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6

Norm-Makers, Norm-Breakers: Uses of Speech by Men and Women in a Malagasy Community

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The Community

Namoizamanga is a hamlet composed of twenty-four households, situated in the southern central plateau of Madagascar. This area is generally referred to as *Vakinankaratra,*[1] meaning 'broken by the Ankaratra.' The Ankaratra Mountains do in fact form a natural boundary in the north. They separate this area somewhat from other parts of the central plateau area. This separation has sociological significance in that the people of this community and communities nearby identify themselves as Vakinankaratra. The present generation recognize an historical link with the dominant plateau group, the Merina, but choose a separate social identity.

A partial explanation for this parochialism lies in the nature of the ties which brought these people formerly in contact. In the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, people of the Vakinankaratra were conquered by the Merina and brought north as slaves. When the French abolished ownership of slaves and the existence of a slave class (*andevo*), many slaves moved back into the traditional homeland of their ancestors. A villager speaks of this time with great difficulty and embarrassment. The people know themselves to be former *andevo* and are known by others to be such, but the term itself is almost never used. To address or refer to someone as *andevo* is a grave insult. Genealogical reckoning is shallow, typically going back two to three generations. With some exceptions, local histories begin with the settling of ancestors into these villages in the early part of this century.

Within the village, fixed distinctions in social status are few. All members of a community (who are part of a household) are considered *havana* (kinsmen). Those outside the community are *vahiny* (guests, strangers). Within the *havana* group, those adults who have taken a spouse, especially those with children, are considered to be *ray-aman-dreny* (elders; literally 'father-and mother') of the

community. A respected adult without spouse or children can be a *ray-aman-dreny*, but the status typically implies these qualifications. Decisions which affect a family or the community are usually handled by these *ray-aman-dreny*. Traditionally, village leadership is not fixed with any one particular individual.

Superimposed on this communal framework is a hierarchy of government officials who represent the national political party in power. These officials collect taxes, regulate elections, and act as general liaisons between the government and the people in their sphere of authority. These officials are referred to by French terms: *chef d'hameau* (head of a hamlet), *chef de village* (head of those hamlets which compose an official village), *chef de quartier* (head of those villages which compose a quartier) and so on.

Linguistic Repertoire of the Community

The language spoken throughout Madagascar, in various dialects, is Malagasy. It is a verb-first, subject-final language belonging to the Western Malayo-Polynesian subfamily of languages. The people of Namoizamanga speak the major dialect of the island, *Merina*. French is taught in local schools but few villagers, and no adults, speak fluently. Nonetheless sets of French terms may be employed to communicate specific information in particular activities. For example, French directional terms are used almost exclusively in giving orders to cows (see Bloch MS.). We will see below that this specific use of French can be understood in terms of the speech norms we shall present.

There are two major modes of speech use distinguished by the villagers. First, there is *resaka*. This term refers to *teny-an-dava'andro* (everyday speaking). *Resaka* is also characterized as *teny tsotra* (simple talk). The specific kinds of speech behavior covered by the term *reseka* are numerous. *Tafatafa* (gossip), *fiarahabana* (greetings), *fangatahana* (requests), *fiantsoana* (calling out), *fierana* (consultations), *dinika* (discussion), *mitapatap'ahitra* (examine closely; literally 'to break grass'), for example, are *resaka*.

Resaka contrasts with *kabary*, which refers both to ceremonial speech situations and to the highly stylized mode of speech which characterizes such situations. *Kabary* speech is governed by a series of well known rules which concern the sequencing and content of particular speeches. *Kabary* is characteristic of formal speech situations. *Fanambadiana* (marriages), *fandevenana* (burials), *famadihana* (ancestral bone-turnings), *famorana* (circumcisions), for example, use a specific *kabary* as part of the ritual. But any situation can become 'ceremonial' if one chooses to use the *kabary* format, as in for example the expression of gratitude by guest to host, or in the expression of sympathy in visiting mourners or the ill.

We consider *resaka* and *kabary* to be contrastive speech uses of the same generality. This consideration is based on comparison of these terms in unsolicited speech of the villagers themselves. In particular, these two modes of speech usage are frequently contrasted with each other by speechmakers. The contrast appears

in that part of a *kabary* in which the speechmaker is expected to convey his inability, unworthiness as a speechmaker. He does this frequently by claiming that his words are not *kabary* but *resaka*.

Avoidance of Direct Affront as a Social Norm

Status as a Norm

Particular uses of speech by a villager are constrained to some extent by notions of what is expected behavior in particular situations. For example, in the Vakinankaratra, one is expected (in many social situations) to avoid open and direct confrontation with another. One is expected not to affront another, not to put an individual in an uncomfortable or unpleasant situation. It is this sort of expected behavior which I am considering as a behavioral norm, relative to particular situations.

When one conducts oneself in violation of these expectations, as in directly confronting another, the action is censured by other villagers. For example, children who confront strangers (*vahiny*) by making direct demands of them are reprimanded by their mothers or elder siblings. An adult who insults (*manevateva*) another openly is ignored by those sympathetic to the injured party. In one case for example, a family who had offended other members of the village with direct insults was physically cut off from most village social life. The footpath running between their house and the rest of the village was blocked. Sisal shrubs were placed across the passage. No member of the village helped the family with rice-planting, whereas normally groups of men and groups of women from each household cooperatively worked each other's fields.

Another form of public censure is to speak of offensive conduct as causing *henatra* (shame). One who has caused *henatra* is thought to *mangala-baraka* (to steal honor) from one's family or community. One who has caused *henatra* is the center of much gossip (*tafatafa*). One strives not to bring *henatra* upon himself or other individuals, and one way to reduce the risk of *henatra* is to act in ways which support the norm of non-confrontation.

Expression of the Non-Confrontation Norm in Speech Interaction

Affront can result from a number of interpersonal actions: catching an individual off-guard, unexpectedly, is an affronting action, for example. Thus, in Namoizamanga, to enter another's house without any warning is always inappropriate. If the callers are *havana* (kinsmen or neighbors), they shout *haody*, which signals to those inside the house that they are about to receive visitors. Those inside respond to this signal by saying *mandrosoa* (enter!). This exchange confirms that those inside the house are, in principle, ready to receive the callers. Such an exchange allows those inside the house a moment of preparation to rise from their beds, dress, stop eating, or the like. On the other hand, if the guests are not *havana*, they may in addition send a messenger ahead to ascertain whether or not

these others can receive them. It is highly offensive then to catch one unawares, as this may put him in a disadvantaged position.

Equally inappropriate is an open and direct expression of anger or disagreement. Physical fighting among adults is almost non-existent. Small boys have mock fights, but these are always playful, never angry. Typically anger or disapproval is not directed toward the relevant person or persons. Rather, each side tells sympathetic associates of their sentiments, and these sentiments are then made known to the other side by intermediaries. Disputes then are often resolved by intermediaries, such as local elders or persons in the area known to be *mpanao fihavanana* (restorers of relationships). These persons are invited by some person associated with both sides to resolve the dispute.

We should note also that the censuring behavior referred to above is subject to the norm of non-confrontation. Thus, with one important exception to be discussed below, censure is not communicated directly and openly to an adult violator of a norm.

Similarly criticism leveled by speechmakers at each other during *kabary* performances is also subject to the nonconfrontation norm. Many *kabary* performances involve at least two speechmakers (*mpikabary*) who engage in a ritualized dialogue which varies according to the nature of the occasion. Usually the second speaker or group of speakers represents the listener group to whom the first speaker addresses himself. The second speaker normally affirms his (his group's) support for and solidarity with the first speaker and his group. However, there are occasions when the second speechmaker wishes to criticize the first one. For example, if the first has made some error in the sequence of speech acts which constitute the *kabary* or has given some incorrect information, the second speechmaker will usually point this out. In so doing he enhances his status as one knowledgeable in matters of the *kabary*. Thus the *kabary* functions on two levels at once. On one level, it is concerned with the ritual at hand: marriage request, funeral, circumcision. And on a second level it is a forum displaying the skill and knowledge of the speakers. An able speechmaker excels by revealing an intimate acquaintance with *kabary* format and with the range of proverbs (*ohabolana*) and traditional sayings (*hainteny*) associated with the particular event.

One way of expressing expertise is to dispute some aspect of the *kabary* handled by the other speechmaker. But the expression of disagreement must be done delicately. It must be shown that an error has been made, but it must not be shown too bluntly or explicitly. The second speechmaker must avoid confronting the first with explicit criticism. In fact, if the second speechmaker were to directly confront the first he would bring *henatra* upon himself and his group. On the other hand, the more subtly the criticism is couched, the greater his status as speechmaker becomes. So, rather than making explicit verbal attacks, the speechmaker makes use of a number of stylistic techniques. First, he softens the negative intent of his remarks by prefacing them with compliments. For example:

> Thank you very much, sir. The first part of your talk has already been received in peace and happiness. I am in accordance and agreement with you on this, sir. You were given permission to speak and what you said gave me courage and strength. You said things skillfully but not pretentiously. You originate words but also recognize what is traditional. But as for myself I am not an originator of words at all but a borrower. I am more comfortable carrying the spade and basket. You, on the other hand, have smoothed out all faults in the speech; you have woven the holes together. You have shown respect to the elders and respect to the young as well. This is finished. But . . . (Criticism begins.)

Second, criticisms are usually not simply stated but rather alluded to. Proverbs, poetry, traditional expressions are all brought in to reveal bit by bit the direction of the utterance. The same kind of proverbs, poetry, and traditional expressions are used over and over again for these purposes, so that the other speechmaker knows exactly what is being implied by each stylistic device. For example, a criticism might typically begin with the proverb *Atao hady voamangan'Ikirijavola ka potsika amin'ny amboamasony* (Done like Ikirijavola digging sweet potatoes: the digging stick jabbed straight into a potato eye). This proverb refers to a similar behavior performed by the other speaker. It implies that the other speaker has rushed into the *kabary* too swiftly and too abruptly. Like Ikirijavola who has spoiled the sweet potato, the other speaker has mishandled some part of the *kabary*. The proper way of digging sweet potatoes calls for a careful loosening of the earth which surrounds the root. And the proper way of performing a *kabary* calls for a careful treatment of each *kabary* segment. If such a criticism were uttered in all its explicitness the other speechmaker and his group would take offense. They might choose to leave rather than bear this loss of face. In making use of a more allusive frame, the speechmaker not only displays his knowledge and skill, he also allows the *kabary* to continue and maintains the flow of communication between the two groups.

Accusations (*fiampangana*, or more usually *manome tsiny* [give guilt]) are another form of speech behavior subject to this norm in that they are rarely made in an explicit and open manner. Typically suspicions are communicated in conversation and gossip, but explicit accusations are rare. One is not even directly accused when, as they say, one is caught *tratra am-body omby* (caught in the act; LIT 'caught on the back of the cow'). Thus one is rarely held accountable for having done something wrong as others hesitate to confront that person with that information.

The hesitation to commit oneself explicitly to an idea or opinion is itself an important behavioral norm in this community. One is noncommittal for fear that an action openly advocated might have consequences that would have to be borne alone. One avoids accusation because one does not wish to be responsible for providing that information. If the wrongdoer is to be pointed out, the rest of the community must share the responsibility for the act, and they must share any guilt that may result. One speechmaker gave this account of what occurs in such situations:

Even if someone was caught in the act of doing something wrong, then you cannot directly point at this person to dishonor him directly. You must use special expressions or go about it in a roundabout way. But if by chance there are people who demand that this wrongdoer be pointed out directly, then the speaker must say directly in the *kabary* who the person is. But because he must speak directly the speaker must ask the people to lift all guilt from him (*aza tsiny*). If there is someone in the audience who wants to know more, who doesn't understand, then he may respond during a break in the talk, 'It is not clear to us, sir. It is hard to distinguish the domestic cat from the wild cat. They are the same whether calico or yellow or grey. And if it is the wild cat who steals the chicken, we cannot tell him from the others. The wild cat steals the chicken but the domestic cat gets its tail cut off. So point directly to the wild cat.'

In general then one avoids confronting another with negative or unpleasant information. Disputes, criticisms, accusations are typically not straightforward. Disputes are often carried through mediators. Criticisms are veiled in metaphor. Accusations are left imprecise, unless the group is willing to share responsibility for the act of accusation. Direct affront indicates a lowering or absence of respect on the part of the affronter. In public situations, however, show of respect is expected. And, in formal public situations such as the *kabary* performance, it is obligatory. Every speechmaker interviewed stressed the importance of respect:

- In the *kabary*, it is not good to speak directly. If you speak directly the *kabary* is a *kabarin-jaza* (child's *kabary*) and there is no respect and honor.
- Speakers are not afraid to explain to one another, to answer with wisdom. But the censurer must be careful not to dishonor or mock or lower in public that speaker, because this was *fady* (taboo) for our ancestors.
- A *kabary* which blames, disgraces is not *a kabary fankasitrahana* (*kabary* of agreement) but a *kabary fankahalana* (*kabary* of hatred). And the audience leaves. 'This is a *kabary ratsy* (bad *kabary*),' they say.

Direct affront, then, risks censure of others. Directness is associated with the ways of children and with things contrary to tradition. A speechmaker who affronts may be left without an audience. His status as speechmaker is lowered. Direct affront can bring *henatra* and possibly *tsiny* (guilt). These considerations help to explain the general hesitation to openly accuse, criticize, or dispute.

The norm of avoidance of explicit and direct affront underlies other speech acts as well. The speech acts of *fandidiana* (ordering) and *fangatahana* (asking), for example, are affected. These speech acts are particular sorts of interpersonal directives (my terminology): they are used to get someone to do something. The use of an interpersonal directive creates an active confrontation situation. The person directed (ordered, asked) is confronted with having to comply with the directive or with having to reject it. And the director (orderer, asker) is confronted with the possibility that his authority to direct will not be acknowledged. A directive which is too explicit may affront the person directed. An explicit rejection of the directive may affront the director.

We consider *fandidiana* (ordering) and the ways the possibility of affront can be reduced.

First, the order is typically softened by a number of verbal niceties. The order is typically preceded by the word *mba* (please). It is typically followed by the word *kely*, usually translated as 'small' but here just a softening word which reduces the harshness of the speech act. These verbal softeners convey respect to the person ordered. In so doing, they transform the order into a more egalitarian type of encounter where personal affront is less likely.

A more important way in which the orderer shapes the speech act of *fandidiana* is in the handling of imperatives. Orders are frequently formed by imperatives. What is interesting is that the speaker has a choice of three distinct forms of imperative to use: the active imperative, the passive imperative, and the circumstantial imperative.

These imperative forms correspond to the three verb voices in Malagasy. The active and passive voices operate much the same as in Indo-European languages. The passive voice takes some object of the active sentence and makes it a superficial subject. The third verb voice, the circumstantial, operates in much the same way. The circumstantial voice makes a superficial subject out of a constituent which refers to some circumstance—place, time, instrument, etc.—of the action. Thus, the active declarative sentence:

Manasa ny lamba amin'ny savony Rasoa.
'Rasoa is washing the clothes with the soap.'
(LIT washes the clothes with the soap Rasoa.)

becomes in the passive voice:

Sasan-dRasoa amin'ny savony ny lamba.
'The clothes are washed by Rasoa with the soap.'
(LIT washed by Rasoa with the soap the clothes.)

The direct object of the active sentence is moved to subject position (indicated by underlining), and the verb form is modified. In the circumstantial voice, the instrumental constituent of the active is moved to subject position, and its case marker (*amin'ny*) is dropped. Again the verb form is modified:

Anasan-dRasoa ny lamba ny savony.
'The soap is used by Rasoa to wash the clothes.'
(LIT washes Rasoa the clothes the soap.)

The three forms of imperative operate in a similar fashion. In the active imperative:

Manasá ny lamba amin'ny savony.
'Wash the clothes with the soap.'

the person addressed ('you' in this example) is the subject. In the passive imperative:

Sasao ny lamba amin'ny savony.
'Have the clothes washed with the soap.'
(LIT have washed the clothes with the soap.)

it is the object of the active order 'the clothes' which is the subject. Likewise, the circumstantial imperative makes the instrumental complement 'the soap' the subject of the order:

Anasao lamba ny savony.
'The soap is to be used to wash clothes.'
(LIT have-washed-with clothes the soap.)

But although these three forms of imperative are available to the speaker, they are not used with equal ease in ordering. In cases where all three are grammatically possible, the speaker prefers to use the passive or the circumstantial voice. (This preference holds for declaratives as well.) The active imperative differs from both the passive and circumstantial in that the person ordered is the subject of the utterance. In the passive and circumstantial imperative, on the other hand, emphasis is withdrawn from the person ordered by making some other aspect of the order the subject. Thus the passive imperative topicalizes the object of the action—*what* is to be done rather than *who* is to do it. And the circumstantial imperative stresses the instrument or place or person for whom the action is to be accomplished rather than who is to accomplish the action.

To use the active imperative where it is grammatically possible to use the passive or circumstantial causes affront. The active imperative is considered harsh and abrupt, without respect. It is the socially marked form of imperative. The passive and circumstantial forms of imperative convey greater deference and are normally more appropriate in giving orders to persons. They avoid stressing the person ordered and, in so doing, reduce the risk of an unsuccessful, unpleasant social encounter.

A third way of mitigating an order lies in the interesting syntactic possibility Malagasy affords of focusing on some particular part of the action ordered. Syntactically the focus operation relates (1) and (2) below:

(1) *Narian'i John* *ny fotsy.*
'The white ones were thrown out by John.'
(LIT: thrown out by John the white.)

(2) *Ny fotsy* *no narian' i John.*
'It was the white (ones) that were thrown out by John.'

The semantic effect of moving the constituent *ny fotsy* (the white ones) to the front and inserting the abstract particle *no* is exactly that indicated by its English translation. That is, in the focused sentence, (2), it is the information in the phrase 'the white ones' which is most prominent; it is only that information which can be naturally questioned or denied. That is, the question *Ny fotsy ve no narian 'i John*? (Was it the white ones that John threw out?) questions only the identity of the objects thrown out, not whether there were any. Similarly *Tsy ny fotsy no narian'i John* (It wasn't the white ones that were thrown out by John) still implies that John threw out something—it only denies that the things thrown out were the white ones. Notice however that if we question or deny sentence (1) we are not permitted to infer that John threw out something. For example *Tsy narian'i John ny fotsy* (The white ones were not thrown out by John) leaves open the possibility that John did not throw out anything at all. Thus focusing on a part of a sentence raises that information to the level of explicit assertion and relegates the rest to the level of presupposition, a level which is much less accessible to questioning and denial.

What is interesting in Malagasy is that this focus operation applies also to imperatives. Thus in addition to the unmarked passive imperative *ario ny fotsy* (roughly: have the white ones thrown out) we find *Ny fotsy no ario* (roughly: it's the white ones which are to be thrown out [by you]). The latter order differs in meaning from the former in essentially the same way as the focused declarative (2) differs from the unfocused one (1). Specifically the focused order basically presupposes that something is to be thrown out and asserts that it is the white things.

Thus in focused orders, the speaker focuses on some aspect of the action ordered—such as the object which will be affected by the order or some circumstance of the ordered action—rather than the order itself. The order is taken for granted, that is, presupposed, and the immediate issue in the utterance is the identity of the objects affected by the order. In this way, the speaker can give an order with minimum stress on the fact that it is an order which he is giving. Through the use of the focus operation the speaker is able to shift the attention of the listeners away from the fact that the utterance is an order. This provides the addressee with the option of failing to execute the order by calling into question the identity of the objects rather than by refusing to execute the order. That is, one might naturally respond to *Ny fotsy no ario* (it's the white ones you're to throw out) by questioning *Ny fotsy sa ny mainty?* (The white ones, or the black ones?). Thus, since the identity of the object to be thrown out has been made the issue, it is possible to 'disagree' with an order without actually refusing to execute it—and thus without directly challenging the authority of the orderer or explicitly asserting one's own power.

The risk of affront through direct confrontation is minimized in *fangatahana* (askings) as well. To understand the operation of this norm in this speech act, we must break it down into at least two unnamed modes of use. These two modes are distinguished on the basis of the social category of the asker and the one asked and on the nature of the service or property asked for. One mode of asking applies to situations in which the asker and one asked are *havana* (kinsmen) and in which what is being asked for is some ordinary minor service (expected of *havana*) or some ordinary, not uncommon piece of property, such as tobacco or hair

grease. Let us call this category of things asked for category A. A second mode of asking applies to more than one social category and to more than one goods and services category. First of all, it applies to all *fangatahana* in which the asker and asked are *vahiny* (non-kinsmen) regardless of the goods and services asked for. Secondly, it applies to *fangatahana* between *havana* where the good or service asked for is not minor or ordinary or automatically expected of *havana*. Let us call this category of things category B. For example, a *havana* asking to borrow another's plough or wagon would use this mode of *fangatahana*. This second mode of use then applies to *vahiny* for category A or B things and to *havana* for category B things only.

	vahiny	*havana*
Mode 1	—	A
Mode 2	A or B	B

These two modes of use differ in the degree to which the one asked is obligated to comply with the directive. *Havana* asked for category A goods and services are obligated to comply. They must provide these goods and services, provided they are in a position to. This obligation is a basic behavioral expression of the *havana* relationship. Another verbal expression of the *havana* relationship is the greeting which one *havana* gives another when entering his or her house: *Inona no masaka?* (What's cooking?) This expression is taken as a demand for a cooked meal, in particular, for rice. Close *havana* have the right to this food. Many times there is no cooked food in the house, and the visitor does not really expect to eat. He demands just out of form, to emphasize the kind of tie which exists between them. Similarly, a *havana* expects another *havana* to provide him or her with tobacco or sweets or other goods which belong to this category. This kind of obligation is not expected among *vahiny*, however, nor among *havana* for category B goods and services.

Where a strong obligation to comply with the directive does not exist, the person asked is thought to be in a superior position relative to the asker; the one asked has the right to refuse the asker. This difference in status is well understood by speechmakers, who are often put in the position of asking for things in public *kabary*. In every *kabary*, the speechmaker asks for the blessing and support of the audience, permission to speak, guilt to be lifted, and so on. And in these parts of every *kabary*, the speechmaker stresses his inferiority in an elaborate manner.

> When I ask for the guilt and blame to be lifted from me (for standing here before you), I am not an originator of words but a preserver only of tradition, a successor to my father by accident. And not only this, I am like a small cricket, not master of the tall plant or able to perch on the tip of the tall plant like the *sopanga* cricket, but my destiny is to stay on the ground because I am the *tsimbotry* cricket, an orphan with no ancestors. I am not the prince of birds, the *railovy*, but the *tsikirity* bird who trails behind in the flock, for I am not an originator of words but a borrower and a preserver of tradition and by accident replace others. So I ask for the guilt and taboo to be lifted, respected gentlemen and all those facing (me) at this moment.

One *kabary* is a *fangatahana* in itself. That is the *kabary vody ondry*, the marriage request. The askers are the boy's family and those asked are the girl's family, and the marriage of the girl to the boy is what is asked for. The *kabary* itself is an elaborate expression of the second mode of *fangatahana*, where the speaker for the boy's family is considered to be much lower than that of the speaker for the girl's family. A speechmaker made these comments to me concerning this relationship:

> You should use *teny malemy* (soft words) when you make requests. You shouldn't be like a boaster or person on the same level as the other. It is our *fomba*, custom, to think of requesters, in this case, the boy's family, as lower than the requested, for example, the elders of the girl's family. Even if the girl's speaker is unskilled, you must put yourself in a lower position and appear to lose the *kabary* (that is, to appear less knowledgeable) to give honor to the girl's side of the family.

In the second mode of *fangatahana*, then, the one asked has in principle the option of refusing to comply. In the first mode, the one asked is rather obligated to comply. The risk of affront to the asker is much higher in the second mode than in the first because of this option. That is, a *havana* who asks another *havana* for a category A item is not risking loss of face. He knows the other must comply if possible. On the other hand, where rejection is a possibility as in the second mode of *fangatahana*, affront is also a possibility. Given this, the asker acts in ways which minimize the risk of personal affront. In particular, the asker avoids directly confronting the one asked with having to comply with the directive or having to reject it. He avoids putting the one asked on the spot.

First, direct affront is avoided in this mode of *fangatahana*, which I shall call the request mode, in that the request is often not presented by the actual requester(s) but by a stand-in who represents the actual requester(s). This is formalized in request *kabary* where speechmakers are employed to represent others. This arrangement does not place the actual requester and the one requested in a direct relationship. The actual requester is saved from any possible affront which could result from the request.

Second, the request mode is typically formulated and presented in a veiled manner. The asker does not make it explicit that he is requesting some object or service from the other. Rather, that which is desired is alluded to in the conversational context. Often a request is signaled by an abrupt change in conversational topic. The new topic moves the speaker or speakers to make reference to what is desired from the listener(s). Young boys suddenly speak of a journey to be made that evening and describe the blackness of the night and their lack of candles. Women will chatter about the poor quality of Malagasy soap in relation to European soap in my presence. Men will moan over the shortage of funds for a particular project. The host or listener is expected to pick up these cues and satisfy the request.

A consequence of this format is that neither the requester nor the requestee is committed to a particular action. That is, in alluding to, rather than openly spec-

ifying the thing requested, the requester does not commit himself to making the request and is not so open to the rebuff of having the request denied. He may intend the utterance to be taken as a request, but he does not make this explicit.

This lack of commitment, of course, allows the person requested the same option. He is not obligated to recognize the utterance as a request. He may choose just how he wishes to define the activity and need not commit himself to any response at all. Thus the party to whom the request is directed is not forced to deny the request (if that is his intention) and, in so doing, cause great loss of face on both sides. The allusive format, then, enables the one requested to deny the request (by 'misinterpreting' it) without affront.

Where the risk of affront is minimal, as in the first mode of *fangatahana*, these constraints do not exist. The asking is relatively direct and explicit, and there are no stand-in requesters. *Havana* are able to ask for category A items in this manner because compliance, if possible, is assured. The asker is not faced with a possible loss of face or rebuff. The one asked may only grudgingly give up tobacco from the market but he does give in to the *fangatahana*. Where affront is a risk, then, *fangatahana* are inexplicit and indirectly presented (mode 2). Where affront is not a risk or is a minimal risk, *fangatahana* are straightforward.

Women as Norm-Breakers

According to the norm, one avoids putting another individual in an uncomfortable or unpleasant position, where loss of face could result. One shows respect to the other by avoiding this type of confrontation. Women, however, do not appear to operate according to these community ground rules for speaking. In particular they are associated with the direct and open expression of anger towards others. Their social behavior contrasts sharply with men in this respect. Men tend not to express their sentiments openly. They admire others who use language subtly. They behave in public in such a way as to promote interpersonal ease. In short, they avoid creating unpleasant face-to-face encounters. Women, on the other hand, tend to speak in a more straightforward manner. They express feelings of anger or criticism directly to the relevant party. Both men and women agree that women have *lavalela*, a long tongue.

Men acknowledge this difference in the speechways of men and women. They consider the use of speech by men to be more skillful than that by women. What is not acknowledged is that men often make use of this difference. In other words, men often use women to confront others with some unpleasant information. Women communicate sentiments which men share but dislike expressing. Men are associated with the maintenance of good communication in a relationship, and women are associated with the expression of socially damaging information. In one instance, for example, the young boys of the village played ball against the side of a newly whitewashed house. They chipped off patches of color. The landlord returned, observed this situation but after an entire day in the village, said

only, 'If you don't patch that, things might not go well between us.' The next day he returned with his wife. As she approached the village, she accosted the first person she saw (which happened to be the eldest man in the village) with accusations. She told everyone within hearing range of their anger and just what must be done to repair the wall. This outburst caused a great deal of grumbling and unpleasant feelings among the villagers. But the outburst was almost expected. It was not a shocking encounter as it came from the wife and not the landlord himself. Such a display of anger is permissible, perhaps even appropriate, because it is initiated by a woman.

In another instance, the oldest man in the village acquired a wife without consulting other kinsmen in his village. Without a word, the old man conducted the woman into his house. A week went by and no one said anything to him or his woman. Then, as the old man passed in front of a gathering of women one morning, they let loose their criticism of his behavior. He looked down, made excuses, and exhibited signs of discomfort. Then, one of the other village men approached and began to talk of some trivial topic, as if he had been totally unaware of the scene which had just passed. The other man marked his entrance with a change of topic. He refused to be associated with the behavior of the women, even though he agreed with their opinions. Women relieve some social pressure in this way, for after these episodes generally nothing more is said. But women can never be *mpanao fihavanana* (restorers of relationships) because they are thought to lack subtlety and sensitivity and because they are associated with communication of negative information.

In fact, women are associated with direct speech, and they are used by men wherever this manner is useful. A man and woman are walking along the side of a road. It is the woman who waves down our car and asks if they might have a ride. And it is the woman who asks for information such as: Where are you going? Where have you been? How much did that cost? All of these speech acts put the addressee on the spot. All are potentially affronting situations.

It is in part because women are more straightforward that they are the ones who sell village produce in the markets, and the ones who buy the everyday necessities in the markets. Buying and selling is a confrontation situation as bargaining is the norm and as the seller has to declare an initial price. The seller commits himself to wanting to sell by virtue of his position. Women are not afraid to confront the buyer or seller with their opinions as to what the price ought to be. They bargain in an expeditious and straightforward manner. Men bargain as well, but their manner is more subtle and ornate. The encounter is much more elaborate; it can sometimes be a show, where others gather round to watch the proceedings. And, rather than lose face, the buyer will frequently walk away from the last given price and later send a young boy back to buy the item. In this way, both the buyer and seller have avoided an unpleasant confrontation. This kind of bargaining is typical of that between men. But this kind of bargaining does not put as many coins in the pocket as do the more rapid transactions between women.

Men sell typically those items which have a more or less fixed price. For example, they sell all the meat in the market. Women tend to sell the more bargainable items such as vegetables and fruit. Sometimes these stalls are manned by a husband and wife. But it is typically the wife who bargains and the man who weighs the items and collects the money. Men pride themselves on their ability to bargain skillfully, but they leave the majority of bargaining encounters to their women.

Women use one kind of power and men another. Women initiate speech encounters which men shy away from. They are the ones who primarily reprimand children. They discuss in detail the shameful behavior of others in daily gossip and speak openly of those who *mangala-baraka*, steal honor away from the family. They are associated with direct criticism and haggling in markets. They are able to put others on the spot, to confront others with possibly offensive information where men cannot or prefer not. Women tend to be direct and open in manner. Men tend to conduct themselves with discretion and subtlety. Women dominate situations where directness is called for. Men, on the other hand, dominate situations where indirectness is desirable.

Indirectness as Ideal Style

Indirectness is desirable wherever respect is called for, and affront is to be avoided. In particular, it is desirable in all *kabary* (ceremonial speech situations). As mentioned before, the *kabary* performance is a formal dialogue between speechmakers representing different groups, for example, the hosts of a particular ceremony and those who have come to participate, or, as in the marriage request, the family of the girl and the family of the boy. Each speechmaker answers the other. That is, the first speechmaker completes one part of the *kabary* and the second speechmaker responds. The first speechmaker does not proceed without the support of the second speechmaker and the group he represents. Thus, a good deal of the *kabary* is spent eliciting the approval and support of the other group and affirming this support. For example, in the opening parts of a major *kabary*, the speechmaker asks for the blessing of the audience and they answer:

Mahaleova! Mahazaka! Andriamatoa o! Tsy ho solafaka, tsy ho tafintohina fa dia: mahavita soa aman-tsara.

Go ahead! Be able! Not to slip, not to bump into things, but to finish good and well.

Furthermore, the speechmaker stresses unity of both groups by making frequent reference to *isika mianankavy* (we family [inclusive of addressee]). Often reference to the inclusive *isika* will occur two or three times in one passage:

Dia misaotra an'Andriamanitra isika mianankavy, nohon'ny fanomezany tombon'andro antsika rehetra izao, ka tratry izao fotoana anankiray izay nokendrentsika mianankavy izao.

Then *we family* thank God for the gift of a tranquil day for *us all* at this time so one time has arrived now which was envisioned by *us family*.

Support and unity cannot be achieved where respect is not shown by the speechmaker. And the major way in which respect is expressed is by using indirect speech. A speechmaker who speaks directly, bluntly, affronts his audience. This effect is recognized by speechmakers, and they often make use of traditional sayings relevant to this behavior in the *kabary* itself. For example:

Tonga eto aminareo mianankavy izahay. Tsy mirodorodo toa omby manga, fa mitaitsika toa vorom-potsy, mandeha mora toa akanga diso an'Andringitra, ary mandeha miandana toy ny akoho hamonjy lapa.

We come here to you family. Not stampeding like wild bulls but approaching softly like a white bird and slowly, proceeding carefully like a lost pigeon and proceeding slowly like a chicken to reach the palace.

To speak indirectly is to speak with skill. Men and women alike consider indirect speech to be more difficult to produce than direct speech. Most villagers can tell you that one who speaks well *manolana teny* (twists words.) In *kabary*, a good speechmaker *miolaka* (winds in and out). The meaning of the utterance becomes clear gradually as the speaker alludes to the intent in a number of ways. This style of speech use is referred to in a number of proverbs often used by the villagers, for example:

Toy ny manoto, ka mamerina in-droa manan'antitra.

Like paint, one returns twice and makes it darker.

Each time a speechmaker alludes to the subject matter, the richer the meaning of that subject becomes. A good speechmaker can return to a subject in many ways. He is able to use proverbs (*ohabolana*), traditional sayings (*hainteny*), and elaborate metaphors to this end. One measures his ability in terms of this kind of richness. Speech which is used in this manner is *tsara lahatra* (well arranged). Speech which is simple and direct is *teny bango tokana* (speech of a single braid), that is, unsophisticated speech.

Men alone are considered to be able speechmakers. Even in everyday *resaka*, they are associated with the style of speaking required for the *kabary*: their requests are typically delayed and inexplicit, accusations imprecise, and criticisms subtle. They conduct themselves so as to minimize loss of face in a social situation. As women are associated with quite the opposite kind of behavior, they are in general considered unsuitable as speechmakers. The one exception to this is the *kabary* given by a woman of a boy's family to women of a girl's family in arranging for a marriage. The *kabary* is short and relatively simple, however, and many times it is replaced by simple *resaka*. Furthermore, it is a *kabary* to be heard by women only: 'When the mother of the boy speaks, it is only the women who listen. It is not right if there are men there,' commented one speechmaker.

Woman are considered able in handling everyday interactions within the village. The people with whom they interact most frequently are other women of the

village and children. In fact, women with their young children form a semi-autonomous group within the village. They work together in the fields, and they relax together around the rice-mortars in the village courtyards. They have a more intimate relationship with one another than do men with each other or do men with women. (An exception to this generalization is the intimacy shown in joking relationships such as those which obtain between brothers-in-law, brother-and sister-in-law, and so on (M. Bloch, personal communication)). They use intimate terms of address and talk about intimate subjects: dysentery, intestinal worms, menstruation, malformed babies, sexual relations outside marriage. They are able to invade each other's personal space (Goffman 1971) in a way that would be taboo among most adult men. They dig into each other's hair looking for fleas. They look underneath a pregnant woman's dress to peek at the bands applied by the midwife to her womb. They bathe together in streams. Within this group, intimacy and directness is the norm.

Kabary, on the other hand, typically involve more than one village. They establish settings where people *tsy mifankazatra* (not accustomed to one another) interact—distant *havana* (kinsmen) and *vahiny* (strangers). Within this group, respect and indirectness are the norms.

We have, then, on the one hand, directness associated with women and children, and on the other hand, indirectness associated with men and intervillage situations. But directness and indirectness have further association. Indirectness is considered to be *fomban'ny ntaolo* (the way of one's ancestors). The use of *teny miolaka* (winding speech) represents to the villager a set of social attitudes held in the past, where respect and love for one another were always displayed. It is the traditional Malagasy speech-way. The use of direct speech, such as that of women and that of 'askings' between kinsmen, is associated with a loss of tradition, with contemporary mores. It is felt that today people speak directly because they do not value interpersonal relationships:

> The people today speak more directly than the ancestors. The people before took care to preserve relationships. Today people just say directly the faults of others, challenge the other. The ancestors could not answer like that. They made circles around the idea. Today few young people like the *kabary* and proverbs and traditional sayings. They don't like Malagasy language but foreign languages. Children are afraid of being beneath another child in knowledge of French or math. It is like our speechways were lost. . . . The government should give an examination, make everyone learn these Malagasy ways and the ways of mutual respect (speech-maker at Loharano).

As indicated in this quote, the change in speech use is thought to be due in part to the influence of European languages, in particular of French. Children learn foreign languages in school and they forget traditional speechways—this sentiment is expressed by many elders. The contrast in speech use for Europeans and for Malagasy is evident in urban contexts, where both interact in commercial settings. In these settings, the Malagasy must conform to the more direct, European-style service encounters. For the average villager from the countryside, these encounters are not always successful. For the European or European-trained Malagasy, these encounters are irritating and time-consuming. Some large business firms, in fact, recognize the difference in interactional style to the extent that particular employees are delegated to handle encounters with rural Malagasy. But further, Malagasy are expected to handle service encounters with Europeans in town markets, where *they* are the venders and Europeans form part of the clientele. It is appropriate, then, that women rather than men are recruited from the village to confront the European buyer. Directness and matter-of-factness are characteristic of both.

This final association of directness with the use of European languages helps to explain an important exception in the use of speech by men. There is one consistent situation in which men do not conform to the ideal style of indirect speech. When giving orders to cows, men speak in a terse and abrupt manner (Bloch MS.) But what is interesting is that these orders are couched in French rather than Malagasy. In particular, the French directional terms *à gauche!* and *à droite!* are used. There exists an equivalent set of directional terms in Malagasy. We must ask, then, why French is selected. At least a partial answer can be gained from this analysis, for the contexts in which men address cows necessitate immediate and direct action. For example, many tasks in cultivation are accomplished with cows. And in these contexts allusive speech is not effective. It is consistent with this analysis that men should choose to use French in such moments. Furthermore, animals occupy a low status. They are not approached with respect. The direct use of speech by men expresses this relationship (see also Bloch MS.)

INDIRECTNESS	DIRECTNESS
Men	*Women*
Skilled speech	*Unsophisticated speech*
Traditional speech ways	*Contemporary speech ways*
Malagasy language	*European languages*

We have presented a norm and an ideal speech style. Men tend to conduct themselves in public in accordance with the norm. Women tend to operate outside this norm. Further, the speech of men is thought (by men and women) to come closer to the ideal use of speech than the speech of women. Where subtlety and delicacy are required in social situations, men are recruited—witness the *kabary*. Where directness and explicitness are desirable in social situations, women are recruited.

Notes

1. Native terms and transcriptions from the native language follow the established conventions for written Malagasy.

References

Bloch, M. (MS.). *Why do Malagasy cows speak French?*
Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public.* New York: Harper & Row.