

owner and that having a master only increases the subjectivity of the possession. Consider María A. Guzmán-Gallegos's depiction of identity cards among the Runa as subjectivized objects that have something of their possessor's self inscribed into their material form. In Guzmán-Gallegos's analysis identity cards are dangerous and potent signs of both shamanic power and of asymmetries in relations between Runa and representatives of Ecuadorian state power. She evaluates the volume's recurring theme of what sort of agency subjectified objects have by suggesting that Runa people attribute "secondary agency" to some objects, while other objects such as shamans' stones are more fully agentive. In both cases there is an emphasis on relational dependency and mutual constitution by a matter of degrees. Els Lagrou analyzes Cashinahua designs and suggests that different from Melanesia, things in Amazonia do not stand for persons and relations because they are beings of their own. This seems to run against much of this volume's evidence of the semiotic emblematic function of subjectivized objects. Rather, the possibility of complex relationships involving humans and nonhumans, including their things, rests in the ability for all the participants to stand for persons and relations.

Overall this volume's chapters resonate with linguistic anthropology's concern with the semiotics of materiality and possession but these connections remain to be made explicit. The approach to the ways that objects are ritually invested with meaning connects to the study of the materiality of signs, semiotic ideologies, and ritual by scholars such as Webb Keane ("Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things," in *Language and Communication*, 2003: 409–425, "Subjects and Objects," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, C. Tilley et al, eds., Sage, 2006: 197–202). Repeated reference in the volume to the animating force of certain possessions and special ways of grammatically marking personified possessions likewise connects to linguistic anthropological studies of inalienable possession, exchange, and personhood and the ways that reference to possessions in discourse contributes to the emblematic subjectification of possessor and possessed ("Inalienable Possessions and Personhood in a Q'eqchi'-Mayan Community," P. Kockelman, *Language in Society* 36(3), 2007: 343–369, "Inalienable Possession as Grammatical Category and Discourse Pattern," P. Kockelman, *Studies in Language* 33(1), 2009:25–68, "Inalienability in Social Relations: Language, Possession, and Exchange in Amazonia," C. Ball, *Language in Society* 40(3), 2011:307–341). Santos-Granero points out how obligatory possessions are grammatically marked in Yanehsa and Hill discusses Wakuénai concepts of ownership but neither author invokes the category of inalienable possession familiar in Arawak languages such as these. The editor seems aware of the potential here and admits in the introduction that the chapters provide a glimpse of deeper semiotic and linguistic issues but that there is more work to be done. Indeed, the book would also benefit from closer dialogue with authors of foundational linguistic anthropological work on discourse in Amazonia, such as Basso, Briggs, Franchetto, Graham, Oakdale, Seeger, and Urban. Still the rich ethnographic portrayals of the variety of, and commonalities in, communicative practices and cultural ideologies involved in the subjectification of objects make this book an invaluable contribution to Amazonian anthropological scholarship. I hope it stimulates further linguistic and semiotic anthropological research into the connections between people and things, but also between materiality, mediation, discourse, and circulation in Lowland South America and beyond.

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**Variation in Indigenous Minority Languages.** James N. Stanford and Dennis R. Preston, eds. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2009. vi + 519.

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This volume provides a welcome focus on minority language communities, ostensibly through the lens of quantitative variationist sociolinguistics. Variationist approaches have often been criticized for being Eurocentric, and this volume brings some interesting insights from communities well beyond the beaten path of the Northern Cities. As the editors point out in their introduction, the change in focus brings with it the need for new kinds of analysis; they

highlight a number of issues that the study of minority language groups sheds light on, including the lack of clear socioeconomic class distinctions, the importance of clan as a variable, the lack of a standard for many languages, dense and multiplex village ties that render the concept of a “network” meaningless, the practice of linguistic exogamy influencing sound change through social identification, different types of links between gender and sound change patterns, contact with minority languages, and the variety of linguistic features that are available to carry meaning (pp. 6–12). I found the editors’ choice to depart from a focus on minority language endangerment and extinction particularly welcome, although this topic crept in nevertheless along the way. The statistical approaches used by the contributors are also quite diverse, going far beyond the standard VARBRUL-type analysis so familiar from variationist studies, although it would have been nice if all of the contributors had explained their choice of analytical tools and their advantages and limitations as clearly as does Brunelle (p. 62).

Stanford and Preston take a soft approach to the definition of an “indigenous minority language,” noting that while the prototypical view might be characterized as ‘a language spoken by a fully endogenous, numerical minority group which experiences a maximally distinct linguistic/cultural contrast with the majority group around it’ (pp. 4–5), they opt to stretch the boundaries of the definition to include languages such as Faetar (Nagy, chapter 17), which is not, strictly speaking, indigenous; and languages such as Ewe, which has a large population but is of lower status than French (Noglo, chapter 9). If the category seems a little *ad hoc*, the authors at least discuss and justify their choices, appealing to ‘similar experiences and characteristics’ (p. 5) that speakers of the languages studied in this volume share.

As I read through the book, however, the diversity of epistemological approaches and subject matter were so striking that I found myself wondering what the editors mean by “variationism,” a point that they address in just one line: ‘the research of language variation and change that has grown out of the Labov tradition (e.g., Labov 1963, 1966, 1994, 2001)’ (p. 1). A collection that includes anything that cites Labov would cast a very wide net indeed. If it is true that many (but not nearly all!) the contributors cite Labov, some of them adhere closely to traditional variationist methods while others seem to take much more inspiration from language contact, language endangerment, or other strands of linguistics (see further discussion below). The contributions also vary widely in the extent to which they are either quantitative or sociolinguistic; for example, Meyerhoff’s contribution (chapter 16) focuses exclusively on linguistic factors while Thiering’s (chapter 21) seems to have no quantitative angle at all. This diversity is both a strength and a weakness of the volume; while it makes for a sometimes bumpy ride, it also generates a great deal of energy from the many different theoretical positions of the contributors, and often some surprisingly productive interactions. For example, Rau et al. (chapter 11) and Romero (chapter 12) each discuss the role of gender and social mobility in the choice to use conservative or less conservative forms, but come to opposite conclusions; while Romero argues that women use the conservative form because they have *less* access to broader speech communities, Rau et al. argue that women use a conservative form because they have *more* access to broader speech communities. This underscores linguistic anthropological work indicating that the symbolic value of linguistic features is deeply intermeshed with particular social and economic conditions of the surrounding community (cf. “Codeswitching and Consciousness in the European Periphery,” Susan Gal, *American Ethnologist*, 1978). Research methodologies provided another interesting meeting point throughout the book, including two largely methods-oriented chapters (Bosch & Scobbie, chapter 15, and Nagy, chapter 17) but also present in contributions such as Babel’s opening chapter on phonetic drift (chapter 1, no relation to myself).

A second, related point that arose in my reading of this book was the tension between what minority languages can do for variationist sociolinguistics vs. what variationist linguistics can do for minority languages. It seems clear from the Introduction that minority languages have much to contribute to quantitative variationist sociolinguistics, especially in the area of variable selection. However, it would have been interesting to see an explicit synthesis of what variationist linguistics can do for the study of minority languages, a direction that several of the contributions seemed to touch on without ever spelling it out.

The volume is divided into two sections, the first focusing on variation in phonetics and phonology and the second on variation in syntax, morphology, and morphophonology. There are frequent agreeable interactions between the sections and between the papers in each section. The first, and longer (300 pages vs. 200 pages) section of the book focuses on variation in phonetics and phonology. In this section, many of the contributions brush up against concepts familiar to linguistic anthropologists, such as register and recursivity (Brunelle, chapter 2) and language ideologies (Carrera-Sabaté, chapter 3) without ever specifically refer-

encing them. Many of the contributions left me wondering how the authors established links between social-cultural ideas and perceptions and linguistic features. The contributions reflect disciplinary influences from language endangerment and death (Montoya-Abat, chapter 8) to relatively strict variationism in the Labovian style (Noglo, chapter 9; Rau et al., chapter 11) to language contact (Harlow et al., chapter 5). Two chapters (Lastra, chapter 6 and Leonard & Tuyuc, chapter 7) contain a great deal of contextual detail that, while necessary and welcome in many ways, ends up bogging down the theoretical argument.

The second section turns to morphosyntactic change. A theme in these contributions is a philosophical focus on methodology (especially Bosch & Scobbie, chapter 15; and applied linguistics in Nagy, chapter 17). It was in this section that I was scratching my head over what draws the contributions together; Biró and Sipőcz (chapter 14) give a straightforward language attrition paper with little focus on social categories, but a lot of information on language, while Meyerhoff contributes a paper with virtually no social analysis but a lot of quantitative detail (chapter 16). In contrast, chapters 18–20 (O’Shannessy, Satyanath & Laskar, and Stanford) are highlights of the book, each setting out concise, readable papers that draw together social analysis and quantitative measures of linguistic behavior.

Though the editors don’t discuss it explicitly, it was clear that the contributors to the volume struggled with providing sufficient detail and background on the social context of the regions in which they worked. As Leonard & Tuyuc note,

In explaining Martha’s Vineyard diphthong laxing or intricate patterns of norm and variable shifts in Belfast or the BEV speakers network, the amount of common knowledge shared by an American or European scholar with his/her readership is enormous, though we too easily take it for granted. This is not the case when one endeavors to describe any sociolinguistic situation in the vastness of the Amerindian world. (p. 179)

This wide-ranging volume contains a wealth of subject matter that linguistic anthropologists may find interesting, but I predict that they will also find parts of it frustrating, as, for example, in the various discussions of the relationship of gender to linguistic change, a topic that has been exhaustively discussed in linguistic anthropology. The best parts of this book are the chapters that step into the murky waters of relationships where bilingualism, code-switching, and language contact are pervasive and difficult to disentangle. After all, a “minority” language can only be defined in relationship to a majority language, a point that so clearly made by this collection of papers as to become nearly background information, but an important contribution to variationism nevertheless. In summary, the detailed data-based studies in this volume provide a valuable counterpoint to traditional variationist sociolinguistics, and in the end leave the reader wondering what constitutes the Labovian tradition.

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**Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic City.** *Rudolf Pell Gaudio.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. xv + 237pp.

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For readers informed about northern Nigeria’s adoption of *Sharia* law after 1999, the topic of this ethnography might come as a surprise. Set in and around the ancient and thriving Islamic city of Kano, Rudolf Pell Gaudio describes ‘*yan daadu*, a category of men who talk and act like women and engage in sex with other men (a practice known as *harka* or “the deed”). If your impression of ‘*yan daadu* is shaped by prior assumptions about gender and sexuality in Islamic societies and in sub-Saharan Africa, then Gaudio makes a request: “that you will rethink [the linguistic means and social contexts through which you gained] those ideas, and reconsider their implications: where do they come from? Who told you them and why? And what difference does it make?” (p. 13)

*Allah Made Us* calls readers’ attention to how specific communicative encounters, like reading the newspaper or joking with friends, can influence the ways people categorize and

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