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Time in all its manifestations permeates anthropological writing—unilinear time in studies of change and evolution, cyclical time in studies of the domestic, seasonal, or mythological cycle, timelessness in studies of tradition and ancestral presence, and so forth. And the handling of time is one of those great themes that splits “them” from “us”—the Western world is an empire of time, a chronometric civilization in which time is regulated and commoditized in the buying and selling of labour, usufructs, “futures,” and the like. Benjamin Franklin’s “Remember that Time is Money” set up a then-startling equation between the two major cultural eccentricities which lie at the foundation of our way of life. Given all this, there is a curious toothlessness about time in anthropology, a lack of analytical clarity, an avoidance (with notable exceptions, of course, as in Gell 1992) of careful descriptive study of the phenomena, and a reluctance to tackle such a multifaceted range of issues frontally. In this context, this special issue is very welcome. Does it advance our understanding, restore our analytical dexterity? Despite the fact that all of the papers are interesting in their own ways, I fear we are not much farther: each paper reminds us of familiar themes, emergent from particular analytic or ethnographic perspectives, without opening up broad new perspectives or contributing to a larger anthropology of time. I will comment here on three of the papers that touch especially on language. Schieffelin focusses on the transformations wrought in Kaluli discourse by the forces of missionization over the past 30 years. Using rich field materials gathered over that period, she demonstrates themes familiar to many fieldworkers—the emergence of a new cadre of indigenous preachers who castigate the heathen past, preach the urgency of a Christian future, and invent new monologic forms of discourse appropriate to those ends. She notes the original mission’s obsession with time, reflected in bells, schedules, and urgency for results, and indicates how the language has changed to accommodate calendrical time. But she fails to tell us much that we need to know as essential background— what exactly were the traditional systems of temporal reckoning, the notions of genealogical and ancestral time, and the sources of illenarianism? Comparing her account with my own experiences of a Papuan society reveals much traditional lore that would be of interest here. The inhabitants of Rossel Island speak a language (Yéli Dnye) with six diurnal tenses—effectively coding what happened earlier today, what yesterday, and what before that in the past and, in the other direction, what will happen today, tomorrow, or farther into the future. It is impossible to be vague about either the past or the future, even imperatives coming in “now” and “later” forms. This is in fact a society with some obsession about time. On parting with someone you must use a formula that expresses on which day in the future you expect to see the person again. There are special monolexemic numerals, meaning “the *n*th day” up to ten, with a generative system after that. But months, seasons, and years are imprecisely demarcated cycles because there is no traditional calendric system of any kind—that is, no fixed points to count from except *now*, no dating system, and no fixed units like weeks, months, years. The absence of a calendrical system must be general to all traditional cultures without cities, courts, or literacy; they are largely motivated by bureaucratic or religious systems. Still, Rossel people are obsessed with time. What drives the Rossel obsession with counting days? Two things, I think: First, there is a general punctiliousness about social relations, motivated in equal measures by kinship obligations, gerontocracy, and witchcraft fears. Genealogical time—Rossels routinely reckon back ten generations—organizes the social world in the present. The attention to when we will next meet again is part of a demonstration of acute attention to social obligations and the anxious respect due to elders and kinsmen (after all, you may be a witch). A second factor is the Rossel preoccupation with ceremonial exchanges, which requires careful planning far into the future so that song cycles can be rehearsed, food collected, and massive collections of shell valuables assembled for

exchange on a named day. Into this traditional system have marched the missions and the new religions, bearing wholly alien notions of calendrical time and both cyclical rituals (Sundays, saints' days, Easter, anniversaries) and unilinear notions of development and change. Young men sometimes see this new temporal system as an avenue to power—1999 saw a revolution of young men preaching the end days, free love, the overthrow of gerontocratic power, and the abandonment of agriculture, all in preparation for the new millennium. The idea that a cycle has a precise start engenders naturally enough the idea that it might have a precise end once and for all. Understanding modern millenarianism requires understanding the temporal concepts of the traditional society and the revolutionary implications of calendrical time. The issue of calendrical systems is nicely taken up by Ramble in his study of the Te, a Tibeto-Burman enclave in Nepal. Complex calendrical systems seem generally to be motivated by ritual cycles (witness the names of our months), and the West was relatively very late to develop anything comparable to the Mayan cycles and their computational power or, indeed, to the Chinese systems that underlie the Tibetan calendar. Ramble shows that “a palimpsest of calendars” is available in Te, and the Tewa express their ethnic identity by holding onto their own calendar, which is regulated by a simple count of pebbles. Such a calendar soon gets out of step with the solar year and is brought back into correspondence with the Tibetan calendar by annual adjustments. The concept of cracks between calendars and calendrical units allows the Tewa to slip out of onerous Tibetan rituals.

The end of the year is marked by an exorcism which Ramble shows is full of anachronisms, and he dwells on the nature of ritual as objects and events displaced in space and time (a point also briefly alluded to in Schieffelin's paper). There is much observation of interest in this intelligent essay, but once again we wonder what has happened to the anthropology of time. Ramble is interested in the little acts of symbolic independence from the greater Tibetan and Nepalese world expressed in a temporal modality, but he does not pursue the modality itself. Goodwin takes us to another kind of time— interactional time, which has a precise chronometric structure of its own. Conversation unfolds in time, and each utterance as it unfolds affords opportunities for other participants to enter or systematically withholds such opportunities according to a micro-metric of “turn constructional units” and recognizable actions. Conversation is not regulated by a metronome, however, because that structural affordance is then exploited by other parties; coming in before the other has completed an utterance can demonstrate an exact understanding of the ideas and actions behind that utterance. Goodwin takes us through three decades of findings about conversational organization and explains how one utterance can project extensive chunks of talk and even sequences of conversations—projections of unfolding contingencies that can be hijacked or contested. He suggests that the particular syntactic properties of a language, by projecting more or less extensive forthcoming structure, may have implications for a cultural style of interaction. He also sketches the much larger semiotic field deployed in interaction— intonation, gesture, reference to objects in play—and shows how the relative timing of all these elements is crucial to the building of a verbal interaction. Though they touch on many interesting issues, none of these papers really offer us linguistic insights into an anthropology of time. Rather they show us how temporal issues play a role in understanding whatever the authors are concerned with. Although the subject of time, like other grand Kantian categories, may seem too large to direct work in any systematic direction, there are surely important foundations that might be established. Our Western empire of time now reaches almost every shore (if only in the form of cheap plastic watches), and the chances of documenting traditional temporal systems are fast eroding. One place to start is simply to look at the *linguistic* expression of time in the local language.

As I have suggested above in the remarks on the language of Rossel Island, cultural preoccupations in the temporal domain are likely to show in the linguistic resources of a language. The precursors of calendars are the seasonal and agricultural cycles reflected in the lexicon, you can't have a calendar without calendrical terminology, and systems of tense vary enormously in the temporal distinctions they make. It has long been noted that the

linguistics of time and space tend to overlap, but this is itself culturally variable. We have found that languages use different “frames of reference” or anchoring schema for spatial distinctions, some cultures, for example, using cardinal directions almost exclusively (see Levinson 1996 for a review). The study of gesture shows that there are also gestural homologies between time and space (see, e.g., Kita, Danziger, and Stolz 2001)—languages with cardinal direction systems sometimes locating the past in, for example, a southerly direction and the future in the north. Sign languages show this homology in systematic ways (Emmorey 2001). Thus the spatialization of temporal distinctions can be seen not only in ritual, as Ramble has noted, but also in unreflective interactional behavior. (A field-manual entry detailing methods covering these issues can be found at www.mpi.nl.) Although studies of these details may seem a plodding way to approach an anthropology of time, they are the essential foundations for a comparative ethnography of temporality which we have as yet failed to establish.