 1981:83).[18]

The possibility that these examples draw on widely available ways of imagining the relation between local and national language is illustrated by a final example that touches on the whole province, Nusa Tenggara Timur ("East Southeastern Islands"—a name that itself implies displacement, oriented as it is to a more central referent found elsewhere). A nickname for the province is Flobamor, derived from the names of its three largest islands, Flores, Sumba, and Timor. I. H. Doko, a Savunese who was educated in Java and became a leader of the independence movement in the province, begins his memoirs by explicating this word. He explains that it means "flower of love" (Indo. *bunga kecintaan*) (Doko 1981:23). To reach this conclusion, he combines synthesis with

analysis. "Flo" leads him to the Latin *flora* (flower) and "mor" to the Latin *amor* (love).

Doko is a sophisticated nationalist whose densely factual memoirs are intended to confirm the place of this province within the national narrative. It is striking, then, that he frames his tale by situating it in a locality with this word-play. The play on words does two things: it provides meanings for proper names that would otherwise lack semantic content, and it does so through translation among global languages.[19] The philosopher Hilary Putnam (1975) has argued that proper names have meaning only by virtue of some "baptismal event." That is, they do not rely on context-free semantics (such as descriptive information) that might serve *by definition* to connect them to the person or place that bears them. Rather, they are connected to their possessor only by an act of naming, which establishes an indexical or existential link between name and bearer. This makes them especially dependent on "local knowledge": one can understand an unfamiliar word for "dog" once provided with a gloss, but "Sally" requires a more specific contextual orientation—lacking semantic content, it is not translatable. Or, when translation does seem possible, it may not be a neutral matter—something Gayatri Spivak seems to have in mind in remarking of Orientalist scholarship that "there is no more dangerous pastime than transposing proper names into common nouns, translating them, and using them as sociological evidence" (1988:306).

The gloss of Flobamor finds a passage from local proper name to generalizable common noun by way of Latin, from which a simple act of translation returns the reader to Indonesian. This example also resembles the analysis of marapu in its use of synecdoche: both analyses make a totality representable by analyzing a constituent. Thus, the word *marapu* turns out to contain the core meanings of "Sumbanese culture." But synecdoche turns on selectiveness: the name *Flobamor* takes three islands to stand for those others that remain unnamed (Savu, Roti, Ndao, Solor, et cetera). If this is indeed a way of imagining how the local translates into the national, it implies that representation depends on exclusion, that the whole is made visible only through selected parts—as, say, Balinese temples might stand for "Bali" or even "Indonesia." In this way, these plays on words echo the reductive processes of cultural codification.[20] More specifically, they seek meaning in local language through translation into translocal languages (Indonesian, Sanskrit, Latin, English), as if to resolve the question of the place of the local by discovering there universal meanings. It is as if only the higher authority of the national language were able to endow the arbitrary constituents of the local language with meaning. In this way, once translated into a supralocal language, specific local denotata seem to become commensurable with universal referents.

Interpretation and Authority

The Indonesian state recognizes localities in part through their capacity to display recognizable forms of local culture (Anderson 1978), something for which ritual speech is suited by its aesthetic and textual properties. In the Indo-

nesian language introduction to his collection of eastern Sumbanese ritual couplets with Indonesian glosses, Umbu Kapita writes, "this book could be given the title: DICTIONARY OF CULTURE, because each couplet Proverb depicts the cultural issues in Sumbanese society" (Kapita 1987:9). This suggests one way in which the construction of "local identity" involves more than just the manipulation of linguistic or cultural emblems of distinctiveness. By interpreting ritual speech as culture, Sumbanese may be transforming the uses of that speech and the meanings they are likely to find there. To the extent that in practice this includes the subordination of the pragmatic to semantic features of speech, there can be complex and possibly contradictory consequences.

Ritual speech does, in fact, lend itself to treatment as a source of meaningful texts (Keane 1995). After all, its ancestral authority lies in part in the ways its textual qualities appear to situate it beyond any particular context. Given the rich layering and multiple functions of ritual speech, it would thus be misguided to deny its potential as, say, a "dictionary of culture"—something whose value Umbu Kapita's important work richly demonstrates. The consequences I have in mind do not arise from any particular ways of handling language in themselves, but from how certain ways of handling language articulate with their historical circumstances.

To read ritual speech for content is to focus on reference and predication, that is, on *what* it says—which is one among many coexisting dimensions of language. If one focuses *exclusively* on content, it will be at the expense of other aspects of ritual speech, such as its capacity to exert itself authoritatively on the world through the act of speaking. It can even be at the expense of the claims ritual speech establishes simply by virtue of its textuality. Moreover, to treat ritual speech primarily as a referential text and thereby as the key to culture, and to do so by way of translation into the national language, may have consequences for the meaning of local identity. For one thing, this treatment suggests that culture is best understood as a system of discursively available, synoptic knowledge (Asad 1986; Bourdieu 1977). By contrast, pragmatic efficacy, skill in performance, the participant roles constituted in dialogue, the implications of style shifts, the poetic effects of formal structure, and indexical ties to particular ancestral sources of authority, are not "translatable."

The objects of this kind of synoptic knowledge often exist in more complete form in the texts than in the world of experience: most villages do not contain all the altars, plazas, tombs, and gateways named in ritual; actual marriage exchanges may omit many of the items named in the speech of negotiation. The gap between what ritual speech names and what actually happens to exist at the moment is often part of the performative power of the speech event. It shows how strong speech permits its speakers to transcend the here and now. In contrast, to focus exclusively on the referents of ritual words can lead one to interpret the gap between text and the world of experience as evidence of pure loss. One consequence can be a kind of nostalgia, in which authentic culture is perceived to be on the wane. This suggests that to treat culture as something that is best captured by translation may inadvertently contribute to the naturalization

of the historical redistribution of powers under colony and state. It does so to the extent that it treats culture as being inherently and solely textual rather than as also being a medium for action that is fully articulated with rivalry, conflict, the political economy of exchange, and so forth. Such a separation of meanings from actions, in its fullest development, can contribute to a perception that "local culture" is essentially outside history (Dirks 1992).

Nostalgia may have consequences for relations of authority. In Anakalang, I was impressed that the people who most vociferously lamented the passing of the old ways and the loss of tradition seemed often to be those who most identified themselves with modernity and Christianity (compare Hefner 1993:117). One of their recurrent complaints was that the remaining ancestral ritualists do not really know the rituals, that people cut corners, make mistakes. But for active practitioners, a degree of incompleteness is to be expected; it is characteristic of the differences between the living and the dead, and thus part of the authority of ancestral speech. The important matter for practitioners is performative efficacy—if, for example, one does not have the "correct" offerings, one can performatively declare that certain tokens stand in for what is missing. Those who are well endowed with skill and authority in performance may also reshape ritual practices through tacit improvisation, and strategic—or pragmatic—abridgments. But from the perspective of those (usually better educated and more aligned with church and state) who see culture as consisting of texts and their referents, incompleteness is only lack and innovation only an abuse. The difference plays itself out in the politics of authority, as I was often reminded by the efforts of some of the more modernist Sumbanese to steer me to those whom they saw as the best sources of information. As one local official warned me, "you want to stay away from villagers—they can't explain anything clearly." In this view of culture, those who are best able to treat texts in nonperformative ways, to cite them and inspect them hermeneutically, are best able to claim real cultural knowledge.[21] Those who speak them but are unable to reflect on them in explicitly propositional language come across, in the context of cultural representation, as incoherent and inarticulate (Briggs 1984). In such circumstances "local identity" may not just label the distinctiveness of one group relative to others. It may also shape relations of authority among those who share the "same" identity. How people imagine their location may be inseparable from how they imagine their capacities for speaking and acting.

Nation and Metalanguage

Many people in Anakalang, and elsewhere in Sumba, appear to accept the legitimacy of the nation, at least in part, by imagining their location as meaningfully encompassed and confirmed within it. Pak D. H. Wohangara, who wrote the analysis of marapu given above, told me that he has often wondered why Sumbanese, unlike Javanese and Balinese, never had their own script. From the national perspective, the absence of writing is something that needs to be explained, and it arises in reference to cultures that *do* have it. To ask "why Bali and not us?" and to see the lack of indigenous writing as a mark of cultural in-

completeness relative to others is to treat all "localities" as commensurable. To the extent that such comparisons arise in the textualized idiom of "culture" (kebudayaan), they treat diverse practices as cultural preconditions of a shared capacity to take a place in the nation.

The treatments of words I have described here seem to evoke an encompassing entity, such as the nation, as that which makes translation and commensurability possible. Just as I do not want to attribute this process to a unified intention (say, of state, church, or an educated elite), so I do not claim this is the only possible outcome, even in the limited case of ritual speech. For example, one might insist that ritual speech is inherently untranslatable, stressing the incommensurable particularism of the local. Several Anakalangese do, such as one ritual specialist who has for years refused to go along with the state Culture Department's effort to revive a certain ritual for tourist consumption, and another who vehemently objected to ritual speaking without offerings—that is, to reliance on words alone (see Keane 1994). Alternatively, one may insist on local particularity only to reject it, like one man who complained to me that "people who try to preserve culture want us to remain ignorant." For him, as for many nationalists, there is no meaningful translation of the local into the validating language of the nation and church. Still others may seek new sources of authoritative language altogether. This seems to underlie the recent appearance of one or two seers in Anakalang. One woman, for example, has visions of a bearded white Jesus and several Catholic Sisters. They read cures for clients' ailments to her from a scroll in Anakalangese. When she regains consciousness, she dictates these to her husband, who records them in an account book. She has found a distant source of potent speech without the mediation of either state or church. She appears to discover in Anakalangese a language fully capable of meeting Indonesian on its own ground, as providing access to something beyond "the local." Yet this language arises in a similar communicative context to governmental speech—a one-way transmission of monologues from beyond. She cannot talk back.

But the institutional conditions under which Indonesian is taught and spoken, and the gradual loss of contexts in which Anakalangese ritual speech can be used to effect—for all its persistent prestige—seem most strongly to support the view that national language encompasses the local. It is as if speakers could discover in Indonesian a transcendent metalanguage into which local referents can be translated. This would mean that the authority of Indonesian is not simply due to its association with national identity or institutional power, nor is it a direct result of any purposeful state policy. Rather, the translatability afforded by Indonesian would provide one way of experiencing the newer forms of power and the accompanying loss of other forms of agency. Translation would help explain Indonesian's association with nation and state by attributing to it a superior access to those topics *about* which people might be able to speak—especially when speaking of authoritative matters. To perceive Indonesian as bearing the properties that make translation possible would be to treat it as a means by which what is said in "local languages" could be shown to be particu-

lar or narrower instances of more general and encompassing meanings—ones perhaps better expressed "elsewhere." In addition, to treat all local languages as transparent and commensurable under the aegis of the national implies that nowhere do conflicting presuppositions, different possible ways of acting, or unfamiliar kinds of interlocutors interfere with mutual translatability. Translatability, then, would be more than a practical convenience; it would provide a conceptual condition of possibility for national order.

As I have suggested, some Sumbanese may find in Indonesian something like ancestral speech, at least insofar as it indexes the possession of special knowledge that comes from beyond the present context. But their appeal to this source of legitimacy may play into forces that undermine them in ways that are not immediately apparent. To give weight to Anakalangese words by recognizing them as local instances for which there are equivalents in the vocabulary of the nation, seems to depend on a transformed view of the possibilities afforded by speech. By stressing semantics over actions, philology over performance, and writing over dialogue, the appeal to translation suggests a shift of emphasis in language ideology. To discover that one speaks a "local language" may affirm that one does indeed have a "place." Such a perception of what makes a language "local" could contribute to how one recognizes who one most legitimately is, as the bearer of a "local culture." In the process, however, those who bear that local culture may come to realize that it will come fully into its own only when it can provide the sorts of texts whose legibility requires the language of the nation.

Notes

1. The nature of locality has been questioned from a number of angles, such as postmodern geography, world system theory, and the critique of ethnographic writing. Ranger (1993) challenges the presumed opposition between local and global religions by describing the "colonial invention of localism," and Appadurai (1988) has criticized

models of culture for constructing the local as "the place of the native." For a criticism of the reified concept of "identity," see Handler 1994.

2. It is important to bear in mind that kebudayaan here is the object of explicit, and largely official, Indonesian discourse, and thus not necessarily identical to the anthropologist's "culture" (on the complex history of the idea in Indonesia's political heartland, see Pemberton 1994). The category of kebudayaan works in coordination with "custom/customary law" (Indo. *adat*) and "religion" (Indo. *agama*); for the semiotic and practical difficulties these distinctions can create, see Keane 1996. Sumbanese usually identify kebudayaan with ceremonial and ritual procedures, "the original manner of doing things" *(na 'pata mema)*. For some ambiguities that critiques of the reification of "traditional culture" need to consider, see Keane 1995. For an account of the languages discussed in this article and of the notation used to indicate them, see note 5 below.

3. Local and national are sometimes viewed as part of a continuum rather than a straightforward contrast (see Mihardja 1977); a sense of the range of often contradictory ways in which Indonesian nationalists have tried to envision the relation between local and national culture is given in Yampolsky 1995 (as Bowen 1986 argues, elements of national culture can vary in their relative transparency to translation in different regions). One discussion of language policy portrays local languages as components of local culture, but these can be arrayed along a developmental scale of relative "completeness" (Tarwotjo 1984:102), which is partly a function of their success in producing serious literature (Rosidi 1984).

4. Sumba, an island about the size of Jamaica, lies 950 miles east of Jakarta. Most of its 355,000 inhabitants live in scattered villages and hamlets, whose economic basis is subsistence agriculture, supplemented with some commerce in cattle and horses. Sumbanese speak some half-dozen closely related languages, their distribution roughly corresponding to certain territorial claims. The criteria for ethnographic and administrative divisions across the island are complex and variable. Despite countless microvariations of dialect, ritual, material culture, kinship systems, et cetera, Sumbanese see themselves as descended from a single set of ancestors and sharing commonalities of language, practices, and values. In contrast, the small numbers of traders and officials from Java, Bali, Flores, and those known in Indonesia as "Chinese" and "Arabs," are concentrated in the few market and administrative towns that have grown up within the last century, and are known to Sumbanese as "foreigners." This article is based on fieldwork in Anakalang, but, as my use of writings by other Sumbanese implies, the general outlines of the situation I describe probably hold across the island.

5. By "Indonesian" (Indo. *bahasa Indonesia,* indicated in glosses by the placement of "Indo." before a word or phrase), I refer to both the standardized and other varieties of Malay spoken on Sumba, which speakers may or may not identify with the national language. Indonesian/Malay is distantly related to the languages of Sumba (a felt relationship perhaps roughly comparable to that between the Romance and Germanic languages of Europe). In this article, words from Arabic, Indonesian, Latin, Javanese, and the Sumbanese languages Kambera, Laboyan, Lolinese, and Weyewan are identified as such. All words and phrases not otherwise identified are from the Sumbanese "language of Anakalang" *(na hilu Anakalang),* my field language and the normal medium of everyday and ritual interaction where I lived.

6. Both language use and linguistic ideology—speakers' beliefs about and evaluations of particular codes—play critical roles in national and ethnic identity (see Bourdieu 1991; Rosaldo 1973; Silverstein 1992; Woolard 1992). In particular, language

ideology is a way in which people explain the indexical implications of language differences. By "indexical" here I refer to causal or associational linkages between variations in language and differences among persons (e.g., a "working class accent"). The ideological dimension concerns how people explain these links. For example, people may feel that some words (which, through perceived use, are associated with the "best" classes of people) are more refined or logical than others because of some inherent properties of the words themselves. This is one way in which social distinctions are naturalized.

7. There is nothing automatic about the hierarchical character of the relation between national, or standard, and local languages. For example, national "standard" languages are not necessarily more prestigious than local languages (Gal 1987; Woolard 1989), efforts to shore up tradition by "purifying" the local language may have the paradoxical effect of undermining its speakers (Hill 1985), and speakers may move ambivalently between acceptance of and resistance to linguistic hierarchies (Rafael 1995). Hierarchical relations *between* national and local languages may also play on hierarchy *internal* to the latter (for Indonesian and Javanese, see Siegel 1986).

8. Despite its relative prominence on maps of Indonesia, Sumba appears only four times in the standard English-language history of Indonesia (Ricklefs 1981), and goes unmentioned in the classic account of the independence movement (Kahin 1952). For an account of one Sumbanese effort to reinterpret history in nationalist terms see Hoskins 1987. A useful contrast to the Sumbanese experience (see Keane 1997: ch. 2) is that of the Karo Batak, who are at once "marginal," yet often dramatically involved in national history (Steedly 1993).

9. Long a language of trade across the archipelago, Malay became the chief language of Dutch colonial rule (Hoffman 1979; Maier 1993). As Indonesian (Indo. bahasa Indonesia), it was canonized by the "Youth Oath" of 1928 as the medium and symbol of nationalist unity and often of hopes for a more egalitarian society. Language planners claim for it three sources of authority; as the language of both state and nationality, and as the "official" or "formal language" (Indo. *bahasa resmi;* see Errington 1986, 1992; Moeliono 1981:41). Its acceptance is often attributed in part to the fact that it is the native tongue of no significant ethnic group, except, to some extent, the politically marginalized Indonesian-born Chinese (Abas 1987; Anderson 1983b; Oetomo 1989). It is also considered to lack the "feudal" character of such major languages as Javanese (Wojowasito 1984:84), and to be better equipped for "modernization" (Alisjahbana 1977). At the same time, the use of Indonesian has tended to become a strong class marker for the upwardly mobile (Oetomo 1989).

10. Other potential grounds for ethnic identity in Sumba are not obvious. Language variation alone would result in as many as a dozen little "ethnicities," mostly with populations in the low tens of thousands. Besides producing tiny groups, this would lead to fuzzy boundaries and a lack of fit between differences of custom and territorial claims. An alternative basis for identity might be religion, for Sumbanese presently include Protestants, Catholics, and a significant number of unconverted ancestral ritualists. Yet kinship, residence, and economic ties so crosscut religious affiliation that the latter does not define clear groups in Anakalang.

11. A survey in another part of Sumba in 1978 found that 10 percent reported themselves to be literate in Indonesian, while 29 percent claimed to have no understanding of the language at all (Kuipers 1990:56); both literacy and ability with Indonesian were probably higher in Anakalang in the 1980s. Because Malay/Indonesian has been a lingua franca in Sumba at least since early in the century, and Anakalang

borders on several other language zones, many Anakalangese with no schooling still have a fair command of the language.

12. School is an especially important means of inculcating a national subject or presenting children with the "proposed world" of the state (Keyes 1991:90). With the increase in funds during the OPEC oil boom, Sumba saw a rapid increase in the number of schools, which are now easily accessible to most children. Although government policy allows the use of local languages in the earliest grades, many Sumbanese schoolteachers do not speak the language of the place to which they have been assigned.

13. The many Anakalangese from whom I asked permission were all willing to let me use their names in print. Because my discussion of Umbu Njara and Pak Makal touches on recent conflicts, however, I have used pseudonyms and also altered some minor identifying details in the account of Pak Makal's negotiation.

14. Although the relevant context of this article is the contemporary distribution of power in contemporary Indonesia, there is a long tradition across eastern Indonesia of drawing on foreign vocabularies for the lexicon of authority (e.g., J. Fox 1982b) or power, even where the precolonial empires of the archipelago existed largely by reputation only (see Ellen 1986).

15. On the use of the word *puncak* in Indonesian discussions of national and local cultures, see Yampolsky 1995.

16. I am unfamiliar with the word *pua* in Anakalangese. A dictionary of Kambera (east Sumbanese) translates it as "wound" or "yaws" (Onvlee 1984:419). In literary Indonesian, however, *puan* is a deferential title for women.

17. In taking the word *marapu* as a key to Sumbanese identity, Pak Wohangara is in good company: as one Dutch observer put it, "who names Sumba, names the word Marapu" (van Dijk 1939:497). Exemplifying the paganism from which Sumbanese were to be converted, the term is prominent in missionary representations and concerns over the translatability of local into Christian discourses (e.g., Lambooy 1937, which argues that marapu must not be equated with possible Christian equivalents). One of the local-color novels by the missionary-ethnographer Wielenga (1932) bears the title "Marapu: A Tale out of Sumba." From the perspective of conventional linguistics, marapu is not evidently decomposable into further constituents found in contemporary speech (see Onvlee 1984:279); for a variety of Sumbanese etymological theories—probably prompted by ethnographers' questions—see Kapita 1976:87; van Dijk 1939; Forth 1981:87.

18. Although this is represented here as translation from Sumbanese to Indonesian, it retraces an initial effort to find local equivalents for Christian terminology. An important part of the discussions between Dutch missionaries and Indonesian gospel teachers in the 1930s was "the use of certain terms such as: Gospel (Indo. *Indjil*), blessing (Indo. *selamat*), sin (Indo. *dosa*), forgiveness (Indo. *keampunan*), holy (Indo. *sutji*), etc." (Kapita 1965:27; see also Lambooy 1937; Onvlee 1973).

19. As one of the referees of this article noted, similar wordplay marked the oratory of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, which was famous both for its playfulness and its use of European languages. In Independence Day speeches (Hooker 1993; Leclerc 1994) he would dub the year with an acronym, such as the prescient "TAVIP," from *Tahun Vivere Pericoloso*—"the Year of Living Dangerously." This expression combines the Indonesian *tahun* with the Latin *vivere pericoloso* and transforms the result into a title, which, since it can apply to only one year, has some of the characteristics of a proper name. Such interweaving of European languages with Indonesian on the same plane, foregoing translation, seems to display the latter's cosmopolitan potential.

This is in contrast to the implicit verticality of the translations from local to nonlocal language that I describe above.

20. These are not long-standing Sumbanese practices. Joseph Errington and Nancy Florida have suggested to me that they might derive from Javanese "forced translation" (*jarwa dhosok*). The "marapu" and "Flobamor" analyses also reverse the mechanism by which abbreviations are formed—an increasingly common and perplexing feature of Indonesian public discourse (the complaint in Alisjahbana 1977:122–23 is still common nearly 20 years later). The problem of ethnicity may incite similar sorts of wordplay across Indonesia. For example, a Javanese general addressing the Police Academy made a series of such plays on well-known ethnonyms and their associated stereotypical characters (Hertadi 1994). Thus, the General explained with a smile, Batak means "many tactics" (Indo. *banyak taktik*), Java (Indo. *Jawa*) means "guard [one's] authority" (Indo. *jaga wibawa*), and so forth. These remarks occurred in the context of his discussion of the need to draw the distinct "cultures" (Indo. *kultur*) into a national unity.

21. Note the implicit asymmetry: while illiterates often excuse themselves from participation in the church, literate Christians are fully capable of writing about ancestral spirits. This is a widespread phenomenon. Sipirok Batak Christians, for instance, may perform ritual speech and then explain the "real meaning" that had been obscured through the ignorance of the ancestors (Rodgers-Siregar 1981:50–51). The distance of Sumbanese cultural writing from practice is evident in the fact that Umbu Kapita's books, full of information about ancestor spirits and their rituals, are published by the Sumbanese Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Sumba).

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