Reduplication and Reciprocity in Imagining Community: The Play of Tropes in a Rural Bangladeshi Moot

The trope of the “body politic” is reproduced in a Bengali popular court, or moot, not only through explicit submetaphors of that master metaphor but through a grammatical example of what Peirce called diagrammatic iconism. The iconism of reduplicated verbs with reciprocal meaning became pivotal in the metacommunicative negotiation of the agenda of a rural Bangladeshi moot. Such forms of iconicity analyzed here play traceable roles in particular imaginations of community and give us an opportunity to explore the accessibility of those imaginations to discursive consciousness. The article concludes that the tropes most powerfully shaping the discourse of the moot are those least accessible to metapragmatic consciousness, those that rhetorically contribute to the veiling of their own rhetoricity.

All communities are largely “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991), and various semiotic processes make the imagining possible. Grammatical constructions and commonly used metaphors often convey a particular imagination of socially engaged bodies (Hanks 1996: ch. 8; Haviland 1996; MacLaury 1989). It is useful to follow C. S. Peirce in linking various signs (whose ground involves a local sense of directness, naturalness, or resemblance) as examples of iconism and to trace the particular power of iconic signs in the imagination of community. This
article examines the potential, exemplified in a particular speech event in rural Bangladesh, for two kinds of linguistic iconism to contribute to the imagination of a rural polity.

The first is diagrammatic iconism, exemplified here in the speech event’s use of a particular grammatical form. Situated within its speech event, this grammatical form—morphological reduplication—operates multifunctionally, as all tropes do, in the constitution of community. Through its iconicity, this grammatical form simultaneously contributes, I suggest, to community building and community factionalizing. The second kind of iconism that I consider is imagistic and involves semantic metaphors. Metaphors have an iconic dimension in that they highlight resemblance or similarity. Thus, in a metaphor used in several forms throughout the event described herein, a particular rural Bangladeshi polity is made to resemble a sick person, as in the classic link between human body and “body politic.” I will argue here that a locally perceived and discursively constituted “body hexis” (Bourdieu 1977’s concept, developed in its discursive dimensions by Starrett) underlies much of the discourse in the event and is projected, not only by metaphors of the “body politic,” but also by reduplicated reciprocal verbs. These verbs, I suggest, bring both forms of linguistic iconism together. Richly endowed with a sense of bodies entangled in mutual action, their complex iconism is an isomorphism of (1) morphemes (tied with asymmetric suffixes) and (2) semantics (agents mutually engaged, if only in conflict).

Iconicity is the “first” of Peirce’s three relations between signs and their objects: the relation of resemblance. More precisely, “An Icon is a Representamen whose Representative Quality is a Firstness of it as a First. That is, a quality that it has qua thing renders it fit to be a representamen. [Thus, a] sign may be iconic, that is, may represent its object mainly by its similarity” (Peirce 1960, 2:157). Iconic elements of language are the exception to the sometimes exaggerated claim that linguistic sign-meaning links are arbitrary. Classic examples include onomatopoeia and metaphors (although metaphors certainly tap into all three sign relations—iconic, indexical, and symbolic; see Haley 1988). Onomatopoeia is but one example of one type of iconicism in language, namely, sound symbolism, which entails a denotational iconicism wherein the very sounds of a lexeme are taken to denote an object (Silverstein 1994).

Among his types, or subclasses, of iconic sign relations, Peirce distinguished images from diagrams (see discussion in Jakobson 1987a:418 f.). In Peircean images, the sign vehicle represents the “simple qualities” of the object; we would have to include both onomatopoeias and simple metaphors highlighting resemblance in a particular dimension, in the category of image. For Peircean diagrams, the likeness between sign vehicle and object exists “only in respect to the relations of their parts” (Jakobson 1987a:418, citing Peirce). Following Bybee (1985:40) and Haiman (1985b:77), we can see this diagrammatic sort of iconicity in Bengali reduplicated verbs, where relations among the expression units (the reduplications) diagram the relations among the object-units. In Bengali reduplicated verbs, it is pri-
marily the reduplication itself, not the particular sound features of the reduplicated root, that is (diagrammatically) iconic.

This article situates one use of iconicity in a form of social interaction fairly common, at least in Bangladesh: the *salis*, or *darbar*, 'moot' (conflict-resolution meeting or popular court; a partial transcript of a particular moot appears in the appendix). I place the iconicity in its speech-event context, and I also show the performative dimension of iconicity; that is, its socially creative potential. To prefigure the argument: it is common in colloquial Bengali to express reciprocal action through the use of morphologically reduplicated verbs. So much is unremarkable, although some analyses of Indo-Aryan reduplication (including Bengali grammars used in Bangladeshi schools) fail to note this aspect of reduplicated verbs' semantics. What is more significant is how, at certain points in conflicts such as occur in moots, such verbs can function creatively. Since the conflict being discussed and played out in the moot may well include contested representations of events or relationships, these verbs contribute to representation by creating an image (or imagination in Benedict Anderson's sense) of reciprocity. Such a linking of grammar, imagination, and social worlds resonates with the sorts of Whorfian research experiencing a revival in linguistic anthropology (Hill and Mannheim 1992).

Reduplication in the Light of the Linguistic Literature

Much early work on iconism was of a philological nature, almost exclusively focused on sound symbolism; it happens to have been done in South Asia. In fact, onomatopoeia and other morphological processes recognized as iconic have been treated as diagnostic features of South Asia as a "linguistic area," and "echo formation" (partial reduplication) has figured prominently in these discussions (Apte 1968; Bhaskararao 1977; Emeneau 1969; Masica 1991). Various semantic functions are performed by reduplicated forms, not only in South Asia but across the spectrum of languages; these include the marking of plurality, aspect, and mood. Stephen Anderson (1985:170), discussing those functions of reduplicated forms, speculates about the possible denotative iconism underlying their semantics.7

Moreover, in Bengali, as in other South Asian languages, the reduplication can be iconic at more than one level. Not only is the reduplication itself an icon of some sort of intensification, but often the words that are reduplicated are themselves onomatopoeic. In the moot analyzed here, an example is *hawdaw* (an onomatopoeic and reduplicated evocation of "roaring," line 252).8

In Bengali, reduplication is a productive grammatical process, as the examples in Table 1 illustrate. Reduplication of Bengali words adds some semantic feature to the root meaning and the narrowly constrained morphological-semantic links are readily explainable in terms of iconism. I focus here on reduplication of Bengali verb roots and on only one of the range of semantic effects produced thereby. In Table 1's examples—most of which are taken from the transcript in the appendix—although the reduplicated forms function as nouns, they all derive from verbs, except
Reduplication and Reciprocity

Table 1
Reduplication in the grammar of violence. Numbers refer to lines in the transcript; see the appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Reduplicated form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>māra (210)</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>mārāmāri (163, 171, etc.)</td>
<td>violence, fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>res/ris</td>
<td>malice</td>
<td>risāriśi (138-9)</td>
<td>mutual spite or ill-feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kāta (221)</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>kathā katakati</td>
<td>argument (cf. “crossing kathā [words]” 526)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thelā</td>
<td>push</td>
<td>thelatheli</td>
<td>shove, match, crowding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharā</td>
<td>grasp</td>
<td>dharādharā</td>
<td>mutual holding or grasping (Dimock 1989:58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

riśāriśi, which derives from a simpler noun. Through the doubling of the root and the maintenance (via vowel endings) of a distinction between the doublets, Bengali reduplicated verbs become frozen metaphors of interaction, of embodied actors socially engaged. Their very form expresses the multiplicity and distinctness of agents (some marked /-a/ and some /-i/) and the reciprocity and intensity of their activity. It is important to note that these forms’ doubling of agent markers, agents that are marked as distinct from one another, conveys the idea of interaction and reciprocity, since this dimension of reduplicative semantics has sometimes been overlooked in analyses of reduplication in South Asian languages.

While reduplication is common in these languages and ranges across word classes, its semantic effects are various. For Hindi, for example, Abbi (1980) cites commonly reduplicated forms among nouns, verbs, and adverbs. Offering a fairly full analysis of the semantics of reduplicated verbs, she mentions the following semantic effects that can be achieved through reduplication: iterative, inchoative, durative, continuative, distributive, and intensive meanings. Thus some commonly reduplicated Hindi verbs can result in such forms as khappat ‘fight, sound made by turning wooden things over’, caincain ‘crying with an argument’, jhanjhay ‘nagging’, and tāntā ‘crying’ (Abbi 1980:150 f.). Reduplicated verbs followed by the utility verb kar ‘do’ (Abbi 1980:55 f.) often have an iterative sense (“again and again”) and, derivatively, an adverbial connotation of “excessiveness” (as in pitpit kar ‘excessive beating’). The iconism in which a repeated stem represents an intensified meaning seems clear. Such meanings are, in fact, not confined to Indo-Aryan or even Indo-European languages.

Similarly, several examples of reduplicated forms in Fijian Hindi occur in a transcript presented by Brenneis (1984), taken from a gossip event whose content focuses on a conflict and thus has some affinities to the data I shall analyze here. Brenneis’s examples include forms such as garmi-garmi ‘hot-hot’ (which metaphorizes the notion of heat), jaldi se jaldi ‘quick from quick’ (intensifying the root meaning), jute-phute ‘lying’, upa-phulta ‘upside-down’ (lit. “reverse-[reverse?]”), where the second member is a partial echo of the first but lacks independent semantic content; the common Bengali counterpart is ulto-phalto). One of his examples is especially close to that on
which I focus in my own data: churi-uri mar di ‘knife-[echo] strike give’ (where uri is an echo of churi ‘knife’ but lacks independent semantic content).

Despite the link with the conflict semantics of my data, however, in neither this phrase nor in any of the others cited by Brenneis or Abbi is the iconism of quite the same nature as that upon which I focus; that is, it is not an iconic representation of reciprocal action. Abbi’s more recent comparative study of reduplicated structures in South Asian languages (1992:109–116) comes closest to describing what I find in Bengali when she deals with non-Indo-Aryan languages spoken around the fringes of greater Bengal. Reciprocal syntactic functions are encoded by reduplicated elements including pronominals in Tibeto-Burman and main verbs in Austro-Asiatic. Evidently thinking only of the Bengali reciprocal pronominal eke-aparke ‘each other’, ‘one another’, Abbi mistakenly claims that “Oriya, Bengali and Assamese, in spite of being adjacent to languages that use reduplicated structures for reciprocals, do not have them” (1992:111). In Austro-Asiatic neighbors of Bengali, “for the RECIPROCAL base (formed by the infix -p-) discontinuous reduplication of the affix of the performative base is used; dal reciprocal da-pa-l (or d-ap-al), performative d-pa-pal-l (or d-ap-ap-al)” (1992:115). This reduplication of the main verb actually closely approximates the Bengali reduplicated reciprocal verbs, the difference being that the latter are fully and continuously reduplicated, with no intervening infix.

That Abbi failed to discover the reciprocal sense of some reduplicated Bengali verbs seems remarkable until we realize that it is also missing from such native-speaker accounts as Shaklayen’s (1983), whose Bengali grammar is widely used by students in Bangladesh. (Cursory reading of other texts in a market in 1996 suggested that the topic of reduplication is dealt with in even less detail in other grammars used in schools.) Shaklayen does recognize reduplication; thus he writes that dvirukto ‘doubly uttered’ words may be adjectives, adverbs, nouns, or verbs. His interpretation of the doubled noun fever in the phrase “jvar jvar bodh” is insightful; rather than intensifying the meaning “I am feverish,” the reduplication adds an element of doubt, subjectivity, or metaphorization. Likewise, larayi karSt means “to fight,” but larayi-larayi khela karSt means “to engage in a mock fight” (Shaklayen 1983:83, my translation). This native-speaker account tells us, first, that reduplication per se is well within the awareness of at least Bengali linguists, although we must hesitate to generalize this to other speakers. Second, if we take the iconism of reduplication per se, heuristically at least, as a universal, the contrast between the Bengali sense attaching to jvar jvar bodh—something like deintensification—and the intensified sense attaching to many Hindi (and other Bengali) reduplicated forms reminds us that even the “iconic” is always culturally constituted. The “resemblance” of signs and their objects, even when it appears to be “natural” (as is the nature of iconism), is always in the eye of the culturally located beholder. But we should also note that Shaklayen’s account omits what I find to be a pervasive semantic effect of reduplication in Bengali: the addition of the sense of reciprocity or mutuality through an iconism between partial reduplication.
Reduplication and Reciprocity

(of the verb root, together with contrasting suffixation) and the semantic expansion of the number of agents in the action, along with a sense of their mutual and balanced engagement.

In contrast with these analyses of the semantics of Bengali reduplicated forms, Dimock's classic article "Symbolic Forms in Bengali" (1989) concurs with my own interpretation. Dimock describes Bengali "echo" words (bipartite words, the second part partially or wholly reduplicating the first) along with onomatopoeia and other sound symbolic forms. He points out that the first iteration of a Bengali compound echo verb ends in \(-a\) and its reduplicated counterpart ends in \(-i\). Whereas reduplication sometimes merely intensifies the root meaning (for example, \(\text{kara} \) 'strict' becomes \(\text{karakari} \) 'extreme strictness'), it commonly adds the semantic feature of reciprocity or mutuality. As Dimock indicates, this transformation of a unilateral action concept into a reciprocal one is, along with intensification, the most common semantic effect of Bengali verb reduplication. In Dimock's words, "these forms always have the meaning 'mutual action' or 'extreme [degree of the] quality'" (Dimock 1989:58). Thus for one person to push something is \(\text{thela}\); for persons to push each other is \(\text{thelatheli}\). The reduplication evokes a bodily sense of push-and-shove. Classical metaphors are not the only site at which language projects body hexis.

What is the significance of the way Bengali reduplicated verbs are formed by consecutively suffixing two different vowel endings \(-a\) and \(-i\) to the two iterations of the verb root? The answer might provide a key to our interpretation of the particular rhetorical work to which this grammatical process was put in the Bangladeshi moot. Using \(\text{maramari}\) as our example, let us consider one interpretation of the significance of the contrastive vowels in relation to the semantics of agency. In Comrie's (1985) analysis of reciprocal semantics and verb valency, forming a reciprocal verb reduces the valency encoded by its nonreciprocal counterpart, since "subject and direct object of the basic verb are combined into a single compound subject... The valency of the verb is... reduced, from transitive to intransitive" (1985:326). It may seem paradoxical that the multiplication of agents seen in the transformation of simple verb roots (appropriate for encoding unilateral actions) to reduplicated verbs (appropriate for encoding mutual action) results in a reduction of valency. And in fact, according to Mansur Musa, director general of the Bangla Academy (personal communication, 1996), it is quite appropriate for such verbs in Bengali to take agent noun phrases as their subjects. On the other hand, says Musa, the sense of personal agency is obscured when speakers use this form. Consider the form \(\text{maramari} \) 'mutual beating', which is in focus for much of the remainder of this article. Musa claims that one possible motivation for speakers to use the form is to obscure agency. The first iteration of the verb root, \(\text{mara}\), is gerundial and lends itself, as we can see from Musa's reflections, to a function quite like that of the English agentless passive. The second iteration, \(\text{mari}\), is formally identical to the finite first-person present verb form \(\text{I beat}\).

The above interpretation of the contrastive suffixation on the reduplicated iterations of Bengali verb roots is significant and highly plausible. Another interpretation, however, deserves notice and is not mutually ex-
clusive with the first. This second interpretation links the contrasting root-final vowels more directly with the diagrammatic iconism entailed in the reiteration of the verb root as diagram of mutuality. While the sheer doubling of verb roots in reduplicated verbs could produce the diagram on its own, the contrastive root-final vowels help in the Bengali case. Their function must be linked with a pervasive Bengali pattern of sound symbolism in which /a/ carries a feeling of heaviness/darkness and /i/ carries the sense of lightness. In reduplicated verbs, these vowels do not index speaker or hearer as do first- and second-person pronominal shifters. It is possible that, in the diagram constituted by reduplicated-reciprocal Bengali verbs (see Table 2), the relative placement of vowels stands iconically for the placement of a pair of objects, namely, two agents differing in moral-aesthetic quality. We should understand that awareness of this semiotic process is constrained, as Haiman reminds us: “A diagram is an icon of a complex [object]. . . . A convenient rule of thumb for distinguishing images from diagrams might be that anyone can recognize the first, while certain conventions have to be understood before we can recognize the second” (1985a:10).

This reciprocal semantic force is associated with reduplicative morphology in other languages as well. For instance, examples of reduplication in Papuan languages have been analyzed (Haiman 1985a, 1985b) as a means of symmetrically representing agents. In the Papuan languages Kate and Kewa, “a small number of verbs form their reciprocal ‘voice’ by deriving a nominal from a reduplication of the first syllable of the verb stem in question. This nominalization is then treated as the object complement of a utility verb e ‘do’. . . . For other verbs, reduplication is less stingy. The entire verb stem is repeated [with the same reciprocal force]” (Haiman 1985a:76 f.). Reduplication, thus, is one iconic means of representing reciprocal action. Given the Bengali data and given how commonly the world’s languages attach reciprocal semantics to reduplicated verbal morphology, the remarkable absence of the “reciprocal” meaning in some accounts of reduplication in South Asian languages, including Bangladeshi grammar textbooks, is a notable oversight. This issue will be taken up again at the end of the article.

### Table 2

**Bengali Deictics.** Proximal deictics are marked by relatively high-front vowels; distal deictics, by relatively low-back vowels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Demonstratives</th>
<th>Spatial deictics</th>
<th>“Agent” markers in reduplicated verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximal</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e-tā ‘this’</td>
<td>e-khāne ‘here’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distal</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o-tā ‘that’</td>
<td>o-khāne ‘there’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moving from linguistic structure to social structure invites attention to that productive metaphor for society, the body (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1990). English speakers are not alone in metaphorically projecting a “body politic.” In some Pacific societies, the metaphor of “disentangling” bodies in conflict—and social affairs—is used to describe meetings designed to resolve conflict (Watson-Gegeo and White 1992). It should not surprise us that bodies figure largely in even the figurative speech of conflict and resolution, particularly when bodily harm is at issue, as it was in the Bangladeshi conflict described here. Bodies were literally entangled. The moot was organized in order to disentangle the physical injuries occurring in the fighting from those economic “injuries” that led to it and to attempt to prevent further damage to the polity, described at times as a sick body (e.g., lines 440–443 of the transcript).15

Anthropologists have pointed out that the body is “good to think with,” that it is not only an object but a vehicle of social thought. Poets do not need our instruction on this point, but neither do they have a monopoly on figurative speech, let alone oratory. Trope-laden speech is common in rural Bangladesh, even in dispute-resolution meetings (“moots,” salis, or darbar), raucous though these open-air speech events often are. In moots, metaphors of the personal and political body are among tropes bearing a lot of rhetorical weight. Several of these metaphors occur in the transcript; like all metaphors, they exemplify iconism as a semiotic relation based on similarity. But while the transcript includes some metaphors whose semiotic organization is relatively straightforward, we shall focus especially on two reduplicated verbs in which a body-politic metaphor is conveyed in a semiotically more complex way. These forms, maramari and resaresi, project a sense of bodily engagement not only in their semantics of physical battle (their Peircean symbolic meaning) but also in an iconism, an isomorphism between their morphological and semantic structure. Thus at some level of consciousness—somewhere between what Giddens (1979) calls practical and discursive modes of consciousness—for these Bengali speakers, classical metaphors such as “the polity is a sick body” and verbs like maramari exemplify two distinct forms of iconism, one (the metaphor) rather more explicit than the other.

Haiman’s discussion of syntactic iconicity is worth mentioning here again: “a convenient rule of thumb for distinguishing images from diagrams might be that anyone can recognize the first, while certain conventions have to be understood before we can recognize the second” (Haiman 1985a:10). Simple metaphors, I argue, are images, while reduplicated-reciprocal verbs are diagrams. It is through such tropes that this darbar speech reflects upon and helps constitute the body politic. Only after some effort can we perceive some of the iconicities—particularly those whose construction is not strictly a sum of continuously segmentable morphemes (Silverstein 1981)—and their social-metaphoric and ritual-performative significance.
The Bangladeshi Moot and Its Background

The *samaj* 'Bangladeshi society', here in its local-community sense, is a group of households with mutual obligations, disputes amongst whom are handled at a conflict-resolution meeting known as a *sālis* (sometimes pronounced, via metathesis, as "sālisā" and sometimes realized in my transcript as "sālisā") or *darbar*. Residents of Sonargaon, the locale in which the particular moot described here occurred, sometimes describe these moots themselves as the *samaj* (see line 508). To do so, however—that is, to imply that this gathering represents the whole society in action—is to use a dangerous synecdoche. It masks how such meetings exclude the poor from speaking and women from even attending. These meetings tend to become platforms for rich peasants to launch or sustain lucrative political careers (Adrian 1990:169). Moots legitimate existing powers and keep a lid on the tendency of factions to divide the polity. In that sense the whole speech event is a creative indexical icon of a polity, a part (society in microcosm) that naturally resembles the whole that it also indexes. The indexical iconicity here is more entailing/performative than presupposing (Silverstein 1976, 1981); it moves the imagination from microlevel (interaction) to the macro ("society"). More than a mere aid to imagining community, it constitutes, performs, and enacts in itself a form of community. Yet as I shall suggest, that form of community contains its opposite.

The event I describe took place in Sonargaon Union, about a four-hour ferry ride from Dhaka in the rural Chandpur subdistrict of Matlab (described in Fauveau 1994). The meeting was held in a public schoolyard, several hundred yards from my field home, which was with the family of Habibur Rahman in the northern end of Sonargaon Union (see Figure 1). Matlab grows a lot of potatoes as a cash crop, as well as rice. Habibur Rahman ("HR" in Figure 2) and his kin, who own a surplus of land, support their fellow pious Muslims for union office. Politically, their stance is moderately Islamist, in the sense that it appeals to Islamic morality as the best basis for electoral choice. Musadeq is Habib’s own son-in-law and a member of the Islamist faction. The other principal disputant, Guna, was at one time Musadeq’s closest friend; but when they tried to start a business together, the capital “disappeared” and they had a bitter falling out. Guna now accuses Musadeq of squatting on one of his agricultural lands near a pond, and Musadeq has made formal accusations—accusations proceeding, that is, through official courts rather than open-air meetings—that Guna leads a gang of robbers (*dakāt*). Around the time of the event under analysis, the gang allegedly plundered television sets and other expensive status symbols in a neighboring union across the canal.

Just after Bangladesh held nationwide local elections for the members and Chairmen of unions such as Sonargaon, the factional dispute in Sonargaon—between Musadeq and Guna, perhaps between “Islamists” and “secularists”—turned violent. According to Musadeq’s side, Guna became a sort of hit man for the victorious union chairman, whom my host family called “Bottle,” accusing him of drinking and sexual promiscuity. Musadeq was threatening to take evidence of Guna’s involvement in the criminal
Because I received the account of the violence through members of Habibur Rahman’s family, my view of the attacks begins there, at Habib’s compound. Going on from Habib’s, Guna’s men came to another “enemy” compound. In the ensuing fight, several members of that compound were injured, including one adolescent girl. That scandalized many of those who later spoke at the moot.

Although I have summarized my host family’s version of the events leading up to the violence because it is the one that was told me, it is presumably not the only version that exists. For the most part, therefore, when discussing the moot, I confine my historiography of the events outside of the moot to their invocation in the dialogue of the moot itself, the transcript of the salis. I could justify restricting myself to the transcript on ethnomethodological grounds, arguing that we should count as relevant issues in the “disentangling” event only what is actually invoked in the talk of that event. To do so in this case would be somewhat disingenuous, however. The fact is that the event was surrounded by such controversy that I hesitated to do extensive interviews to elicit post facto versions of the story. Also, I heard one side—the perspective of the party with whom I lived—much better than the other. They, the residents of Habibur Rahman’s compound, who are Islamists, saw themselves as the aggrieved
party in the violence that, they say, led to the sâlis.\textsuperscript{18} I was actually concerned for their safety and even my own when I heard about the weapons waved at them on the morning of the violence; I was only a mile away when “my” homestead was thus threatened. My anxiety spilled over into the taping and later analysis of the sâlis, preventing me from approaching members of the opposite faction for interviews. Moreover, with only an audiotape of this chaotic multiparty conversation involving some 50 participants, identification of all speakers has proven impossible. Still, certain dominant voices are clearly identifiable as their interlocutors address them by name and title. Dominant voices there included not only local big men but officials elected to union-level (roughly “county”-level) office—union councilmembers and several chairmen of this and neighboring unions. (For the positioning of participants at the moot, see Figure 2.) These were the persons whose legitimacy was most at stake in a potential breakdown of order and who strove most vigorously to assert their legitimacy by controlling the moot. To say that the sâlis was “about” a violent attack, however, is to beg an important question since the agenda itself was a topic of much of the discourse. Two items vied for precedence in the agenda: a land dispute and the violence. Was the “real” agenda some original dispute, or was it the violence that arose from it and led to the sâlis, and in that case, what was the conflict that precipitated the violence? (For transcript conventions, see the appendix.)

\begin{verbatim}
130 apnagô jäga(r?) sinkrânto byâpar,
131 jami jamâr byâpar, puskinir byâpar,
132 egula to pare-o karte pârben.
\end{verbatim}

You have the affair concerning the place,\textsuperscript{19} the affair of the land, the affair of the pond.

These you could even handle later.

The lines above provide only some of the many examples in the transcript where the agenda was (re-)negotiated.

Also under negotiation was the representation of what happened to the injured adolescent girl. Stories conflicted as to whether she was passive or active in the fight. Some said she was a victim (\textit{mar khâyyleche} ‘she ate blows’), while others described the scene as \textit{mâramâri} ‘mutual fighting’. That issue came to dominate the moot. In fact, it seems that this debate entailed a resolution of the metaconflict and foreshadowed a “successful” resolution of the underlying moral-economic conflict. Once the actionable offense was agreed upon, the participants in the moot could go on to agree to hold one of the parties accountable. That party was eventually fined, the details being worked out in the last minutes of the multihour moot, although some backpedaling followed by reinforcement of the agreement did occur over the next few days.

The meeting did not completely resolve the underlying factional conflict between “Islamists” and “secularists,” but it did dash some of the secularists’ hopes that had risen after their election victory one short month earlier. In this political history the moot played a role—riveting attention on fissure in the community, primarily by metaphorically projecting “the polity as
Participants seated and standing at moot, Baghmar High School yard, February 1992. Following Duranti 1992, the carets roughly represent the orientation of the pelvises of the men participating in the moot, such that the direction in which they open out indicates the direction in which their eyes might have been gazing. Names and phrases label active speaker/participants. Less active participants are marked with an "x." The number of persons thus labeled is an approximation of the number present, which was at any rate not stable during the course of the meeting. Italics represent members of the "Islamist" faction recently ousted in election, accused in land dispute, accusers in dispute over violence. Small caps represent members of the "secularist" faction, accusers in land dispute, newly elected to union office, and accused of instigating violence.

sick body" and, ironically, through discourse that framed the fight as maramari (‘reciprocal fighting’). This crucial framing was also echoed in other reduplicated verbs that evoke a sense of reciprocity, but reciprocity of blows in a fight. (The irony is heightened when we consider that the particular "Member Shaheb" [union council member] who was arguing for
this "reciprocal" view of the violence—and against a unilateral view involving some innocent victims—was trying to win community unanimity around that vision of "a fight."

In addition, "successful" legal actions (by an official court, not a moot) were taken against the "secularists" for their alleged involvement in the burglary ring, or so my fictive mother reported to me over the next month. Taking the court actions and the moot together, it seems possible that the burglary convictions (imposed by the court) and the fine (imposed by the moot) might not have caused the secularists' setback so much as they reflected it. The strength of those local elements who were scandalized by the secularists' behavior (especially their rumored use of alcohol) may have been only temporarily hidden in the election results, reasserting itself shortly afterward in the separate legal actions of official court and village moot.

As for the "victims," the moot did little for them, other than fixing "sentence" on the "perpetrators." One of those affected by the violence was Jalu Miah's four-year-old son, who had seen his father threatened with a pistol; the boy's condition was considered to be dar 'deep fear' (parallel to "magical fright" in the anthropological literature). The boy was given magicoreligious herbal treatment by a neighbor woman, not as part of the moot's adjudication but on the initiative of Jalu Miah. The treatment cost next to nothing.

Before considering portions of the talk that occurred at the moot more closely, I must point out that my transcript is by no means a complete record of the long moot. I arrived after learning that the meeting was in progress, and I left at a point when the meeting appeared to break down, although it had seemed tantalizingly close to resolution at several points while I was there. What I recorded amounts to two hours out of a total meeting time exceeding five hours. (The transcript cited in this discussion and presented in the appendix represents extended excerpts from the two hours I recorded.) After I left, my fictive kin continued to trickle out of the meeting and give me reports, and over the next days I also asked Jalu Miah, my neighbor and one with divided loyalties in the conflict, for continuing updates on its resolution and on his son's progress in coping with dar.

The early portions of the transcript concern the negotiation of agenda, as mentioned above. In doing so the transcript includes allusions to preceding events, since part of the "issue" is when the conflict should be said to have "begun." One such event to which I was not privy had occurred between the fight itself and the moot—the negotiation of a "truce."

195E  (ka) māramārī agey? māramārī jāte na hae
196  ubhay pakhyo salisāke mā(n)eche.
197  KE amānyā kairā māramārī karlo
198  setā niyā habe bicār

Before the māramārī, to prevent māramārī
both sides agreed to arbitration.
NOW THEN, who broke [that "truce"/agreement]? Who did māramārī?
THAT'S what the arbitration will be about.
Line 195 indicates that, before the fighting broke out, the prior dispute had been arbitrated to the point of a truce agreement. The moot talk indicates that the truce had been violated, and one understanding of the moot’s task is to establish which party violated it and punish them.

The agenda dispute had moved along in fairly chaotic fashion when one of the leading men began first to propose that an elite subgroup handle the whole process (143–150) and then (after line 162) to declare the agenda issue settled and to control the terms of the debate. The one repeatedly addressed simply as “[union council] Member Shaheb” himself would define the agenda (163 ff.). But not everyone submitted passively to his rhetorical construction of events. The metaconflict took on sharper tones following Member Shaheb’s shifting of the metadebate from the question of agenda-priorities to the definition of events.

In this part of the Bangladeshi salis, the rhetorical struggle hinges on the construction of agency or responsibility in the narration of events. Duranti (1990, 1994; Duranti and Ochs 1990) has uncovered the grammatical means by which agency and responsibility are assigned in politically sensitive talk in Samoa. In many if not all languages, the semantics of agency may be manipulated through verb valency (changing verb voice in the grammatical sense) and through case marking. The transformation of transitive verbs like the Bengali mara into intransitive verbs like maramari—a shift in valency, as Comrie (1985) rightly argues (see my discussion above)—parallels the Samoan discursive play between ergative and absolutive. That is, the Samoan choice of the grammatical case with which to mark a party in a disputed event parallels the choice Member Shaheb made in encoding actors not as attackers and victims but as coparticipants in violence. In line 163, Member Shaheb draws attention to the action noun (a reduplicated verb but for the omission of the auxiliary kar) that has been used to describe the violence: maramari.

163 (p)n(a)ra bisartachen maramari. you are looking into maramari. about maramari . . .

Resaresi (lines 138–139), too, is a reduplicated form that alters the valency of an action expression:

139 M gantfagal resaresi aro The indiscipline and mutual spite would grow, not shrink.
barbo = kambo na.20

The morphological process of reduplication is put to the semiotic purpose of metasemantic discourse, drawing explicit attention to the deverbal noun in 163 and its meaning in 171:

171 Maramari balte ubhay pakhye To say “maramari” [means] both sides.

Member Shaheb’s utterance in 171 is a metasemantic act; it comments explicitly on the meaning of a word that in fact he himself had introduced into the discourse in line 163 (see above).21
By construing the event as an example of a reciprocal action (mārāmārī), Member Shaheb adroitly robs one side of the rhetorical power it might have gained had all participants unconsciously accepted the fight as a one-sided affair. His portrayal does not go uncontested, as lines 190–191 illustrate.

One pablik expressed outrage at Member Shaheb’s attempt to impose such a neutral definition of the event on the meeting when, in his view, the party supported by Member Shaheb had unilaterally perpetrated a grave and violent injustice on his party (see Lindstrom 1992). The aggrieved party would countenance no such mutual distribution of agency and blame! By using the finite first-person verb haiyechi ‘was/became’, the speaker in line 190 indicates his own party was injured. He presents his “collective self as victim rather than participant in a reciprocal mārāmārī. His initial complaint is followed by an accusation that the powerful discussion leaders are suppressing the important facts of the case: the injuries sustained by the innocent.

The Body Politic in a Troubled Polity

The salīs did not go smoothly. Outside analysts—and perhaps those at the margins of power whose shouting was “disrupting” the meeting—might claim that there is something egalitarian about a polity that “allows” such shouting. A positive view of long meetings and elaborate oratory was presented by Michelle Rosaldo (1973). She argued that polities that give ample opportunity for various parties to engage in baroque rhetoric are more egalitarian than those whose rules of rhetorical order stifle debate. This verges on a one-to-one mapping of social-structural function onto discourse-level form paralleling that of Bloch (1975); I hesitate to follow Rosaldo’s generalization. Still, the new relative disunity of landed Muslim leaders in Bangladesh has presented others with opportunities that are evident in the “chaos” lamented by those trying to control the moot. The inability of the leaders of the salīs to “maintain order” might reflect at least a partial deference to a Bangladeshi version of individualism which gives no automatic submission to authority. This is reminiscent of Bloch’s (1975) argument that oratorical formality itself exercises a coercive effect on listeners, so identifying speech with a tradition as to place it beyond challenge. We can appreciate Bloch’s affirmation that the form of ritual speech exercises some influence on its flow and content (1975:5) and that rhetorical form exercises a unique degree power when it is hidden (1975:6). Still, his one-to-one mapping of function onto (an essentialized notion of) formality is untenable, as is demonstrated in Seidel’s essay (1975) in the
volume Bloch himself edited and in more recent work (Bauman and Briggs 1990:62–63; Irvine 1979; Myers and Brenneis 1984; Parmentier 1993).

At any rate, the four elected chairmen of four unions who were trying to run the meeting did not react to the shouting by the pablik as a positive manifestation of egalitarianism in the polity. In fact, they threatened to leave if people did not stop krasia katha ‘crossing words’ (i.e., mutual interrupting; line 535). The threat should be seen as a form of coercion since any withdrawal of the legitimating presence of the officials would have contributed to the disarray and disrepute of the local polity. Significantly, the chairmen turned to a medical metaphor in line 439 in the context of describing the measures needed to bring order back into the social order. (The “canvasser” is a hawker of medicines, a common figure in Bangladesh’s outdoor markets.)

439 udār sālin guli owṣud bānāyā You are making fine “saline” preparations
440 dāter owṣud bicchen. but you’re trying to sell toothache medicine.
441 etā to asubidha haito nā. [If you want to engage in verbal gymnastics (line 434),] that’s no problem.
442 kintu (xx) canvasser haiyā But a canvasser’s teaching
443 buddhi (to) dān we don’t need.

The speaker of line 439, taking a presiding role, aims to reimpose order, lest the meeting mire in chaos. He uses two strategies to chide previous speakers, speaking first in relatively “direct” metarhetoric and then in a metaphor. What they have been doing is bogging down in kathār bahaduri ‘skilled words, oratory’ (the local equivalent, perhaps, of “legalese,” another pejorative example of what I am calling metarhetoric), demonstrating their oratorical skills but circling around what he calls the meyn jinis ‘main thing’ (line 444). This he likens to a canvasser, a hawker of medicine in the bazaar. The canvasser would like to sell one remedy that works for all problems; thus he waxes eloquent about its virtues. Saline—oral or injectable—is widely viewed as such a cure-all. But neither eloquence nor such a generic fix is called for when one has a toothache. Not that the toothache is regarded lightly; it is just very specific and falls outside the purview of saline’s efficacy. The samaj (the society, the body politic) has a toothache, and now the sālis must engage in specific, targeted, direct, bold action to cure it. The toothache, I think, refers both to the February fight and to the breakdown of order in the meeting at hand.

The speaker in lines 470–476—perhaps the same man—changes the trope:

470 mama bānaiyechilām sabhāpati? We made Mother’s-Brother the chair of the meeting?
471 uni ey elākār chairman? He is the chairman of this union?
I was thinking that he would be able to crack this green coconut (Mister X and we.)

[I hoped] we could proceed this way.

But today we’ve seen that he has a lot of weakness.

Indeed, ”weakness” (Wilce, in press[a]) functions here as another iconic trope; it is a metaphor with one foot in the phenomenology of experience and the other in social reality. The speaker says that he had hoped the particular elder who is his “Mother’s Brother” could lead this meeting to a solution, but he has proven too weak. The weakness of the local polity, I assume, is the real problem; to admit that, however, would contribute to the problem. Better to personify it, to resort to synecdoche, pars pro toto, one leading member standing for a whole. At any rate, this trope is one more brick in the construction of the case that the honor of the local polity is at stake in the way the moot proceeds:

In light of that, lest people speak ill of this area, [let us act in such a way as to] uphold its dignity.

Discussion

What enabled the image and the diagram, the denotational-structural iconism to be used so effectively in the moot, that is, to become a micro-macro performative iconism? I do not argue that the denotative meaning of the reduplicated verb phrase used by Member Shaheb was lost on the crowd; quite the contrary. One man who heard Member Shaheb’s reciprocal construction (maramari) of the violence did protest. His protest was a counterconstruction of the event as one-sided, a construction using the nonreduplicated (and passivized) form mstrsi haiyeche ‘was beaten’ (lines 190 f.). The debate thus centered on referential (meta)semantics as Member Shaheb and others struggled over ”truth” or ”truths,” ”trying to reconstruct in aggregate memory the way particular phrasings fit ‘real world’ events” (Silverstein, personal communication, 1995). But no one called explicit attention to the rhetorical tool or to the ”rhetoricity” itself (Herzfeld 1988). The lack of a readily available metapragmatic discourse in which hearers might describe the member’s verbal strategy contributed to the power of his words to reconstruct the event without serious challenge.31

Does the explanation lie in the relative opacity of diagrammatic iconism in particular? The opacity of this moot’s rhetoricity might arise in part from the particular mode of semiosis entailed by the structural-semantic iconism of these specific Bengali reduplicated verbs. Diagrammatic iconism, to paraphrase Haiman (1985a:10), is less accessible to discursive conscious-
ness than is image iconism. I do not claim that the reduplication process is opaque to native speakers. Speakers of Bengali, or at least linguists, do, in fact, have metalinguistic tools to refer to reduplication as process; see Shaklayen's (1983) description of *dvirukto* 'doubly-uttered' words. Yet Shaklayen's account is also a manifestation of linguistic ideology. Given the attitudes accompanying the particular diglossia pervasive in the Bengal region (Wilce 1996), his linking of "doubled verbs" with the colloquial form of the language seems pejorative and urban-classist (Shaklayen 1983:86). While admittedly speculative, my hypothesis is that the metapragmatic association of reduplicated verbs with rural speakers contributes to making the reduplicative-reciprocal semantic iconism relatively less accessible to discursive consciousness than either the morphology of reduplication itself or other semantic effects it produces. Thus in addition to intrinsically semiotic factors, linguistic ideologies almost certainly shape the form and degree of native speakers' consciousness of these tropes of grammar.

Yet another explanation for the fact that no one drew attention to the use of reduplicated forms as rhetorical or performative device is the capacity of rhetoric per se to hide itself. I would propose that the effectiveness of at least some of the tropes in play owes to the fact that their rhetoricity (Herzfeld 1988) lies outside of the metadiscursive consciousness of the moot participants. Again, it is not that the moot lacked metarhetoric; there were in fact "accusations" that some party was resorting to "mere" rhetoric (lines 434, 514). In fact those very accusations—coupled with a lack of attention to *how* devices like reduplicated-reciprocal verbs function rhetorically—do "precisely what rhetoric does best: it backgrounds its own rhetoricity" (Herzfeld 1988:1). By backgrounding its own rhetoricity, the rhetoric of this moot can be seen as more-or-less successfully achieving performativity. That performativity is a particular exploitation of iconicity in the service of social ideology (Herzfeld 1986).

Most members of stratified speech communities (including the United States [Hill 1995] and rural Bangladesh) are not considered rhetorically competent; competence is regarded as an achievement (Briggs 1988). Thus the "expert" use of certain rhetorical tools by a few helps keep their intricacies (and the contingencies of their performance) from the awareness of most speaker/hearers. To the extent that using the reduplicated-reciprocal verb rhetorically manages to hide its own rhetoricity, it falls in the realm of those aspects of speech which effectively naturalize the somewhat arbitrary construction of reality it calls forth.

**Conclusion**

Space does not allow us to investigate the indexical (and probably also iconic) dimensions of vocal timbre and volume in the moot; this article must content itself with description of the iconism of metaphor and morphological-semantic isomorphism in the moot. A skeptic—more likely one without, rather than with, linguistic training—might dismiss the transcribed exchange over *maramari* versus mär as "mere semantics." Semantics, yes. But to be able to define the terms of debate is to exercise power. Thus to control
what is the focus of the words in the debate is to render the interlocutor either a complainer (a “whiner,” injured in “his own” brawl) or a legitimate plaintiff. In other words, from vocal timbre and intensity to morphology and explicit tropes like “the body politic,” the management of linguistic resources constitutes variously imagined communities. As contemporary crosscurrents in Bangladeshi public rhetoric sometimes escalate into violence, it remains to be seen what forms of community can survive and what newer forms will arise.

It is not surprising, given the multifunctionality of linguistic signs (Irvine 1989:248–252), that a monolexemic sign like maramari might simultaneously accomplish the imagination of a polity (united at some level, or at least mutually engaged in the same activity, albeit a fight!) and also factionalize that community. Member Shaheb’s diagrammatic-iconic invocation of reciprocity via the reduplicated verb alienates one party even while the reduplication achieves a performative level of iconicity by linking persons in an imagined polity. In the very act of implicating “all” in maramāri, Member Shaheb suppresses the claims of those who consider themselves uniquely victimized, alienating at least one speaker (lines 190 f.). It seems that, for at least some time during the moot, owing to the semiotics and rhetorical production of (un)consciousness as well as to the coercive force more or less implicit in threats (threats not unlike those that the moot was called ostensibly to resolve and in its very process to transcend), even that alienation was subsumed under the hegemonic imagination. Yet in the end, again because of and in other ways despite the public discourse, a somewhat different community emerged from this speech event, one in which the faction supported by Member Shaheb was marginalized. This event, then, represents the potential of all sorts of Peircean tropes to play a formative role in the creation of political moments (Friedrich 1989). The life of political institutions subsists in such moments, linked intertextually.

Notes

Acknowledgments. Fieldwork in Bangladesh during 1991–92 was supported by the Institute of International Education (Fulbright) and the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, which also generously provided advice and support on site. Analysis of the data was carried out with the support of National Science Foundation Grant DBS-9919127. Fieldwork in summer 1996 was supported by the Organized Research Committee of Northern Arizona University. The International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) has given logistical and moral support during both periods of fieldwork. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1994 South Asian Language Analysis Roundtable XVI (“Languages in Contact”), University of Pennsylvania. The author gratefully acknowledges the comments of Judy Irvine and four anonymous reviewers, and, on an earlier draft, Michael Silverstein. The present form the article takes, naturally, is my own responsibility.

1. As Haley points out in his “microscopic” Peircean analysis of metaphor, iconicity in poetic metaphor must actually be viewed as encompassing not only the imaginal and diagrammatic but also a third subcategory of iconism Haley calls the metaiconic. A mature metaphor needs “the rigor of the Peircean diagram to give it structure (to our minds), the quality of the Peircean image to give it color (to our
senses)” as well as the “reciprocal” depth of the metaicon, the “typological” or “archetypal” form of iconism (Haley 1988:34, 46).

2. “Any practice theory (Ortner 1984) that is to grant a space to agency and allow for the strategic use of cultural resources that Bourdieu himself stresses must move beyond a vague discourse of mute embodiment and toward one in which we can perceive in detail the ways in which the body is made symbolic, interpreted, and experienced as ideologically significant. It is in this direction—exploring the ways that the body is made an object of cultural and political contention—that we can most fruitfully extend the notion of body hexis in Islamic ritual” (Starrett 1995:965).

3. The iconism of such juxtaposition is explicated quite differently by Herzfeld and Bybee. Bybee (1985) makes the case that not only the order of words in sentences but also the distance of morphemes from the heads they modify (e.g., aspect markers from verb stems) is iconic, leading speaker/hearers to make sensible inferences about what modifies what. Herzfeld, exemplifying the semiotic or language-derived (and thus less language-based [Herzfeld 1988:2]) form of anthropological reasoning he himself advocates, argues that “[b]oth allusion and direct juxtaposition illustrate the paradox which makes iconicity so useful a tool for ideologies. . . . The paradox is that juxtaposition, by positing at least two terms to be compared, denies identity [yet, for ideological purposes, projects it nonetheless]” (Herzfeld 1986:409).

4. This is not the occasion for discourse about Peirce’s idea of firstness, but the following citation from Peirce makes clear that no icon, least of all the denotational iconic legisigns (Daniel 1984:30; Parmentier 1994:8 ff.) discussed in this article, is a pure first: “The First is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. . . . The idea of the absolutely First must be entirely separated from all conception of or reference to anything else. . . . It cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence. . . . Stop to think of it, and it has flown” (Peirce 1991:188–189).

5. Sound symbolism may entail single sounds, while onomatopoeia entails an iconism of the form of a whole word with its object.

6. “Ideally an iconic diagram is homologous with what it represents: not only will every point in the diagram correspond to some point in the reality depicted, but the relationships among these points will correspond to the relationships among the points in reality” (Haiman 1985a:11). In her article “Diagrammatic Iconicity in Stem-Inflection Relations,” Bybee argues, “When the relations among the expression units of various categories are considered, it is found that these relations are diagrammatic for the relations among the units of content” (Bybee 1985:40).

7. Counterevidence to Stephen Anderson’s claim that verb reduplication does not affect “person, voice or the like” (1985:170) is provided by Bengali and its Austro-Asiatic neighbors (Abbi 1992:115) if we interpret reciprocal verbs as modified in voice or valency (Comrie 1985).

8. Standard Bengali hawmāw, which corresponds to Matlab hawdaw, denotes an animal’s growling or roaring.

9. Haiman argues that verb-stem reduplication, when used to achieve reciprocal meaning, manifests this diagrammatic sort of Peircean iconism: “The reduplication may itself be seen as an iconically motivated index of the multi-clausal origin of the reciprocal sentence [i.e., a sentence like ‘A hit B and B hit A’, reduced to a single lexeme meaning ‘A-B-hit-each-other’]” (Haiman 1985b:77).

10. The semantic extension of the notion of “heat” to food, passion, intensity of mana-like spiritual power and so forth is common in South Asia.

11. Bangladeshi sociolinguist Humayun (1985:97) also recognizes, in passing, the reciprocal force of some reduplicated verbs in a particular dialect. Humayun also
credits Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore with having written about the reciprocal force of reduplication (Rajib Humayun, personal communication, 1996).

12. These parts are not (meaning-bearing) morphemes in the strict sense, since the second is often unglossable, a "mere echo" of the first.

13. Although the sound-symbolic pattern itself is fairly well established (see below), it is the sort of pattern that remains unconscious until someone like myself comes around asking questions about it. (Pinker [1994:167] speculates that high front vowels are quite common signs of proximity while low back or central vowels often index distance throughout the world’s languages.) My hypothesis that the vowel contrast in reduplicated verbs conveys a diagrammatic contrast in "moral-aesthetic quality" is admittedly speculative, partly due to the "limits of awareness" (Silverstein 1981).

The "lightness" of the /i/ vowel is mentioned by Dimock (1989:60 f.). This and the contrasting value of the /a/ vowel were confirmed in linguistic interviews that I conducted in Bangladesh in 1996. My earlier hypothesis that the contrast was linked with the proximal-distal values conveyed indexically by the /e/ versus /o/ deictics in Bengali was not directly confirmed. That is, interviewees consistently identified the indexical values of /e/ and /o/ as proximal and distal but did not consistently identify the same values for /i/ and /a/.

14. The Papuan examples of reciprocal-reduplication in verbs described by Haiman approach the "problem" differently from Bengali. The problem, according to Haiman (1985a), is how to manage the concatenated clausal elements compressed in reciprocal verbs. "[T]he asymmetry of any concatenated elements AB may be either reinforced or overridden by morphological or prosodic diacritics of two distinct types . . . [either] subordination [or another type of solution, unnamed by Haiman] which . . . allows us to distinguish between symmetrical and asymmetrical coordination" (1985a:73). Haiman, citing Pilhofer's Kate language data, shows a preference for a "symmetrical" means of overriding the semantic asymmetry inherent in reciprocal verbs. In at least some reciprocal-reduplicated verbs, "the entire stem . . . is repeated. The first token is prefixed with the first person singular object pronoun prefix na-, the second, with the second person pronoun prefix ga-. Each token is followed by the same suffix -ng; the entire complex is treated as the object complement of the utility verb e-" (Haiman 1985b:77).

For example:

na-le-ng ga-le-ng-e-
1st sing, obj-give- nominalizer? 2nd (subj.?)-give- nominalizer? do/say- "give each other"

In Bengali, the entire complex is treated as the object complement of the utility verb kara 'do', but the semantic asymmetry inherent in the reciprocal meaning is reinforced through the asymmetrical marking of the two agents, A and B:

mär-a már-i kara-
hit-(distal?) hit-(proximal?) do-
"engage in mutual beating"

15. In lines 417-431 those who address the moot dispense with metaphor and make a more directly and patently ideological appeal to the audience to cooperate. They make an implicit threat to impose order upon the unruly bodies of the pablik ("unauthorized," or "lay," speakers), those claiming injury, and/or those whose violence might have embarrassed their patrons. The ideological appeal is not only in highly valorized moral terms like peace but in terms of the relative status or reputation of this fractured polity—as if reputation could earn a community a
special standing in a grand sort of competition between neighborhoods. Here the imagined "community" approaches the level of "district" or nation.

16. Administrative units in Bangladesh are, in ascending order of inclusivity, the village (gram), union, subdistrict (upazila), district (zila), and division.

17. All names of persons and places (with the exception of Dhaka, Matlab, and Chandpur) are pseudonyms.

18. All are Islamists, that is, but one household in the six-household compound. I asked one young man about the idea of the residents of his household voting according to individual preference; he laughed and told me that was unthinkable. Yet to the consternation of the other elders, one household head supported the "un-Islamic" candidate, as befitted his own lifestyle.

19. Note that Bengali has a three-term system of respect/intimacy in second-person pronouns and suffixation on verbs. The form of the second-person pronoun used throughout the meeting is, in accord with its formal character, the highest (apni), rather than tumi or (extremely intimate/disrespectful) tui.

20. Ganda-gol bears some resemblance to reduplicated forms derived by what is known among South Asianists as "echo formation"; in this case, however, each segment—ganda and gol—bears some semantic weight and contributes something to the compound's sense: "disturbance."

21. Parmentier's semiotic analysis of Belauan oratory defines "metasemantics" (following Silverstein) as "language about the relatively decontextualized meaning of forms." This realm of sign making is encompassed by metapragmatics, "language about the indexical or pragmatic relationship between linguistic signals and their contexts of use" (Parmentier 1993:261). Among the many examples of metalanguage in the transcript of the Belauan oratory that he analyzes are many references to the ongoing speech event (analogous to what I treat as metadebate over agenda) and "metapragmatic glosses" of a metasemantic sort: explicit discussions of the meaning of recent speech segments.

22. Although what I hear is märman, which seems idiosyncratic, what was said could also have been either maraṅ 'slaughter, destruction' (Ali et al. 1994:663) or märada 'injustice' (Shahidullah 1993:853).

23. [märj], the phonetic shape produced by the speaker, is somewhat idiosyncratic.

24. The singular English form is used by Bangladeshis to designate a member of a crowd (cf. the Greek masculine plural 'oi poloi.) A páblik (citizen) contrasts with a byaktityo (personality), or a person who has a title owing to political office. There are, at times, some parallels to be drawn between discourse in Matlab and in Samoa, two hierarchical societies (Myers and Brenneis 1984).

25. Note that Bengali verbs are unmarked for number, hence the subject of this verb may be "we" or "I."

26. Space does not permit a digression from my focus on iconism to an examination of the fascinating role played by indexicals in this moot; suffice it to say that first-person plural pronouns functioning either exclusively or inclusively constitute what Silverstein (in his Whorfian reflection on Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities) calls "the trope of 'we'-ness" (Silverstein, in press). Such pronouns also help the polity to imagine itself as such.

27. For this insightful critique I am indebted to Michael Silverstein (personal communication, 1995).

28. It is possible that "crossing words" here is a calque on the Bengali reduplicated verb phrase kathar katakati 'mutual cross-cutting' (overlapping, argumentative exchanging) of words. Whereas the latter refers to argument in general, a context-
sensitive interpretation of "crossing words" in this moot supports the more specific meaning of "interruption."

29. Regarding the question mark here and in line 476, cited below, see the transcription conventions in the appendix.

30. This faith is based on the successful use of saline in rehydrating victims of cholera and other severe diarrheal disorders.

31. Such metapragmatic discourses can be generated, as evidenced by my discussions with Mansur Musa (alluded to above).

Jane Hill (1995) has recently described how "mock Spanish" indirectly indexes racist images of Spanish-speaking people. She traces her theoretical framework through the writings of Ochs (1990) on indirect indexicality to Silverstein (1979) and Whorf on covert semiosis. "Innocence," unconsciousness, and power are linked in Hill's striking portrayal of the range of forms used in mock Spanish.

32. "At the level of rhetoric itself, imputations of rhetoric [imputations that the present author labels metarhetoric] are a mark of social unpleasantness. In ordinary usage, the term implies pretension, bombast, even deliberate dishonesty. As a result, the social sciences have generally treated rhetoric as an epiphenomenon of a real world to which it blocks access. Yet the consequent refusal to take rhetoric seriously is symptomatic of precisely what rhetoric does best: it backgrounds its own rhetoric" (Herzfeld 1988:1; see also Jakobson 1987b).

33. "Both allusion and direct juxtaposition illustrate the paradox which makes iconicity so useful a tool for ideologies. . . . The paradox is that juxtaposition, by positing at least two terms to be compared, denies identity. . . . All these devices are performatives, directed to the reconstitution of what may be an impossible condition in one sense as fundamental truth in another. They belong to the larger class of devices which background the tropic character of an attribution ('Z is a real shark'). Just as it would be merely silly to object to the reality of the shark, so, too, we stand to gain nothing from simply dismissing the claims of cultural ideologies as 'untrue'. Their validity is subject to what Hanson (1979) has called a 'double contingency,' one side of which lies in the evidential rules within which the ideology itself is formulated. Like all performatives, such devices are successful in varying degrees" (Herzfeld 1986:409).

34. What role behind-the-scenes negotiations played in the fining of the relatively-more-violent parties I know only in a general sense.

35. This statement invokes a vision of social institutions being produced and reproduced in and across moments of interaction, a vision conveyed by Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984), and practice theory in general. The intertextuality on which the social structures of power rest is described by Bauman and Briggs (1990).

References Cited

Abbi, Anvita

Adnan, Shapan

Ali, Mohammad, Mohammad Moniruzzaman, and Jahangir Tareq, eds.
Anderson, Benedict

Anderson, Stephen

Apte, Mahadev

Bauman, Richard, and Charles Briggs

Bhaskararao, Peri

Bloch, Maurice

Bourdieu, Pierre

Brenneis, Donald

Briggs, Charles

Bybee, Joan

Comrie, Bernard

Daniel, Valentine

Dimock, Edward C.

Duranti, Alessandro

Duranti, Alessandro, and Elinor Ochs
Emeneau, Murray

Fauveau, Vincent, ed.

Friedrich, Paul

Giddens, Anthony

Haiman, John

Haley, Michael Cabot

Hanks, William F.

Haviland, John

Herzfeld, Michael

Hill, Jane

Hill, Jane, and Bruce Mannheim

Humayun, Rajib

Irvine, Judith
Jakobson, Roman

Lindstrom, Lamont

Lock, Margaret, and Nancy Schepker-Hughes

MacLaury, Robert

Masica, Colin P.

Myers, Fred R., and Donald L. Brenneis

Ochs, Elinor

Ortner, Sherry

Parmentier, Richard J.

Peirce, Charles S.

Pinker, Steven

Rosaldo, Michelle Z.
Seidel, Gill
Shahidullah, Muhammad, ed.
Shaklayen, Gholam
Silverstein, Michael
Starrett, Gregory
Watson-Gegeo, Karen, and Geoffrey M. White, eds.
Wilce, James M.

Appendix: Transcript of the February 1992 Moot

Transcription Conventions

- Punctuation of the Bengali discourse follows intonation, not grammar. Thus a final question mark indicates rising intonation, even if the preceding sentence is a statement.
- Overlapping speech segments are shown between slashes on both of the lines that overlap.
- Capitalization indicates segments stressed by speakers.
- Italicization marks English words used in the Bengali discourse.
• Words within parentheses are problematic or uncertain hearings of the taped words. Individual letters within parentheses in the middle of Bengali words are phonemes unrealized in the rapid pronunciation but included to facilitate Indologists’ recognition. (xx) signifies inaudible words.

• Comments about participant structure and paralinguistic features are contained in double parentheses.

• Words not spoken but implied in the original are contained within brackets.

• Length of pauses is shown in seconds, by numbers in parentheses.

• Latching of utterances, the near overlap of two utterances by the same or different speakers, is indicated by =.

Given the difficulty of identifying all 50 potential speakers from an audio recording of the moot, I have arbitrarily assigned a new lowercase or capital letter of the alphabet whenever a new unidentified speaker begins. Some speakers are identified explicitly in the course of the interaction, and I assign them special letters. For example, “M” designates the particular union councilmember dominating most of the salis, “Mt” designates Burrus, the schoolmaster (“Master Shaheb”), and “Bt” designates “Bottle,” the new chairman of Sonargaon Union. “N” designates “Bottle’s” nephew.

130  अपनागो जागार(र) सानक्रांतो बियापार
131  जमि जमार बियापार पुस्कुनिर बियापार
132  इगुला तो परे-ओ कर्ते पारबेन।
133  जेता अपनारा उद्याग निया दुजन chairmen
134  मामला कर्ते दन नय,
135  इटाके एक्ता महात काज़ करणेल?
136  मामला हाले एलाक़र एक्समती,
137  एलाकर ताका पायसा अपाकन हाबो,
138y रेसारे
139M गंदागाल रेसारे एरो बरबो कम्बो ना।
140y हम।
141M इटार एग्ज समाधान करा रेसेता करणेल।
142 इटार टो time अचेव=पारे पारबेन।
143 एर एय मतलब कर(ए)चे
144 जे जागार(र) सानक्रांतो जिनिस देख्ते हाले,
145 एटो लोक लाग्बे ना।
146y नाथिक
147M अमि लाग्बो?

You have the affair concerning the place,
the affair of the land, the affair of the pond
these you could even handle later.
The thing about which you took the initiative and invited two union council chairmen:
you did not allow [the parties] to go to court.
In that you have done a great thing.
In a court case, the area is hurt,
the area’s money would be wasted,
conflict . . .
The indiscipline and mutual spite would grow, not shrink.
Mhm. ((Agreement.))
Before it comes to that, try to solve it!
There’s time for this matter—later you can do it.
And this [person] thought
that if you must hear land-related disputes
You don’t need so many people.
No, [you’re] right.
I’m needed.
The area's leaders—ten [or so]—are needed.
One are [sic] needed who KNOW the matter.
Yeah.
First, whatever is the real event,
whatever this centers on—you should finish it first.
Member Shaheb, what is the center?
(That, something got neglected??)
What is the center, Member Shaheb?
And they [who took this initiative] took a burden [of responsibility].
You've heard all this talk; what is the center?
Yes, I've heard—[wait] a minute.
Huh?
That for which all those presentations went by, you know?
Bit by bit they addressed it.

Now
you are no longer looking for the source of the fight.
You are looking into maramari.
About maramari—
This is not már. It's maramari. (1.0)

Or is it már?
Maramari is what happened.
No, I'm saying, /if it's maramari/

/(Since it's two sides)
—maramari or/
*/If/
To say "maram 6ri" [means] both sides.
YEAH!
Both sides just did maramari. (1.5)

NOT "MÄR" AT ALL! (1) THAT WASNT MÄR AT ALL!
I SAID /maramari. /

*/That's it—/
both sides did maramari.

[Yes,] sir.
If it were már, that question would remain.
ekhan āpni dekhen,
Now you look
je asaLEY ki niyā lāglo ke
at actually who did what for what
karlo.
reasons.

Hm.
Mhm.

Hm.
that's (?) mārāmāri happened
That's (?) mārāmāri happened
[right]?
[right]?
Both sides did mārāmāri.
Both sides did mārāmāri.

And if (.5)—who did what,
And if (.5)—who did what,
who is the owner [of the land] and
who is the owner [of the land] and
who is not...
who is not...
That's what we have to grasp.
That's what we have to grasp.
One subject has been suppressed.
One subject has been suppressed.

(very emotional) ekta (mārman
((several people speaking at once))
mārman [mārān, mārān]) hayechi?
one (of us) was beaten [slaugh-

ektā hai(ye)che MĀR.
[tered, robbed of justice]),
ektā cápa hai(ye)che amner.
and] one [did the] beating. Some-

((several people speaking at once))
Hm.
One (of us) was beaten [slaugh-
mārāmāri [between] two sides oc-
tered, robbed of justice]),
curred!
and] one [did the] beating. Some-

Before the mārāmāri, in order that
thing was suppressed [in] your [ac-
mārāmāri not occur

tcount]!
both sides agreed to arbitration.

( Hold your words)
((several people speaking at once))
maramari [between] two sides oc-

Now then who broke [that], who
curred!
did mārāmāri,

maramari [between] two sides oc-

that's what the arbitration will be

curred!
about.

Yeah, you can raise that issue.
(We've taken the mār) later!
And here [you should] speak softly
or, "slowly".
( There will inevitably be a little)

The case was initiated [against?]
mārāmāri.
three people.

[They had said ] we would sit this
evening. (0.5)
But that (was set for 9 or 10 [p.m.]).

(There will inevitably be a little)
maramari.

The case was initiated [against?] maramari.

three people.

[They had said ] we would sit this evening. (0.5)

But that (was set for 9 or 10 [p.m.]).

[Should we] give that up [x] and de-
cide who started the mārāmāri

—-that ("is another," or "or the pre-

vious") discussion?
((Unintelligible multiparty talk))

Then, then they said—

then mār occurred, not mārāmāri.
Then came thoughts about staying [overnight].
Here you had no (xx), you

((uproar))
This discussion will not settle down!
It will settle down.
Whatever. (xx) As you said

We’ve taken a statement [from the accused?]

This discussion you are now dragging out:
The horse when roped, wounds [the one who goes near].
So, to go in the middle . . . [those who intervene also bear some responsibility]
((Unintelligible multiparty talk))
I told them to say something, and all know.

No [not all know about it]
Since Burrus is an elder-leader, Burrus went [to speak in an official capacity].
Everyone knows [that].
Nevertheless, introduce [Burrus?].
(Never mind)
In this sort of “international” moot.
Convening an interdistrict moot.

(They convene it)
In that light, what point does he want to move to?
That is your decision.
What you speak of [someone] addressed (already, by way of background)
Look (with your ears) at what [took place] before.
(xx) a little bit
If, along with that (before)
some other matter or thing comes in, then this court is stopped.
Yes, a decision occurs [then].
This “court” would be suspended.
It comes to a stop.

(tarpare to åslo je thákår cintā karā)
ey je āpnāder (xxxx) chilen nā āpnārā
jato kāthā kambo nā.
kamto.
ey jak āwā emje kāthā kaiyechen.
äge to ämrá to statement /niyechi/
e kāthā ämāre ekhan tān diyechen
tat niyā ābār e ghorrā dārī
ghorā tānto ghorrā
tatto ghorrā katte
herpare mājhe jāite

onāre āmī kichu bal ār janno balechi? ēbā-sabā-e ājāne (eji karechen)
(nā (sam xx ājānī nā)
(jehetu xxx Burrus-e murábbi āchen. Burrus cale geche.
sabā-e jān‘ē)
erpareo paricay karen.
(thāk cese ha)
e rakam internation darbār
interdistrict-er darbār (du ekta) KAREēo
=kare.
(se hisābe onār ki point -e jāite cāe (cān)?)
etā āpnāder byāpār.
xxx jā balechen eta (bhumikā diya) baltache,
(jā āge iyāta dekhen (KĀN DIYA) dekhen.
(āchen nimno oderike jadi) alpo
jadi etār sange (age lupto)
kono biṣay bastu esa jāe,
ta(ha)le fazdāri stop.
(xx) rāy haiyā jāe
fazdāni sthagito thākeyi
stop haiyā a a a—/ad/

(2021P 212M 213M 214M 215Q 216Y 217 219 220 221 222 223 224M 225M 226B 227x 228B 229x 230B 231 232x 233B 234 235M 236 237 238 239 240x 241M 242x 243M)
Reduplication and Reciprocity

244
245a a ekhane amra e (xxx) kata
balben na (xx) eta
246
247ch x na, sunen!
248R amri kichu kata baltam (1.8),
eman kichutabaltam.
249R EKHANE JE JINISTÁ
NIYE ĀMRA EKHANE
((speaking over the roar))
250
251M? ekhane (sahāpati saheb ekta
kaTHĀY (ney na keo).
252 sabay to kata hāwdaw
kartāche.
253
254S? nā!
255
256S? sunen, sunen!
257 ekhane darbāre basle jadi
sālāsi kan,
258 ekhane corresponding karen.
259 ekhane darbār kono din?
260 siddhānto amra pawcte pārbo
na.
261 ekhan asal bisay-bastutā
puskuni.
262x dar (xxx)
263S sekhane jamin kono
264 ekhane kono subject -i na.
265 ...
266 291 (1.0) o tin jan amanya karlo. (1.0) Those three transgressed.
267 292T ((high nasal voice)) E RĀ(K)HEN!
AMNE hunen,
268 ...
269 417A niyam srinkalā buddhi āyechi,
270 je āmār (deser janno) chāraite
pāri.
271 418 ((Someone makes a joke.))
272 ((Several laugh.))
273 419B 420C 421D 422E 423D 424 425 thakte habe
ekta atma-niyaton thakte
habe,
Everyone must have an attitude of respect.
There must be this attitude of respect among all
Hm.
There must be love, and the greatest of all things, there must be (xx)
a nobility [or magnanimity/loftiness].
We have sat down here (to work out) a compromise.
If we display verbal skill and keep on talking, then
(Or by speaking 2, 7, 10 thousand [x’s]?)
(xx) No need to explain.
You are making fine “saline” preparations,
but you’re trying to sell toothache medicine.
[If you want to engage in verbal gymnastics,] that’s no problem. But a canvasser’s teaching
we don’t need.
That which is our main thing we have heard.
(Parasite) medicine (or problem?) is fine.
So [to do x with the question of] whose [x is x-ing] won’t help.
We don’t need “whose objection, whose pain.”
[There is] a common peace [to be concerned with].

We made Mother’s Brother [Bottle?] the chair of the meeting.
He is the chairman of this union.
I was thinking that he would be able to crack this green coconut.
(I hoped we could) proceed this way.
But today we’ve seen that he has a lot of weakness.

He is weak, and (???)

(humans xxx)—

I can’t understand whether he is [x or y].

He is hosting this moot.

As his nephew (xxx),

I feel badly.

Why should this happen?

Today we are four chairmen present.

Not only here.

If this attitude does not abide, if respect does not abide, love does not abide, respect does not abide, (xx) does not abide, then shut down your moot?

and let’s go. And if that (is what you want), then do it.

Don’t be angry with my words.

Forgive the offense.

((Unintelligible multiparty talk))

(*** People have come from other “districts.”)

In light of that, lest people speak ill of this area,

uphold its dignity.

We are of one mind (regarding [your?] words).

We are all of one mind.

Now (xx) Member Shaheb

Yes (1.5)

The (0.8) previous [time] when we all

[When] statements happened, a council [convened], discussion went on

[That is,] a “society” (was convened). We said then that those outsiders (0.8) who have come (0.3),

the line they (want to go in)

even if that line be pure (1.3)
we are not willing (on our own) to go on in (our) verbal skill [rhetoric]
(0.6) (0.6)
I'm (?) speaking a word to you.
No!
Wait.
(Three people speak at once; unintelligible)
(x) hasn't happened
(Wait? They became x?)
/Now/
(Unintelligible multiparty talk)
there is more (?)
Do your (insulting)
Proclaim it in whatever way you will.
(Unintelligible loud interruption)
[third person] will not be able to speak
(Member and Master Shaheb speaking simultaneously?)
?
No need!
that today—
(Unintelligible multiparty talk)
It won't do for just anyone to speak.
crossing-words
Only (x) shall speak
[If we] (descend into) crossing-
words
Now something (?)
Hello
What [sort of] treatment happened and did not happen?
(0.4) Everyone knows that the incident occurred . . . /(.3)/.
/Everyone knows./
Then our (??)
(speakers) from outside (??)
those who are being humiliated
(0.8)
/?/
(became?)
They are being (humiliated) more than us. (2.0)
Uuh [agreeing].
More than us.