UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Kinship: Void Categories

Bakalářská diplomová práce

Olomouc 2020 **Karel Vranovský**

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KATEDRA SOCIOLOGIE, ANDRAGOGIKY A KULTURNÍ ANTROPOLOGIE

KINSHIP: "VOID" CATEGORIES

Understanding (Japanese) kinship based on the Japanese spatial metaphor of "*ma*"

Bakalářská diplomová práce

Obor: Kulturní antropologie

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou diplomovou práci na téma „Kinship: Void Categories" vypracoval samostatně a uvedl v ní veškerou literaturu a ostatní zdroje, které jsem použil.

V Olomouci dne …… Podpis……

Poděkování:

Poděkování patří v první řadě jako vždy vedoucímu práce, doktoru Jakubovi Havlíčkovi, za jeho pečlivé vedení, dostatek konzultací, vždy rychlý a upřímný feedback, trpělivost a užitečné připomínky. Další díky patří profesoru Richardovi Feinbergovi a profesorce Joy Hendry za jejich podporu, rady a dodatečné materiály.

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Anotace:

Tématem práce je studie analytických a kategorizačních nástrojů, které stojí v samém základu oboru příbuzenské antropologie. Zajímat nás bude především strategie vytváření obecných i konkrétních kategorií příbuzenské terminologie. Novou perspektivu chceme získat skrze přiblížení procesu vytváření a užití příbuzenských kategorií v Japonsku. Za nástroj nám budou sloužit jak specifika konkrétního používání japonské příbuzenské terminologie (vyznačující se bohatým užitím příbuzenské terminologie ve fiktivním smyslu), tak obecnější nativní teorie souvztažnosti založené na prostorové metafoře (tzv. koncepce "*ma*"), jenž byla dosud zkoumána spíše v uměnovědných oborech. Cílem je obohatit existující (a často problematizované) kategorizační strategie oboru příbuzenské antropologie přímo o nové postupy, které nám specificky japonské užívání příbuzenství nabízí.

Klíčová slova: Příbuzenství, Japonsko, Ma, Negativní prostor, Rodina, Teorie kategorií, Logocentrismus

Annotation:

The subject of this thesis is discussion of analytical and categorization tools that rest in the very heart of the field of kinship studies. We take particular interest in strategies of construction of both general and specific kinship terms. We hope to achieve a new perspective through a look at the specific nature of kinship terminology usage in Japan, which shows unusual properties both in modularity and unusually high degree of fictive kinship usage. To aid us, we shall analyse native Japanese theory of mutuality and contextuality – the so-called Concept of "*ma*", which has been up till this point mostly analysed in fields of art theory. Our goal is to specify and enrich existing (and often contested) categorization strategies of kinship terminology through new strategies, informed by the unique Japanese perspective.

Key words: Kinship, Japan, Ma, Negative Space, Family, Category Theory, Logocentrism

Obsah

Introduction:

In the following paper, we shall tackle several seemingly only tangentially related subjects. First a (brief) history of Kinship anthropology and in particular, several major concerns that have arisen within the field the past few decades. The problems in question will be for the most part related to the very way we establish categories that are at the heart of our discipline: the ways that we arrive at concepts such as "kinship", "family", or "father". The second subject will be the specific condition of kinship terminology and kinship practices in contemporary Japan, based on available ethnographic data. Here we wish to reveal some interesting and relatively unique properties of Japanese kinship practices. Finally, we wish to examine a rather uniquely Japanese conceptual perspective of "void" or "negative space", known in Japan as ***ma*** and see if it can provide us with a new perspective on the subjects discussed above. In the end we shall attempt a synthesis of all of these subjects. Our study is theoretical, interdisciplinary, and (with a handful of exceptions) based on extensive primary and secondary literature research.

As such, this paper will be divided into three major chapters.

The first chapter: "**Kinship General",** will attempt to give us a loose definition of kinship, as well as provide some of existing criticism of said definition. We will take a brief look at the history of the discipline, present the context of existing outlooks outlining what constitutes kinship, and introduce some of the major players in the field together with their unique takes on subject of kinship and kinship-related categories. Particular attention will be given to what we tentatively call the "kinship earthquake", a discussion that shook the very foundation of the discipline not even fifty years ago. This discussion seems particularly important to me as some of those who influenced it the most have concluded that kinship as a category, and the kinship terminology it relies on, are **empty** categories.

The second chapter: "**Japanese Kinship**", will attempt to provide general overview of existing data on kinship terminology and practice of its use in Japan over the past few decades.

We will look at history of Japanese language and grapheme system first. Partially because understanding of Japanese kinship terminology (which is heavily modular) requires: a general understanding of some aspects of the Japanese language, a better understanding of the role different graphemic models (use of China-imported Sinitic symbols in particular), and finally a description of the various cultural influences which have shaped the system and provided it with even more specific properties. We will also account for certain culture-specific properties and conventions related to use of address, reference, grouping, and ego-positionality.

After that, we will take a look at Japanese kinship in general: providing an overview, categorization based on pre-existing western kinship taxonomy, and illustrating some examples of how Japanese kinship terminology can be listed, grouped and categorized.

Finally, we will look at its use in praxis, with special attention given to the extensive use of kinship terminology in a fictive sense: both within the family proper, and among strangers, and even within corporate environment. We will conclude this chapter by reflecting on some of the existing Japanese native scholars conclusions about their own kinship system.

Third and last chapter will be dedicated to ***ma*** – a native Japanese way of understanding emptiness, void, or negative space. *Ma* has been, up till now, mainly analysed as part of Japanese aesthetics and art, but I will attempt to make a case (in concurrence with several other authors) that it may actually be more than that: an entire perceptual paradigm, a perspective that significantly alters our understanding of inter-relatedness, commonality, and as a result, strategies of categorization and taxonomy. I shall attempt to argue that this "paradigm of *ma*", in my view comparable to the much maligned western "paradigm of logocentrism", does indeed manifest itself

across multiple levels of Japanese culture, including language and – of course – kinship terminology and practice.

In my conclusion, I will attempt a synthesis of all what I have outlined above. I hope that I may offer a new view on the understanding of "empty" or "void" categories, illustrate a different and highly pragmatic use of these notions in daily Japanese practice (of kinship and of language), and help to perhaps answer some criticisms that have been levelled at the field of kinship anthropology. Criticisms that up till point we have been side-stepping instead of answering.

Transcription note:

I shall, throughout this paper, use classic Hepburn romanization of Japanese script (avoiding the use of macron to indicate long vowels, instead opting for doubling them where appropriate). The choice of classic over revised Hepburn romanization boils down to technical limitations of available text processors as well as lack of consensus upon on appropriate use of macrons across multiple sources. While less common, classic Hepburn allows me for more clarity and easier text processing.

CHAPTER 1: Kinship General

Chapter 1.0: Foreword

Our very first task, the simple act of defining our subject of study, is unfortunately going to prove be the most difficult one.

What *is* **kinship**?

While kinship is intuitively understood and "practiced" almost universally across cultures separated by vast space and time (Morgan, 1871; D. Read & Guindi, 2013; D. W. Read, 2001; Sahlins, 2013; Skupnik, 2010), gaining a firm theoretical and academic grip on what actually constitutes "kinship" has proven to be one of the biggest challenges social anthropology has faced. In fact the difficulties of defining kinship were deemed so severe, many authors rejected this venture all together, and at a certain point of this debate (namely with the release of *What is kinship all about* (Schneider, 2004, originally 1972), kinship became a dismissed and even marginalized as field of studies (Sousa, 2003)[1].

In our most intuitive perspective, scarcely tainted by academic analysis, kinship appears to be a unique form of social bond, a sense of shared identity or mutually defined roles forming our most immediate and intimate social landscape, or perhaps a mere natural result of how our reproduction works. People we refer to as "our kin" are those who surround us at birth, they are those whose birth we witness, and often those who attend to us on our deathbed. We usually treat our kin in a most exclusive way, giving them priority over strangers, rely on them in times of need, and reciprocate when needed by them.

Our Modern world makes these sentiments regarding kinship more complicated: nurses, not mothers welcome us to this world and often are also the ones who close our eyes on our demise. Co-workers, bosses and friends often usurp more time of our life than our own immediate family. Meanwhile, social norms regarding gay

[1] Although some authors do see Sousa's overview of the current state of kinship as overtly pesimistic – see (Feinberg, 2003)

right liberation, single-sex marriage, adoption, fosterage, of communal child-rearing, and a host of other evolving social norms of conduct serve to obfuscate the biological role of creating human life. Given the complexities of modern biology, including genetic chimerism, and advances in artificial insemination challenge all of our intuitions about biological nature of kinship.

In his book "Anthropological perspectives on Kinship" Ladislav Holý offers the following summary:

"Kinship ties which people acknowledge and distinguish determine whom to marry, where to live, how to raise children, which ancestors to worship, how to solve disputes, which land to cultivate, which property to inherit, to whom turn for help in pursuing common interest and many other things."

(Holy 1996 p.13, cited from Skupnik, 2010 p.14).

As is immediately obvious, this broad definition, while hard to disagree with, gives us insight into how broad and potentially vague our understanding of kinship structures really is, as well as the lack of "common substantial" or "essential" component that ties all existing kinship models together. Skupnik offers a slightly narrower definition:

"We shall view kinship as cultural interpretation of ***human reproduction and utilization of related experiences*** *(…)* ***to form meaningful social relations****.*

(Skupnik, 2010 p.28)[2]

Here, we see a rather singular focus on kinship as product of a human reproductive mechanism, a perspective very common to our wide-spread intuitions about

[2] Translation mine, emphasis original

kinship. This notion was challenged robustly (Lévi-Strauss & Needham, 1969; Needham, 1971; Sahlins, 2013; Schneider, 2004)[3], with many of those cited calling out for the necessity to establish different "essential" criteria of kinship.

My work here is to explore the subject of kinship "essence" or kinship "substance" as a valid (or not) culturally universal notion. This question has been looked at before (Needham, 1971; Schneider, 2004) and I will examine their work as I go about questioning the very existence of kinship, but hopefully, arriving at different and more constructive conclusions.

To root my analysis of kinship in concrete ethnographic data, I will focus specifically on kinship in Japan – not only due to my personal interest and familiarity with the field, but also because Japan is home to a particular conceptual tool known commonly as "*ma*" (written traditionally as 間), which I believe will help us shift our perspective on the subject of kinship firstly in Japan, and secondly on an universal level.

Given the universality and importance of kinship across cultures accompanied by deeply rooted intuitions regarding its importance[4], both clashing with fundamental issues the field has faced to establish a workable universal definition, all lead me to believe the fundamental issue lies not so much in kinship itself, as in the epistemic tools modern social studies rely on. I hope to challenge some of these tools and in process in which they are used, to bring kinship to wider attention once more. Regardless of definitions and essentialist properties scholars may conjure up: kinship will continue to be a central tenant of our lives, a guideline for our behaviour, a bond of intimacy, and a vital part of our cooperation.

[3] The different bases of criticism of reproduction-focused interpretation of kinship are too wide and too varied for us to analyse here. Aforementioned subjects of political interests and rights of homosexuals, more complex and nuanced understanding of the biology behind reproduction, or flat out rejection of materialist / biological interpretation of culture are only some of the arguments levelled against reproduction-focused perspectives.

[4] Let's just remember the sheer quantity of proverbs and saying following along the lines of „Family is most important" or „blood is thicker than water. existing across cultures.

Chapter 1.1: Classic definitions of Kinship

The subdiscipline of kinship anthropology was arguably introduced by Lewis Henry Morgan in his phenomenally influential book *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in Human Families* (Morgan, 1871). As the very name suggest, Morgan's view of kinship was based around two essential elements – bond by blood, and bond by marriage. These two basic types of relationship are presented as unproblematic, and gravitate towards analysis of kinship through genealogical maps and rigorous analysis of used kinship terminology. Rivers, one of Morgan's contemporaries, (Rivers, Firth, & Schneider, 2004) further extended this method with scientific rigor.

Emphasis on human reproduction (sharing bed, sharing blood) remained central to most anthropologists studying this subject (Skupnik, 2010; Sousa, 2003), and as illustrated by Skupnik's citation above, is still often embraced even today. In this view, kinship can be broken down to a simple and universally understandable set of relationships: Maternity and paternity, fraternity and sorority, and finally affinity – that is the bond of marriage. Specifics of individual kinship models, which vary drastically from culture to culture, are seen as nothing more than various possible permutations, native reinterpretations or cumulations of these simple core bonds. Their thought process once again derived from their inherent need to track "consanguinity", the sharing blood, and the biological facts of human reproduction to capture kinship.

However, the consanguinity approach was not met with universal acceptance. Several authors, including the rather influential Claude Levi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss & Needham, 1969), in his now somewhat controversial *incest taboo explanation of kinship*, posing that kinship structures fundamentally serve to ensure circulation of goods (including alliances and women) between extended members of community, rather than simply reflect observations and experiences related to human reproduction (p. 52). A rather important problem for this theory is also appears when faced with societies that do not, at least explicitly, associate sexuality and reproduction at all, such as those

observed among Australian aboriginal people by Merlan (Merlan, 1986). Paolo Sousa also mentions rejection of biology / reproduction centred explanation of kinship by members of the materialistic oriented anthropologist such as Marvin Harris (Sousa, 2003).

Regardless, understanding kinship as a form of social reflection of human biological, reproductive necessities remained strong until the seventies, being embraced and entertained by such authors as Wilson (Hölldobler & Wilson, 2017; Wilson, 2005), Hamilton (Hamilton, 1964), Goodenough (Goodenough, 2006) and more recently Dan Sperber (Bloch & Sperber, 2002).

Around year 1970 however, things started to change quite rapidly.

Chapter 1.2: The Kinship Earthquake

There seems to be little doubt about the fact that something strange has been afoot in the field of Kinship Anthropology over the past several decades. While (as Peletz (1995)) notes, it would be a clear exaggeration to declare the field of kinship studies to be dead, it has seen some major shifts and turmoil in more recent history. Much of it can be traced to a mere couple of sources. For illustration: It's been almost fifty years since David Murray Schneider came up with this dramatic declaration:

*"In my view, "kinship" is like totemism, matriarchy and the "matrilinear complex". **It's a non-subject.** It exists in the minds of anthropologists but not in the cultures they study."*

(D. Schneider, 2004, originally published in 1972)[5]

Indeed, in the year 1972, the very subject of the field, has been denied existence.

Schneider's rejection of the very existence of kinship as a pragmatic subject of study was not just an isolated or inconsequential claim. It followed right on the heels of Rodney Needham's *Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage* (Needham, 1971), which provided similarly sceptical view of the usefulness of the notion. The impact of

[5] Emphasis mine

these two seminal works have been since recounted in works of many authors (for illustration let's recall Collier & Yanagisako, 1992; Peletz, 1995; D. Read & Guindi, 2013; D. W. Read, 2001; Sahlins, 2013; Shenk & Mattison, 2011; Sousa, 2003 and others). The impact of Schneider's and Needham's concerns markedly differs from author to author. Yet, there seems to be a rather universal agreement these concerns coalesced into a crucial turning point for the field.

Schneider's bold damnation of kinship was a conclusion of a prolonged debate that we might as well consider "Kinship war" that took place in sixties and seventies. According to Paolo Sousa (Sousa, 2003), the debate primarily sprung into being surrounding an exchange in Journal of Philosophy and Science in between the years 1957 and 1963, between three major original players: Ernest Gellner, Rodney Needham and John Barnes. The debate eventually escalated and peaked with publishing of aforementioned two articles: Needham's *Remarks on Analysis* and Schneider's *What is Kinship* in years 1971 and 1972 respectively. The subject of the debate transformed from initial dispute over the extend genealogy (and by implication biological function) should be reflected in contemporary kinship analysis, to a thorough re-examination and criticism of the notion of kinship itself as a valid tool of inquiry. We shall provide shortened summary of the debate, based primarily on Paolo Sousa's account (2003):

Gellner, representing a more traditionalist account of anthropology, argued for grounding theory of kinship in biological foundations or reproduction and biological proximity. Barnes, in reply, warned about mistaken assumption biological and social relations can be treated as same, while Needham went further in his criticism: by completely dismissing the relevance of biological notions, and also warning about mistaken assumption of essential nature of constitutive criteria of kinship. As a result he stated a claim that kinship as was then established cannot be employed as a basis for comparative cultural analysis.

In a somewhat overlooked article *Polythetic classification: convergence and consequences*, Needham, (1975) goes on to further explain his theory. The gist of his argument was inspired by a discovery that simultaneously occurred in two independent

disciplines: philosophy of language (most notably both Ludwig Wittgenstein and Lev Vygotsky), and in biology: the notion of "*family resemblance categories*", or in more biological terminology "*polythetic groups*".

The root of this concept is a "new" form of categorization of objects, not based on assumption of one or more shared universal qualities inherent to all members of the category, but rather by a series of overlapping similarities, where all members show list of similar qualities, but no one single quality is shared among every single member of the group. Needham argues that "kinship" belongs to this "polythetic" (or "family resemblance", should we chose to adopt Wittgenstein's terminology) class of categories, which according to him, makes any and all comparative study of the subject technically impossible (Needham, 1975).

Schneider, who joined the fray as last, agreed with Needham on dismission of biological foundations of kinship, but instead stressed out a folk-biological dimension of kinship categories over social relations (Rivers et al., 2004). Ultimately however, Schneider concluded even folk-biological dimensions of kinship (based on his continued study of American kinship concluding in his book *American Kinship* (Schneider, 1980) as insufficient for formulating a universal understanding of kinship, and concluded that kinship - in fact - does not and never had existed in social reality as a general phenomenon (Schneider, 2004).

Surprisingly enough, it seems that Schneider's position, though arguably least expertly argued, gained the greatest favour and influence (Georgas, 2006; Peletz, 1995; Sousa, 2003).

Chapter 1.3: Where are we now?

So, how did the field of kinship anthropology withstand these damning prospects? Well, the manner in which contemporary authors acknowledge the "kinship earthquake" are highly disparate.

Peletz, (1995) for instance argues, that kinship has since been reinvigorated and reconceptualized, by being merely "repatriated" into perspectives of "modern",

Marxist or feminist social theories. Focused on historically grounded inquiries into daily experiences related to issues of gay/lesbian relationships, power, gender and difference, kinship anthropology is supposedly concerned primarily with "*themes of contradiction, paradox and ambivalence*" (p. 344). His conclusions seem to mainly draw on the arguments presented in the foreword and opening essay of *Gender and Kinship: Towards an Unified Analysis* (Collier & Yanagisako, 1992). I shall not hide that I find these conclusions disturbing and misguided, especially as they are later on followed by Peletz`s endorsement of Engels and his "unique" take on human social history (p. 353).

Another (significantly less politically profiled) observations have been also provided by Richard Feinberg's *Some Overstatements in Fall of Kinship* (Feinberg, 2003), also drawing attention to plurality and diversity of subsequent treatments of the notion of kinship. In contrast to Sousa's rather bleak interpretation of the state of kinship, Feinberg stresses existence of wide variety of approaches ranging from ones based in theory of conflicts and Marxist outlooks, to evolutionary, sociobiological, materialistic and even cognitive perspectives, all being very much alive.

To compliment Feinberg's report, we can consider accounts of Mary Shenk & Siobhán Mattison (Shenk & Mattison, 2011), Charles Kemp & Terry Regier (Kemp & Regier, 2012) or Dwight Read & Fadwa El Guindi (D. Read & Guindi, 2013) These three studies, despite each coming from a widely disparate background formative theory (evolutionary theory, theory of communication and cognitive computationalism respectively) all advocate the thought that kinship anthropology is indeed very much alive and kicking – if very disunited in its core premises. In conclusion, worries about "death of Kinship", presented by Sousa, (2003), seem to have been exaggerated indeed.

However, the question remains whenever the new directions forming in a post-Schneiderian world, have actually satisfyingly answered Schneider's and Needham's concerns, or have they merely dodged them?

The answer is not easy and may lie - in part - in deeper understanding of both the underlying premises that gave them rise in the first place, and in part in mechanisms that lead to their hastily and perhaps somewhat unwarranted adoption.

The concern that "Kinship" may be indeed an empty, "void" category, still looms over the field.

I wish to argue that Schneider's and Needham's criticisms have not been really properly answered. They have been merely circumvented, or simply disregarded. I intend to revisit them, and examine the possibility that they may have been more correct than they even realized: that kinship may be, in fact, a "void" category.

However, I will propose that the notion of "void" or "empty" is less unproblematic than it seems, and that in fact, "void categories" may be far more constructive and relevant epistemic units than our initial sentiments may lead us to believe. Before we jump to the discussion of "void" space as a matter of different epistemic perspectives, I wish to first provide a brief analysis of a peculiar case of kinship based on concrete ethnographic data: specifically, the rather intriguing case of kinship in postwar Japan.

CHAPTER 2: Japanese Kinship

Chapter 2.0: Some preliminary notes

Japanese kinship has not been subjected to quite as much thorough anthropological inquiry in English literature as I would like to see, despite its peculiar properties. Most readily available studies (Ishino, 1953; Smith, 1962, 2004; Spencer & Imamura, 1950) date back to fifties and sixties: anthropological studies into Japanese Kinship and terminology past that date are sparse in between. Later studies seem more preoccupied with particularism or gender and power-focused analysis that barely qualify as kinship anthropology. This may be partially due to the generally diminished interest in kinship anthropology due to aforementioned "kinship earthquake" and its fallout. In part it may also be attributed to general reluctance of western anthropology to study larger industrialized societies, which (at least in the past) have been assumed - with a staggering lack of foresight - to be better studied through the means of sociology, gender studies and conflict theories. This assumption is also related to another deeply rooted issue of kinship anthropology in general: the often implied and unacknowledged assumption that with industrialization, kinship models across cultures are supposed to converge and homogenize in nature: an assumption that is underlined by implied unilinear evolutionism beliefs at heart, and that can be sadly traced to still present specters of authors such as Marx and in particular Engels (Georgas, 2006).

Another factor that may have forestalled deeper examination of Japanese Kinship may be linked to claims made by prominent formative scholars focused on Japanese society, namely Nakane Chie (Nakane, 2008, first published in 1970), whose observations later resonate in multiple follow-up works, such as those of Takashi Sugiyama Lebra, (1998).

In her assessment of Japanese kinship, Nakane concludes that:

***Japan gives less weight to kinship than do other societies even England and America**; in fact, the function of kinship is comparatively weak outside the household. The saying 'the sibling is the beginning of the stranger' accurately reflects Japanese ideas on kinship.*

(Nakane, 2008 p.6[6])

This statement can be easily misleading, if not understood in the proper historical context. Nakane still works with an older framework, one that assumes that kinship **equals** consanguinity specifically. Perhaps unaware of the transformation that was already happening in the western academic understanding of the concept, Nakane unknowingly embraces a rather outdated and ironically western ethnocentric approach to the notion of kin. Equipped with a broader approach to the idea of kin, seeking its functional dimension rather than simple descent tracking, we will find evidence in the very same book that paints a very much the opposite picture.

Kinship as a structural metaphor, as basic cognitive unit, permeates the Japanese society (according to Nakane) on just about every level: in the use of the term 家 (Ie - household, family) in reference to one's company (p. 3, 4,) the concept of "company familialism" and term *Kokutetsu-Ikka* 国鉄一家 (One Railway Family) (p.7, 19), the use of the term 親分子分 (*Oyabun-Kobun* – literally: "Parent role - Child role", a form of extra-familial social bond) (p. 43) or the term 家元制（*iemoto*-sei – literally "house-like system", a traditional organization of vocational or artistic units) (p. 58) etc… Further evidence can be found outside of Nakane's subject matter, such as in the common use of terms お兄さん(*onii-san*) and お姉さん (*onee*-san) as a term of address towards older peers among children.

[6] Emphasis mine

Consanguineal ties may be arguably weaker, but taken as a fundamental conceptual frame of social organization, kinship seems (at least in Nakane's view) exceptionally pronounced in Japan.

Of course, the question can be raised as to how much this metaphorical or fictive use of kinship-based-terminology still applies as a proper instance of kin term use. Argument could be raised that it is merely an instance of polysemy or even homophony. The latter concern can be easily dismissed if we analyze use kanji in transcription of terminology, as the use of Chinese-origin-based symbols in Japan allows us to divorce phonetic and semiotic elements of a term. Common use of kin-based symbols in transcription of fictional use of kin terms suggest we are not dealing with a mere case of homophony.

To address the former concern, once again functional analysis of kinship needs to be employed - that is, we need to ask if behavior associated with given term truly matches patterns of behavior typical for traditional Japanese kin-based relationship. Ishino, (1953) and Norbeck & Befu, (1958), both present strong arguments towards this conclusion, as they illustrate that use of kin-terminology towards strangers is by no means indiscriminatory, but rather follows a rather complicated pattern reflecting both age of the speaker, age of the referent, but also implications of social status and anticipated reaction / behavior reflecting different cooperative strategies within (and across) various social strata. Discriminatory use reflecting anticipated or implied levels of intimacy and mutualism specific to the particular context of situation seem to be roughly analogical to models of expected intimacy and mutualism among corresponding "true" kin terminology within "true family" – such as fictive kin terminology being employed more commonly among people of seemingly similar status, in smaller communities, within boundaries of friendship etc. (Norbeck & Befu, 1958). This to me strongly suggests that their use is an intentional invocation of "true" kin terms and related associations, rather than merely "double serving" as mere alternative words for "stranger" or "older woman". We will revisit this subject in our chapter on fictive kinship in Japan.

Chapter 2.1: Japanese kinship - Context:

Before we even begin considering the concrete aspects of Japanese kinship terminology, we first must establish some groundworks of its rather specific history and relationship to Japanese language, ideography and phonography. Several subjects must be considered, namely: the history of Japanese graphemic system, modularity and contextuality of Japanese language, its particular emphasis on differentiating terms of addression and terms of reference, and somewhat unusual strategies of establishing ego of used kin structure.

Chapter 2.2: History of Japanese grapheme system

The very first thing we have to acknowledge when understanding Japanese kinship terminology and underlying social patterns, is the importance of the role of diffusion of Chinese linguistic and potentially cultural elements into older Japanese substrate, namely the fact that Japan adopted Chinese symbolic script despite its "poor fit" (Smith, 1962, 2004; Spencer & Imamura, 1950)to pre-existing Japanese languages. The attempt to fit Chinese characters to the needs of distinct Japanese phonetics and morphology, as well as influx of new vocabulary from mainland China, resulted in production of so-called Sino-Japanese lexicon which coexisted and in part diffused into the oral use (Shibatani, 1990; Smith, 1962; Spencer & Imamura, 1950). With the diffusion, completely new terminology seems to have been transplanted with the written form of language, including a rather extensive list of new, Sino-Japanese kinship terms reflecting kinship models of continental China. With Chinese and Japanese native kinship models historically being dramatically different (Spencer & Imamura, 1950), many of these were lacking corresponding native Japanese equivalents. In fact, as Smith (Smith, 1962, 2004) notes, there is an evidence for a limited time frame in which Japan had two entirely separate kinship terminology libraries: one existing purely in written, Sino-Japanese form, and having no oral counterpart, and the other

existing exclusively in oral form without appropriate Sino-Japanese symbols to represent it.

There is no doubt that contemporary use of Japanese kinship models is a result of blending of both pre-China contact and post-China contact models. However, following the suit of Smith, Spencer, Imamura and Shibatani, we want to privilege practical (oral and daily-use) terminology over terminology existing only in written form, and reflect the specific context in which different terminologies are being employed.

To illustrate this process, let us consider following example:

Even though contemporary written Japanese recognizes distinction between following words: 伯父, 叔父, 姑父 and 舅父, each meaning different type of uncle - reflecting both seniority and lineage of parental siblings and their affiliates (so in this case it is: FeB, FyB, FZH and MB respectively), all of these are commonly read by the same Japanese reading: *oji* (“おじ”), simply corresponding to our word “uncle”: (PB/PZH) (Spencer & Imamura, 1950).

This leads to conclude that lineage and parent-generation sibling seniority seems to have little to no relevance to practical daily use of kinship terminology in contemporary Japan, despite the existence despite Sino-Japanese script terminology that distinguishes said seniority and lineage (factors common and highly relevant in classical Chinese kinship terminology). As such, we consider such terms “non-native” (lacking relevance in practical use in Japanese cultural context) and secondary to our analytical interest.

Coexistence of different Sino-Japanese and Japanese lexicons for kinship terminology, and their somewhat arbitrary ties to oral praxis make otherwise rather simplistic practical-use Japanese kinship model much richer and more flexible when accounting for both oral and literal sources, but also arguably more complicated to navigate for an academician. In general, a single ideogram may have multiple readings, while multiple different ideograms or their combinations may all share the same reading. So to understand the proper use of kinship terminology in praxis, we have to “sift”

(Spencer & Imamura, 1950) through the terminology accordingly, and keep in mind specific origins of individual terms, and their function specific contexts. That is not to say we should dismiss the Sino-Japanese kinship terms entirely – as many of them find their use in daily practice. I merely want to remain aware of their somewhat different role within practical daily use, and attempt to treat them accordingly.

Chapter 2.3: Modification, address, reference and grouping

In addition to this complexity, Japanese also employ a set of different tools to further modify individual kin terms, usually to express varied levels of politeness or intimacy, but at times to signify altered meaning. These mainly consists of:

Honorific prefixes: お (*o-*) (used for Japanese words) or 御/ご(*go-*) (used for Sino-Japanese words), usually signifying an increase in politeness attributed to attached term. Their absence usually signifies increased level of intimacy between speaker and referred or addressed person.

Honorific suffixes, which further specify or modify politeness or intimacy of said term. These exist in great variety, but for the purposes of our needs we can mainly limit our list to most common suffixes: ちゃん (*-chan*, diminutive or endearing sufix) さん (*-san*, neutral honorific) and 様 (*-sama*, polite honorific), as these three are most frequently used in conjunction with kinship terminology. It's important to keep in mind that absence of honorific suffix itself still can have semiotic importance.

As a result, a single core of a term can manifest itself in multiple varieties: a common Japanese term of address to father may exist in neutral intimate form: 父さん (*tou-san*) (absent prefix, neutral suffix), neutral polite form: お父さん (*o-tou-san*), or highly polite お父様 (*o-tou-sama*). Similarly, Sino-Japanese term for grandfather: 祖父 (*sofu*) in its most neutral intimate form (absent of either prefix or suffix), may exist in variants of ご祖父(*go-sofu*), 祖父様 (*sofu-sama*), or even ご祖父様 (*go-sofu-sama*) in its most polite version.

The use of honorific modification may or may not have kin-relevant semantic implications, depending on the context. For an instance, the difference between neutral form of address towards mother お母さん (*o-kaa-san*), and its polite form お母様 (*o-kaa-sama*) may be used to communicate distinction between address towards one's own mother and addressing one's mother-in-law. But it also may simply be a matter of required increase of politeness in some forms of written communication (such as letters written for formal occasions), with no semantic implication about the actual kin-relation towards the person addressed. Alterations to modifiers can be made to express respect, intimacy, and even anger and irony, as well as to help clearing out particular distinctions of kin-relatedness (Mogi, 2002; Shibatani, 1990; Watanabe & Švarcová, 2000)

To complicate matters further, we have to consider and place heavy emphasis on the division between social in-groups and out-groups, as well as, the distinction between terms of reference and terms of address.

Many scholars have noted the unusual awareness Japanese people maintain towards members identified as part of ego's in-groups and out-groups: a distinction that is commonly recognized as the principles of 内 (*uchi*) and 外 (*soto*)[7] (Caudill, 1970; Hendry, 1995; Kitaoji, 1971; Lebra, 1998; Yamaguchi, 2007). In kinship, this distinction results in duality of certain kinship terms reflecting their relative position towards ego's in- and out- groups, usually (but not exclusively) his actual family. This distinction generally tends to reflect used levels of politeness, with members of out-groups being usually referred to with higher levels of politeness than members of in-groups (Spencer & Imamura, 1950), but at times with a different term all together.

For an example, in reference towards his own parents, a person will usually use diminutive terms 父 (*chichi*) and 母 (*haha*) (one's own father and mother respectively),

[7] "Inside" and "outside" respectively, corresponding to our in-group and out-group ("us" and "them"), but also corresponding to the difference between "inside" and "outside", "private" and "public"c etc… For more detailed analysis, see aformentioned authors.

but in reference to other's parents, he will use more polite forms お父さん (*o-tou-san*) and お母さん (*o-kaa-san*) instead. Older siblings of ego get similar treatment: 姉 (*ane*) (eZ) and 兄 (*ani*) (eB) for members of ego's *uchi*, but お姉さん (*o-nee-san*) and お兄さん (*o-nii-san*) for members of the *soto* group. In reference towards grandparents, uncles, aunts, younger siblings and cousins, simple addition of the neutral suffix *-san* (or in more formal situations polite *-sama*) in reference to out-group members will usually suffice: 弟 (*otouto*) – 弟さん (*otouto-san*) (yB), 妹 (*imouto*) – 妹さん (*imouto-san*) (yZ), おじ (*oji*) – おじさん (*oji-san*) (PB), 従兄弟 (*itoko*) – 従兄弟さん (*itoko-san*) (PSiC) and so on (Yamaguchi, 2007).

To further understand this system, we must also take note of stronger emphasis on distinguishing between referential terminology and address terminology. Mogi, (2002) identifies these as *vocative* (used to address someone, to draw his attention) and *pronominative* (used to refer to someone or someone's state) forms of reference. To put it simply: it means one may often be required to use a different kin term when addressing a person of given kin-position, than he would use when merely speaking about them. Once again, relative politeness implications play a major role (Loveday, 1986; Mogi, 2002).

As an example: A person may use pronominative *haha* when speaking about his mother, but employ vocative, intimate *kaa-chan* or more polite *o-kaa-san* when addressing her directly.

Here we should stress out that use of vocative kinship terms is limited to one's seniors. Whereas use of vocative kin term is the most preferred form of address towards kin seniors (and as we'll see, this practice is by no means restrained by actual blood ties), no vocative forms for junior kinship positions exist (Loveday, 1986; Mogi, 2002; Norbeck & Befu, 1958). As a result, a younger brother will generally use variant

of *o-nii-san* (vocative form of eB) towards his older male sibling, while the older brother will address the younger one by his given name[8].

The list of kin terms used in vocative context is significantly shorter than the list of referential ones, and generally seems to employ Japanese vocabulary rather than those of Sino-Japanese origin, making it tempting to speculate that these terms may derive from an older tradition than they might from the far more frequently Sino-Japanese referential terminology.

Chapter 2.4: Ego-position

Final consideration has to be made towards unusual flexibility of ego-positionality when employing kinship terminology. As so many scholars have repeatedly stressed out, Japanese society ceaselessly surprise with the degree to which social identity groups supersede individual-bounded identities (Bachnik, 1983; Caudill, 1970; Eisenstadt, 1996; Hendry, 1995; Kitaoji, 1971; Lebra, 1998; Nakane, 2008; Spencer & Imamura, 1950). This external focus does translate into kinship terminology in the form of "ego-decentralization" of used terminology. Particularly strong evidence for this process is provided by (Lebra, 1998; Norbeck & Befu, 1958).

Here we are tethering on a verge of a greater subject, to which we will dedicate a significant portion of our work later: the issue of fictivity of kinship. For now, it must suffice to point out that when choosing the preferable kin term for both address and reference, actual position of the speaker may not always be treated as the focal point of drawing kin relation. One of such examples may be what Norbeck and Befu call

[8] Exceptions to this rule do seem to exist. I have witnessed on more than one occasion use of polite form of ySi "*otouto -san/imouto-san*" as a term of address towards younger sibling of a friend or acquittance. This practice may stem from forgetfulness of some speaker who may have forgotten friend's younger sibling's name, or from habitual use of kinship designation by older one, that may at time simply introduce their own younger siblings as "my younger sibling" without providing name to begin with. With japanese reluctance to use vocative pronominal words, use of polite form referential kin term such as "*otouto-san*" as a form of address seem still preferable to addression by a pronoun, such as "*kimi*" (you), or address by family name.

"modified teknonymy" - used most commonly, but not exclusively towards children, in which speaker assumes the recipients' position as an ego rather than his own.

Alternatively, an abstract ego may be construed that serves as an orientation point, usually in relationship to the family (in its corporate sense, as used by (Befu, 2004)) itself. Evidence of cases such as mother or siblings referring to their oldest son/brother as "*o-tou-san*" (father) after the original father of the household has passed away is provided by (Lebra, 1998; Norbeck & Befu, 1958).

(Kitaoji, 1971) presents an interesting argument based on field research in the community of Yaho, east of Tokyo. Here, he argues, classic kin terms were rarely employed, if at all, instead they were replaced by socio-centric "positional terms", which reflect the particular position of an individual related to his corporate family unit, with focal point to maintain their continuity of occupation and household facility.

We will explore this subject more once we reach our chapter on fictive kin usage in Japan.

Chapter 2.5: Kin terminology: Overview and typology

In this chapter we limit our focus on contemporary forms of Japanese family. Much has been said about the history of Japanese family model, its gradual transformation from 内 (*uchi* – "clan") to 同族 (*douzoku* – "stem family") and finally to "modern" and "nuclear" pattern of 家族 (*kazoku*) models (Hendry, 1995; Nakane, 2008; Ochiai, 1997, 2005, 2013; Okada, 1952; Robertson, 2005; Ryang, 2004). For the purposes of our analysis, we will however limit ourselves to most recent trends in Japanese kinship and kinship terminologies, because adding further historical analysis would stretch our already long work even longer.

Despite its functionally patrilinear bias, and certain complications brought in by the diffusion of Sinitic influences into native Japanese substrate, we may conclude that at its most commonly used basis, contemporary Japanese kinship model is a simple one. It loosely fits the "Yankee" pattern of "Eskimo" kinship model (R. J. Smith,

1962, terminology used as established by Skupnik, 2010): bilateral "descriptive" model, primarily discriminating on the bases of generation, lineage and gender. Seniority is - in practical use - only distinguished between siblings of ego. Japanese notion of kin descendance was traditionally conceptualized as ties of blood (Spencer & Imamura, 1950), but again in practical use, emphasis on continuation of family as a corporate unit superseded actual genealogical ties (Bachnik, 1983; Befu, 2004), allowing for great variance of possible descent pattern strategies to be employed, including adoption, fosterage, and even "buying" or "resurrecting" discontinued family identities (institutions of *kaiyoushi* and *saiken* as described by (Bachnik, 1983; Befu, 2004; Lebra, 1998).

The great variety of existing strategies of descent patterns make the fairly simple bilateral kinship terminology challenging to properly map out, given the combination the context of imported, Sino-Japanese kinship terminology, the varying degrees of emphasis given to ego-centric kin conceptualization, the significant differences between vocative and pronominative terminology, the role of in/out group distinctions, and finally, the great variety of existing strategies of descent patterns all contribute to make this effort a challenge.

Kin Tabs and Commentaries

Following is an attempt overview of commonly employed kinship terminology, based overviews presented in (Kitaoji, 1971; Smith, 2004; Spencer & Imamura, 1950; Zoggel, 2010). This list is intended to be orientational and does not make any claims to be exhaustive. Regional and local variations, modularity of use and general flexibility in it's employ make providing definitive lists near impossible.

In our first tab, we provide what most common kin terms divided into four categories. **Pronominative out-group** terms are commonly used to refer to members of someone else's family or group. **Pronominative in-group** terms are used exclusively to refer to members of one's own family or group. **Neutral vocative** terms can

be used as form of address towards both in- and out- group members based on user's discretion, and finally **diminutive vocative** terms are customarily used to members of one's own in-group exclusively.

Table 1: Common Use Kin Terms

Kin type	Pronominative (Out-group)	Pronominative (In-group)	Vocative (Neutral)	Vocative (Diminutive)
Father (F)	お父さん *o-tou-san*	父 *chichi*	お父さん *o-tou-san*	(お)父ちゃん / パパ *(o-)tou-chan / papa*
Mother (M)	お母さん *o-kaa-san*	母 *haha*	お母さん *o-kaa-san*	(お)母ちゃん / ママ *(o-)kaa-chan / mama*
Elder brother (eB)	お兄さん *o-nii-san*	兄 *ani*	お兄さん *o-nii-san*	(お)兄ちゃん *(o-)nii-chan*
Elder sister (eZ)	お姉さん *o-nee-san*	姉 *ane*	お姉さん *o-nee-san*	(お)姉ちゃん *(o-)nee-chan*
Younger brother (yB)	弟さん *otouto-san*	弟 *otouto*	-name-	-name-
Younger sister (yZ)	妹さん *imouto-san*	妹 *imouto*	-name-	-name-
Grandfather (FF/MF)	おじいさん *o-jii-san*	祖父 *sofu*	おじいさん *o-jii-san*	(お)じいちゃん / 爺 *(o-)jii-chan / jiji*
Grandmother (FM/MM)	おばあさん *o-baa-san*	祖母 *sobo*	おばあさん *o-baa-san*	(お)ばあちゃん *(o-)baa-chan*
Uncle (PB)*	おじさん *oji-san*	おじ *oji*	おじさん *oji-san*	おじちゃん *oji-chan*
Aunt (PZ)*	おばさん *oba-san*	おば *oba*	おばさん *oba-san*	おばちゃん *oba-chan*
Husband (H)	ご主人 / 旦那 *go-shujin / danna*	主人 / 夫 *shujin/otto*	お父さん / あなた *o-tou-san / anata*	(お)父さん *(o-)tou-san*
Wife (W)	奥さん *oku-san*	妻 / 家内 *tsuma / kanai*	お母さん *o-kaa-san*	(お)母さん *(o-)kaa-san* / -name-
Child (C)	お子さん *o-ko-san*	子供 / 子 *kodomo / ko*	-name-	-name-

Son (S)	**息子さん** *musuko-san*	**息子** *musuko*	-name-	-name-
Daughter (D)	**お嬢さん** *o-jou-san*	**娘** *musume*	-name-	-name-
Cousin (PSiC)**	**おいとこさん** *o-itoko*	**いとこ** *itoko*	-name-	-name-
Grandchild (SC/DC)	**お孫さん** *o-mago-san*	**孫** *mago*	-name-	-name-
Nephew (BS/ZS)	**甥御** *oigo*	**甥 / 甥っ子** *oi / oikko*	-name-	-name-
Niece (BD/ZD)	**姪御** *meigo*	**姪 / 姪っ子** *mei / meikko*	-name-	-name-
Father-in-law (LaF)	**義父 / 舅** *gifu / shuuto*	**義父 / 舅 / 義理の父** *gifu / shuuto / giri-no-chichi*	**お父様** *o-tou-sama*	**お父さん** *o-tou-san*
Mother-in-law (LaM)	**義母 / 姑** *gibo /shuutome*	**義母 / 姑 / 義理の母** *gibo / shuutome / giri-no-haha*	**お母様** *o-kaa-sama*	**お母さん** *o-kaa-san*

* Terms for "uncle" and „aunt" present us with a more complicated situation, so we will dedicate a separate table for them alone.

** Cousins present us with very similar problem as aunts/uncles, and we will also address them further.

Members of more distant generations above ones listed are usually referred by addition of the prefix symbol 曾 (*hii*) – as in 曾おばあさん *(hii-o-baa-san*: „great-grand-mother", or 曾孫 (*hii-mago*: "great-grand-child"). This prefix can be cumulated up to two times: members of generations more than three generations away from ego are normally not tracked. Twice removed members of family are denoted by adding the symbol 又 (*mata*), such as 又いとこ (*mata-itoko*: "cousin twice removed").

Use of honorific prefix お (*o-*) and intimate sufix ちゃん (*-chan*) instead neutral さん (*-san*) is optional in most diminutive vocative terms, with exception of vocative

terms for mother and father in law, more polite お and さん / 様 are considered customary.

Affinal kin terms are slightly more complex, so we will dedicate a full table to them now.

Table 2: Affinal Kin Extended

Kin type	Pronominative	Vocative (standard)	Vocative (alternative)
Elder Brother-in-law (LaeB)	**義理の兄** *giri no ani*	**お兄さん** *o-nii-san*	**おじさん*** *oji-san*
Younger Brother-in-law (LayB)	**義理の弟** *giri no otōto*	-name-	**お兄さん** *o-nii-san* / -name-
Elder sister-in-law (LaeZ)	**義姉** *gishi*	**お姉さん** *o-nee-san*	**おばさん*** *oba-san*
Younger sister-in-law (LaeZ)	**義妹** *gimei*	-name-	**お姉さん** *o-nee-san* / -name-
Son-in-law (LaS)	**義理の息子** *giri no musuko*	-name-	-open-**
Daughter-in-law (LaD)	**嫁姑** *yome shuutome*	-name-	-open-**

Diminutive vocative forms are largely absent towards affinal kin. Instead, we present two alternative vocative forms: the decision to use one over another largely depends on personal preference, but also on respect, intimacy, and marital status. Terms denoted by * specifically are more likely to be employed towards a married person than a single one.

"Open" terms denoted by ** allow potential use of non-kin non-personal name terminology as well as conventional one, such as term of employment or social rank.

Now let us revisit the subject of uncles, aunts and cousins. As mentioned above, diffusion of Chinese symbols and terminology has at times altered potential ways to

denote certain kin terms, without fully integrating itself into common use. Referential terms for cousins, aunts and uncles reflect this.

Uncles and aunts: while most commonly written in simple hiragana as おじ(さん) / おば(さん), meaning any male / female sibling of a parent (or in general, any male / female roughly in parent's generation for that matter) following alternate transcription specifying kin position exists.

Table 3: Uncles

Fathers elder[9] brother (FeB)	Fathers younger brother (FyB)	Fathers sister's husband (FZH)	Mothers brother (MB)
伯父	叔父	姑父	舅父

All of these terms have the same reading: おじ (*oji* - uncle) and おば (*oba* - aunt)[10] respectively. Synthetic readings based on characters Sino-Japanese readings of their respective symbols are possible, but not used in practice (Spencer & Imamura, 1950).

Table 4: Aunts

Fathers Sister (FZ)	Mothers sister (MZ)	Father's elder sister (FeZ)	Fathers younger siter (FyZ)	Mother's brother's Wife (MBW)
姑母	姨母	伯母	叔母	舅母

Existence of these varied transcriptions specifying both relative age and laterality, lacking however oral counterparts serves as a good illustration of how native Japanese and imported Chinese cultural systems interacted in praxis.

Cousins present us with even more varied example of the same process:

[9] In case of aunts and uncles, always relative to parents age.
[10] In vocative form, these would be followed by „-san" sufix.

Table 5: Cousins

Kin Type	Sino-Japanese writing	Sino-Japanese reading
Cousin elder[11] male	従兄*	*juukei*
Cousin younger male	従弟	*juutei*
Cousin elder female	従姉	*juushi*
Cousin younger female	従妹	*juumei*
Cousins male / female	従兄弟	*juukeitei*
Cousins female only	従姉妹	*juushimei*

All of these variations of possible spelling are, under most circumstances, read by the same reading, *itoko*, and in most written materials, the Japanese respondents seem to prefer using a simple syllabic transcription, or opting for version indicated by *.

In this case however, both (Spencer & Imamura, 1950) and Denshi Jisho ('Jisho.org: Japanese Dictionary', 06. 03 2020.) admit Sino-Japanese reading occasionally appears in practical use.

It's worth noting that unlike aunts and uncles, cousin terms don't seem to reflect linearity, only gender relative age. Vocative terms for cousins are not unified, and may vary from use of given name (especially towards equal-age or younger cousins), sibling-oriented terminology (*o-nee-san, o-nii-san*), past given name + sibling designator (*Emiri-o-nee-san*), to occasional use of aunt/uncle oriented terminology (*oba-san, oji-san*) used towards married or significantly older individuals.

Finally, let's briefly mention some kin-related terms that did not find a place in the previous lists. Firstly, the term 祖宗 (*souzou*) means "ancestry" or "ancestors". Parents are usually referred to as 両親 (*ryoushin*), relatives as 親戚 (*shinseki*) and family as 家族 (*kazoku*). All three can be prefaced with the suffix 御 (go-) in situations requiring increased politeness.

Less polite forms of reference for parents include 親 (*oya*: "parent"), 父親 (*chi-chi-oya*: "father" inf.) 母親 (*haha-oya*: "mother" inf.) and finally highly impolite 親父

[11] In case of cousins, always relative to Ego.

(*oya-ji*: "father" as in "the old man"). Former term appears particularly frequently in fictive kinship use.

Siblings however present again a slightly more interesting situation. Most commonly, the term 兄弟 (*kyoudai*) is used to denote any possible siblings of ego or referent. However, under more formal condition, following variants should be used specifically:

Table 6: Siblings

Siblings (Si)	**兄弟姉妹** *kyoudai-shimai*
Only Brothers (e/yB)	**兄弟** *kyoudai*
Only Sisters (e/yZ)	**姉妹** *shimai*

Furthermore, children in family can also be referred to in order of birth. Oldest child may be referred as 長子 (*choushi*), or 第一子 (*dai-isshi* – literally: "first child"). Second child will then be referred to as 次子 (*jishi*) or 二子 (*nishi* – literally: "second child"). All following children will then be referred in corresponding fashion, merely adding the proper numeral to the symbol for a child.

Replacing the symbol for child 子 (*shi*[12]) with a symbol for man 男 (*nan*) or woman 女 (*jo*) will allow us to count orders of birth by gender, resulting in corresponding: 長男 (*chounan*) or 一男 (*ichinan*) as "first son", 次男 (*jinan*) or 二男 (*ninan*) as "second son", 三男 (*sannan*) as "third son" etc. For daughters, it will then be: 長女 (*choujo*) or 一女 (*ichijo*) for "first daughter", 次女 (*jijo*) or 二女 (*nijo*) for "second daughter", 三女 (*sanjo*) for third and so on.

[12] Here and in all following examples, Sino-Japanese reading is being utilized.

Tracing children by order of birth is used only for referential purposes, has no vocative equivalents, and is generally limited in daily use, where relative-age based sibling terminology is far more prominent.

That concludes our orientational list of Japanese kinship terms. Additional lists and info, including overviews of Kitaoji's positional kinship, see: (Bachnik, 1983; Kitaoji, 1971; Spencer & Imamura, 1950).

Chapter 2.6: Fictive kinship:

As the overview above suggest, fictive kinship plays a major role in Japanese daily kinship usage (Lebra, 1998; Mogi, 2002; Norbeck & Befu, 1958). It is indeed hard to go more than a few meters on a Japanese street without hearing a kin term in a fictional context. Norbeck and Befu identify three main areas in which it is commonly employed: Intra-familial fictive use of kinship terminology, friendship/acquittance-oriented use and use towards strangers. I will expand this list by two more areas: positional terminology presented by Kitaoji, and institutionalized use, such as the phenomenon of *Oyabun-Kobun* and corporate familialism, both explored mainly by (Ishino, 1953; Nakane, 2008).

Intra-familiar fictive kinship terminology:

In accordance to Norbeck and Befu, we will define intra-familial use of fictive kinship as a use of kinship terminology within the members of a family that departs from their "standard" genealogical or referential position. Let us remind ourselves that among members of a shared household, all junior members address their seniors near-exclusively by vocative kin terms, which Norbeck and Befu identify eight basic types, corresponding roughly to English Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncle, Aunt, Older Brother, Older Sister, Father and Mother. Each of these exists in multiple different variants due to the distinction between vocative and pronominal forms as well as the possibility of being modified by honorific prefixes and suffixes.

On top of these, we should also keep in mind the possibility to transform an entire kinship term in to a sufix attached to given name, allowing for forms such as *Emiri-nee-san* (big sister Emily), *Yamada-baa-san* (grandma Yamada) etc… Within intra-familial context, these are mostly reserved for reference towards more distant relatives, that are not usual members of the same shared household (Norbeck & Befu, 1958).

As the definition implies, actual selection of a given kin term used in practice frequently does not adhere to the "proper" (genealogically defined) referential designation. As such, it is common for children to address their older cousins as "older sisters/older brothers" or even "aunts/uncles". A variety of different factors play a role here and may differ distinctly between individual households as well as regions. Factors of age, marital status, implied intimacy, and even social standing can be employed. As a result, genetic uncles and aunts only few years older than speaker may be addressed as "older siblings", or a married uncle / aunt / cousin may be addressed as "uncle/aunt", while unmarried uncle / cousin of the exact same or even greater age as "older sibling". General use seem to be governed by basic intuitions about standard family structure models, where relative-age distant and married members of the kin circle are more likely to be called "uncles" and "aunts", whereas members of the family closer in age and/or single are more likely to be referred to as "older siblings" and so on. For a more complete list of variants of intra-familiar fictive use kinship terminology, see Norbeck & Befu, (1958, p. 106) or the kin tabs above.

Some more unusual uses of fictive kinship within a intra-familial context were recorded by Lebra:

"Sociocentric role names may override egocentric kinship terms. The head of a house is often called "father" by all members of the house regardless of particular kin relationships between the caller and the head; hence, a mother may call her son "father" if he is the head of the house in which she lives. (...) A more intriguing example was provided by another informant telling about her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law evidently called the informant nee-san

(elder sister). Asked why, the informant said she ran a cabaret-type entertainment business and that her clients called her by this term."

(Lebra, 1998 pg. 85)

This particular note informs two interesting realities of Japanese use of fictive kinship: it is used commonly intra-familialy, and also frequently used towards strangers in certain occupations.

Common is also the use of what Befu and Norbeck call "teknonymy and modified teknonymy", that is the shifting of ego towards the position of the recipient, or to an assumed, third body - either a person, or a fictive institute of the family itself. This strategy is often used for the benefit of little children and it is by no means unusual around the world, but the degree to which it is employed seems to have been relatively pronounced compared to Indo-European languages, given it often is not abandoned when children reach maturity (Norbeck & Befu, 1958).

Positional "kinship" terminology

A somewhat extreme example of the sociocentric use of kinship terminology overriding conventional referential terms is provided by (Kitaoji, 1971). In his study of the Yaho community, first published in 1968. Here he concludes that participants did not even use the conventional referential terminology, and instead preferred a specific, household status-and-succession oriented terminology he calls "positional". Further analysis of this system was also made by Bachnik, (1983), who adds multiple different locations where similar distinct positional terminologies are being tracked. The models of kin tracking, as well as recruitment and descendance strategies accompanying them seem to be strongly in line with Befu's analysis of multiplicity of descendance patterns (Befu, 2004), and roughly in line with the traditional model of *dózoku* stem family, as presented by (Okada, 1952). They also further reinforce the issue of "ego-decentralization" (positional terminology shifts the "ego" to a hypothetical body of corporate family/household). Sadly, the subject of positional terminology

and the way it relates to, or is integrated to other levels of kinship terminology seem to have been abandoned by the international academic community.

Friends/acquittance-oriented fictive kinship terminology

Norbeck and Befu report that while not universal, use of fictive kinship terminology among close friends and acquittances is common, and largely dependent on a degree of intimacy among both parties, to a point of where some informants report a failure to employ it towards close friends as an actual breach of etiquette (Norbeck & Befu, 1958). The practice mirrors the use of kin (both "true" and fictional) terminology among true collateral and affinal relatives, as does the expected pattern of behavior associated with it. Once again, relative age and marital status play a significant role, as well as addressees' actual position within his own family. Principles of "modified teknonymy" may also come into play – with the ego being shifted towards a different position (most commonly, a child), as Norbeck and Befu mention cases where a familiar older girl in a neighborhood may be addressed and even referred to as "older sister" not only by the children, but also the adults in the family. Cornell (in Bilheimer, 2016) also notes existence of so called "*shinrui* circles", economically and social inter-dependent small communities which heavily employ kinship terminology, despite being composed of biologically unrelated multiple families, and tied together largely by economic necessities.

Stranger-oriented fictive kinship terminology

The most common use of stranger-oriented kinship terminology is in situations of basic address or drawing attention of an unfamiliar person, much akin to use of "Sir…" or "Hey you…" in English (Norbeck & Befu, 1958). And while not universal, it seems to be very common, even in my personal experience from the present date. Unlike in cases of friends/acquittance-oriented cases, estimated social status of the referent plays a more significant role, and choice of kin terminology is somewhat reduced, based almost entirely on estimated age (occasionally on marital status) – to "older

brother / sister", "uncle / aunt" and "grandmother / grandfather". Also, unlike intra-familiar fictive kinship terminology use, the use of stranger-oriented fictive kinship dwindles heavily with age, being most common among children, although Norbeck and Befu note some interesting exceptions to that trend.

A specific case of stranger-oriented fictive kinship terminology use is vocational based. The term *o-nee-san* (elder sister) is often used towards women in occupations considered of lower status or associated with services and entertainment, such as barmaids, hotel maids, waitresses, hostesses and prostitutes. An example of such convention, even further transposed into intra-familiar fictive kinship terminology, has been proved by Sugiama-Lebra in a quotation above. Elderly women in similar positions or in positions higher in the workplace hierarchy may sometimes be addressed as "aunts", "mothers" and even "grandmothers" (Norbeck & Befu, 1958). Norbeck and Befu also note that men in menial and clerical occupations may similarly be referred to as "older brothers". Vocation based use of fictive kinship terminology, unlike random stranger oriented one, does not seem to dwindle with age, but does depend on gender of the user (with women being much less common to employ it than men).

While I have not found any support for this in existing literature, my recent observations in Japan made me notice another pattern, which patrons commonly address a shop / restaurant owners or proprietors in smaller, private shops as "mother" and "father" respectively, usually in the neutral Japanese vocative form *o-kaa-san* / *o-tou-san*. This practice, to the best of my knowledge, seems to considered a sign of familiarity, trust and certain degree of intimacy, practiced more commonly by regular guests of the establishment who had already build some degree of personal relationship to the proprietor, or in context of small communities.

Institutionalized fictive kinship: Oyabun-kobun and corporate familialism

親分子分 (*Oyabun-kobun*): Explored particularly heavily by Nakane (2008, first released in 1970) and Ishino, (1953), *oyabun-kobun* is a wide-spread pattern of institutionalized, ritualized fictive kinship existing within corporate, political and also criminal hierarchies. Literally translated as "parent's role/part – child's role/part", oyabun-kobun reflects familial relationship model as a form of ideal (or at least conventional) pattern for non-blood related hierarchical institutions. Ishino defines it as follows:

"Oyabun-kobun institution is one in which persons usually unrelated close kin ties enter a compact to assume obligations of diffuse nature similar to those ascribed to members of one's immediate family. (…) Both the terms of address and in assignment of roles within the group are patterned on the Japanese family system: the leader becomes a symbolic father and his followers, symbolic children."

(Ishino, 1953, p. 696)

Nakane further clarifies:

"Oyabun may be one in a senior position at a man's place of work, with whom has grown a close personal relationship over the years. The essential elements in the relationship are that the kobun receives benefits or help from his oyabun, such as assistance in securing employment or promotion, and advice on the occasion of important decision making. The kobun, in turn, is ready to offer his services whenever the oyabun requires them. In the case of a funeral of a man of higher rank, for instance, his juniors rush to the household to help in the preparations and even contribute more than the dead man's kinsmen or neighbours."

(Nakane, 2008, p. 42-43)

Further she reports that traditionally, *oyabun-kobun* relationship has been the standard for most forms of hierarchical institutional organization: the relationship between land-owner and tenant, patron and client, or master and disciple. In more

modern context, relevance of *oyabun-kobun* relationship has shifted towards intra-corporate, political and criminal hierarchies. However, as she notes, regardless of their status or occupation, most Japanese do participate, in one way or another, on an *oyabun-kobun* relationship, as these do form, according to her assessment, the very fundamental structure of Japanese social hierarchy models, providing the advantage of a clear, unambiguous distribution or responsibility and loyalty. It is worth mentioning that *oyabun-kobun* structures can stack on each other, and a single person can and often does occupy both positions at the same time, being a *kobun* to one, and *oyabun* to potentially several other people, who may in return be *kobun* to him, but *oyabun* to several other people down the line (Nakane, 2008).

Corporate familialism:

Also heavily explored by Nakane Chie, corporate familialism can be defined as invocation of a family-like sentiments and associations within corporate environment, this time not necessarily containing such strong hierarchical dimension. Such familialism manifests primarily in choice of terminology in job-advertising, intra-corporate communication, but also projects into economic and social workings of a company. Nakane's earliest example of this strategy date all the way to the year 1909, to a famous slogan promoted by Goto Shinpei, former president of National Railways: "One Railway Family" (Nakane, 2008, p. 19), but according to her research, it seems to continue well into the second half of 20th century. As she notes:

"*The characteristics of Japanese enterprise are, first, that the group itself is family-like and, second, it pervades even into the private life of its employees, for each family joins extensively in the enterprise*."

(Nakane, 2008, p. 19)

Chapter 2.7.: Conclusion – Social or familial?

In the previous few chapters, I have hoped to illustrate just how extensively kinship models permeate through Japanese society, while at the same time, how extensively modifiable and biology-divorced they appear to be. Indeed, across almost all available sources, a single sentiment seems to recur, which can be summed up by quote by Spencer and Imamura:

"Japanese kinship designation serve to affirm ***social role; they lack any suggestion of broader familial implications.****"*

(Spencer & Imamura, 1950)

The evidence for this claim seems to be rather undisputable. The sheer flexibility of the model and the degree in which it is utilized outside of actual genealogical ties is a testament of it. However, while the reasoning behind this statement is understandable, I believe this statement deserves a **much-needed reevaluation and extension**.

Firstly: It is based on an implied assumption of a dichotomy (if not opposition) of "familial" and "social" identities. Taking into consideration the transformation that kinship underwent during the past few decades, I do not believe such simple dichotomy is tenable anymore. Lines between kin, social and even biological dimensions of human world are beginning to finally blur and reveal human social structures in their emergent complexity. We have learned to accept all that kin roles are undeniably always **also** social roles. Now we are exploring what else they may be on top of that.

Secondly, I believe that the particularities of how such hybrid kin-social relationship are constructed are well deserving deeper analysis. To say it bluntly, I think it was a mistake to stop the analysis here. The particularism and contextualism of use of kinship roles especially deserves a longer pause for consideration. And in order to

do so, I intend to use an analytical tool that as far as I am aware, has not been yet applied to this field.

CHAPTER 3: *MA*

Chapter 3.0: *Ma* - the void that makes sense

Ma (間, "Negative Space" as common and somewhat baffling English translation has it) is a notion that has so far been only marginally explored in the areas of social studies. Being usually understood as a subject of art and aesthetics, and frequently bundled along-side of other vaguely understood notions such as *wabi-sabi*, *mono-no-aware* and *shibui*, as one of those strange elements of Japanese traditional aesthetics, it pops up more frequently in popularization articles and blogs than in academic literature. This may be partially because of its somewhat puzzling nature, and also because the interconnection between classic studies of art and social studies seems to be still woefully lacking. Somewhat more comprehensive understanding of the notion of "Ma" has been attempted by Nitschke, (2011) and Pilgrim, (1986), but has not yet been properly followed upon.

I intend to provide a new reevaluation and redefinition of the concept to transform it for a tool useful to social studies. I believe that if "*ma*" is properly understood, it will not only give us greater insight into Japanese society in general (and kinship in particular), but may actually become of use to numerous difficult conceptualizations that social studies have struggled with in the past. Most notably (but by no means exclusively) of course, the subject of general definition of kinship.

Chapter 3.1: *Ma* in general use

Much like Nitschke and Pilgrim, I think analysis of the concept of *ma* has to begin at the symbol used to represent it. The symbol 間 (Chinese in origin) can be divided into two compounds (radicals): The first one, 門 represents a gate, but also an opening or gap of any sort. The other appears to be at first glance 日, "sun" or "day", but as Pilgrim notes, it actually used to represent 月, "moon", before simple economics

of hand-writing deprived it of its lower half. As such, the symbol literally represents "moon in a gap", or more verbosely "moon-light shining through gaps and openings" (Pilgrim, 1986).

In modern day use, 間 is utilized in vast range of contexts (with multiple different readings) and in many different compound words. Let us review a couple (all based on 'Jisho.org: Japanese Dictionary', 28.02.2020.)

Standing alone as 間, it reads as "*aida*", and means "in between" (places) or "during" (an interval of time). It can also mean "occasion, vague spot in time", as illustrated by a saying "*kono aida*", meaning "recently".

In compounds, it is arguably most frequently used in various terms relating to discrete time flow: 間中 *aidachuu* (during), 時間 *jikan* (time), 期間 *kikan* (period of time), 間 *-kan* (suffix indicating discrete period of time), 間際 *magiwa* (the point of something happening), 合間 *aima* (interval, pause, spare moment), 瞬間 *shunkan* (instant, short period of time), 昼間 *hiruma* (daytime), 間に合う *ma-ni-au* (to be on time), 間もなく *mamonaku* (soon - literally, "not even in "*ma*" of time").

Aside from that, it is used in variety of contexts and compounds related to more-or-less discrete spatial division: 間 *ken* (unit of length: 1,818 m., or 6 *shaku*, representing standardized width of beam span in traditional architecture), 土間 *doma* (literally "dirt interval", non-elevated space in traditional architecture), 床の間 *toko-no-ma* (traditional display alcove), 鹿間 *kashima* (room-for-rent), 空間 *kuukan* (space, room), 間取り *madori* (layout of the house), 間口 *maguchi* (breadth, width), 広間 *hiroma* (spacious room, hall) etc...

Aside from that, it also appears in a couple of compounds where it has little to do with both discrete temporal or spatial meaning. These cases may have very special relevance to us, as they illustrate how far can the notion of "*ma*" stray from temporo-

spatial meaning into realms of social conceptualizations. The most noteworthy examples would be:

仲間 *Nakama* (friends, companions), 世間 *seken* (society), or 人間 *ningen* (humanity). The full importance of these uses will be examined further.

Aside from all of these daily uses, of course, it also exists in the use in which I have introduced it at the beginning, as a standalone notion 間 (reading "*ma*"), utilized mainly in theory of art, photography and architecture. In concurrence with Pilgrim, I will propose that as a standalone notion, *ma* represents a rather specific perceptual paradigm. And it is in this sense I wish to expand upon it, and introduce it to social studies.

Chapter 3.2: *Ma* as a proposed paradigm

Gunther Nitschke, (2011) provides us with what he proposes as six dimensional axis along which "*ma*" can be utilized: Two-dimensional, three-dimensional, temporal, subjective, artistic, social and metaphysical. This analysis is interesting to me because it reveals the span of contexts in which it can be seen really is, but also because it betrays Nitschke inherently western approach to the subject: the need to analyze the subject by dissecting it into clearly defined "essential" dimensions.

Richard (Pilgrim, 1986) uses somewhat more simple distinction, on objective and subjective properties of *ma*.

"*The word* ma *basically means an "interval" between two (or more) spatial or temporal things and events. (…) By extension, ma also means "along". In the compound* ningen *("human being") for an example,* ma *(read* gen *here) implies that a person (*nin, hito*) stands within, among, or in relationship to others. (…)*

The word, therefore, carries both objective and subjective meaning; that is, ma *is not only "something" within objective, descriptive reality, but also signifies particular modes of experience. Both descriptive objective and experiential subjective aspects are important. (…)*

Therefore, although ma *may be objectively located as intervals in space and time, ultimately it transcends this and expresses a deeper level. Indeed, it takes us to a boundary situation at the edge of thinking and the edge of all processes of locating things by naming and distinguishing. (…)*

Ma *seems to operate at, cross and even deconstruct a number of boundaries. First, for some Japanese* ma *is a deep and living word that cannot even be discussed, much less analyzed and interpreted across the boundaries of culture and language. Second,* ma *operates and bridged the boundaries between traditional and contemporary arts, between religion and art, between one religion and another, between religion and culture. (…)*

*This negative space / time (*Ma*) is therefore anything but a mere nothing awaiting the positive space / time; it is a pregnant nothingness that is "*never unsubstantial or uncreative*"*

(Pilgrim, 1986 pg. 255-256)

While these accounts of *ma* may seem highly disparate and complex, I have attempted to identify several underlying patterns:

The notion of **emptiness** or void: the "negative space": empty span (between beams), unpainted surface, silence, ineffability, pause of action. *Ma* seems to be heavily preoccupied with absence of something.

The notion of **discreteness**: defined or interval of time, framing by beams or structural elements, delimitation by parameter. *Ma* seems to be interested in the finite.

The notion of **mutuality**: *Ma* seems to relate objects to each other, to establish a form of connection between, a common ground on which they are perceived. In contrast to "*ma*", we can set "*mu*" (literally, "nothingness"), which represents emptiness without the mutualist/relativist connotations.

The notion of **immediacy**: While heavily pre-occupied with the seeming contradiction of *ma* serving both as an "objective" and empiric spatial or temporal measurement or relation (ken as a unit of length), and "subjective" state of being, both Nitschke and Pilgrim seem to neglect the uniting parameter of both, which is that both are perceived as an immediately existing process, rooted in phenomenologically

immediate experience. *Ma* is not a transcendent understanding of space, but rather one we actively inhabit.

The notion of **relativity**: *Ma* seems to be exploring and defining qualities through reference to other elements of the system, rather than through reference to their intrinsic properties.

The notion of **semiotic properties**: *Ma* establishes or helps to clarify or generate meaning, it is substantive, "pregnant", creative and formative.

Somewhere between these recurring patterns emerges a notion of *ma* as a perceptual paradigm that approaches identity *as relatedness defined as a discrete product of immediate relative positioning of all objects within the system.*

In laymen terms: *ma* is a perceptual paradigm that perceives objects as products of their circumstances, rather than those of their intrinsic identities or properties. Meaning is shifted from the object itself, and towards a concrete context in which the object participates. Borrowing from the famous definition provided by Arata Isozaki (Isozaki, 1979), *ma* can be understood by examining the contrasting western and Japanese perception of space: the western rooted in the notion of Cartesian absolute coordinates (properties/position objects within a field can be described by their relation to the absolute spatial grid – the "zero" point of the coordinate grid), whereas Japanese, *ma*-oriented interpretation of space is akin to a visual experience, where properties of individual objects can be only described relative to the position of other objects within our field of view, and can change freely as we shift our own point of view of the system.

Chapter 3.3: Paradigm of *ma* vs. Paradigms of The West

A tempting comparison can be made to what the modern western intellectual tradition defines as "**logocentrism**". Logocentrism presents us with a very complex and challenging landscape of philosophical and linguistic problems, so we shall present it only very briefly. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines logocentrism as follows:

"A philosophy holding that all forms of thought are based on an external point of reference which is held to exist and given a certain degree of authority."

('Definition of LOGOCENTRISM', 28. 02 2020.)

Encyclopedia Britannica offers another take:

(…) the opposition between speech and writing is a manifestation of the "logocentrism" of Western culture—i.e., the general assumption that there is a realm of "truth" existing prior to and independent of its representation by linguistic signs. Logocentrism encourages us to treat linguistic signs as distinct from and inessential to the phenomena they represent, rather than as inextricably bound up with them.

('Deconstruction | criticism', 28.02.2020)

A more thorough analysis of the subject can be offered by Johnatan Culler, who himself follows the footsteps of Jacques Derrida:

"Traditionally, Western philosophy has distinguished "reality" from "appearance," things themselves from representations of them, and thought from signs that express it. Signs or representations, in this view, are but a way to get at reality, truth, or ideas, and they should be as transparent as possible; they should not get in the way, should not affect or infect the thought or truth they represent.

(Culler, 2011 p.11)

White surmises Derrida's somewhat lengthy thoughts on the subject thusly:

"The history of (the only) metaphysics, which has, in spite of all differences, not only from Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger, always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos: the

history of truth, of the truth of truth, has always been–except for a metaphysical diversion that we shall have to explain – the debasement of writing, and its repression outside "full" speech"

(White, 2017, p.5) paraphrasing the opening chapters of Derrida's Of Grammatology, (1998, passage A.1 following White's systemization.)

The discussion surrounding the challenges surrounding the concept of logocentrism are indeed difficult to navigate, and its use is far from unified across multiple works. Constantly muddling the line between the notions of "truth", "writing" and "meaning", it threatens to instil more confusion than utility into our writing. We shall therefore limit our interpretation of aforementioned theories to a fairly basic level, focusing on their underlying implications of alleged privilege western culture has been given to notion of underlying absolute order, a network of absolute referents, each imbued with their own "essential" or "essentially true" properties, largely accessible and manipulatable by language and terminology we use.

We shall also – for the time being – disregard their critical implications, especially their relation to notions of political or discursive power, such as are being indulged in Archaeology of Knowledge (Foucault, 2002), Discourse on Language (Foucault, 2005), or even worse, the hostilities of Spivak's hijacking of Subaltern Voices (Spivak, 2003).

Instead, we shall tenaciously accept the suggestion that indeed, much of western philosophical history is underpinned by "logocentric" assumptions, assumptions that meanings and categories serve to refer to absolute objects defined by essential properties, or classes of items sharing an essential property in common. Despite the through criticism from authors mentioned above, I do not believe it is a stretch to argue that these unvoiced implications are prevalent even in modern western academia, and Schneider's / Needham's criticisms of the concept of kinship in fact mirrors them quite closely.

Both the utility, and more to the point the sheer extent of implications *ma* provides us as a paradigm will start to become more apparently when we propose that as

a formative perceptual/epistemological framework, it may rival (or supplement) logocentrism so prevalent in the west. Rejection of absolute externally imposed grants of meaning/identity, rooted in assumed essential dimension of "truth", and their replacement by situational, behaviouralist or perceptual context shines in contrast to notions that Derrida was so eager to disavow. As such, *ma* as a perceptual paradigm as outlined above, may function as a tested, self-contained alternative of approach. And unlike some wilder postmodern theories suggest, it's not contra-epistemological either. Whereas Derrida's contra-logocentrism unavoidably ends in rejection of permeance itself, (White, 2017), the paradigm of *ma*, being bounded to pragmatic contexts, being focused on psychology, pragmatism and behaviouralism rather than speculative epistemologies, threatens much less potential dead ends.

It is attractive to interpret this as a form of anti-idealism: an opposition to the idea of identity and existence as a reference to absolute metaphysical ideal. And in many ways, this seems to be a fairly accurate sentiment, as much of the actual Japanese society can be better understood and explained as a product heavily pragmatic outlook. It is worth reminding ourselves though, that *ma* maintains a dimension of metaphysicality, as ideals and identities still are derived from "void space" ("pregnant emptiness", as Pilgrim notes (Pilgrim, 1986 p.g. 257-258) - objects and relatedness are not interpreted as the same thing. "Circumstentionality" or "contextuality" may be more adequate terms to use.

To reiterate on a point which I believe may be most important in our thesis: I will propose the definition of *ma* for use in social sciences:

Ma is a perception of social or conceptual categories and relationships as products of relative positionality of concrete referential focal points.

Despite the contrivance of the terminology we are forced to employ to even explain our understanding of *ma*, I believe that the notion is, at its heart, very simple,

and very intuitive. In a way, it is indeed, a highly pragmatic philosophy. Within its paradigm, a person is not a person by virtue of his metaphysical immortal soul nor his genetic makeup, but rather by the virtue of being situated among, and cooperating with, other people. A leader is a leader not by divine mandate or exceptional charisma, but by the sheer fact *that there are people obeying his will*.

And more relevant to our point: An older brother is an older brother not by virtue of sharing the same parents or having approximately 50% of shared genetic material and being born before ego, but by being treated with a mix of respect and intimacy - and acting with benevolence and protectiveness - second only to that expected from parents. And with that the "brother-ness" – the sought-after "substance of kinship", just like the "substance of *ma*" can freely remain empty - void - without the actual notion ever losing relevance or use in practical use. It exists outside of the brother, it's not intrinsic to him, but rather intrinsic to the specific network of contexts and attitudes he is being treated with. We merely shift our understanding of kinship from consubstantiality towards a situatedness of particular individual.

Looping all the way back to the very beginning: this brings us back at the problem of categories and epistemological tools we use to establish them. Providing that my premises about the notion of *ma* as an important, if not fundamental paradigm of Japanese culture are accurate, we can now understand that the grounds on which *categories themselves* are being established in the context of the Japanese culture may be significantly different from our intuitions. *Ma* allows the Japanese to maintain categories through relative positionality – literally deriving meaning from the "void space between things" - even where our inherent desire for essentialism cannot be maintained.

Emphasis on relative positionality as the source of meaning brings so many curious aspects of Japanese use of kinship terminology to a new light. The emphasis on "social" rather than biological, the flexibility and modifiability of the terminology, distinction between vocative and pronominative use, in-and-out-group variants of the

same terminology, and its abundant fictive or metaphorical use suddenly make much greater deal of sense. Without rejecting the existence of biological necessities of reproduction, relying on *ma* rather than on essentialist mindset, the Japanese kinship can be understood as emphasis on procedural and experiential dimension of life than conceptual and idealistic one. Kin terminology is heavily employed in a fictive fashion because kin-like relationship and behavior are expected and welcomed. Head of a household, or indeed of a company is going to be called "Father" regardless of his actual biological relationship to referent, because his relative position to them is "father-like": due to him being benevolent provider and/or moral authority of the given corporate unit. Kin terminology seems to affirm *behavioral* and *perceptual*, rather than just "social" or "biological" reality.

Hopefully using *ma* as a paradigmatic core of our interpretation, we should arrive at more informative conclusion than "Japanese kinship is overridden by social roles". Such conclusion itself does not provide us with enough information about how these social roles come to being, or where the line between "kinship" and "social role" are. What we need to realize is that Japanese kinship is viewed as a product of relative positionality of very specific, concrete circumstances. Kin ties are not marginalized, in fact they are repeatedly presented as the apex ideal model of social organization. Neither is the notion of biological necessities of reproduction being overlooked, as those naturally creep back into praxis by sheer weight they impose on daily behavioral routines. But the very nature of the class, "kin", is seen as a product of process or interaction rooted in concrete reality of concrete focal persons and practices and inseparable from it. Not as an abstract entity existing in "the third realm", as Frege would have it.

Chapter 3.4: Supporting theories

In her work, Nakane Chie (Nakane, 2008) proposes her own specific terminology in order to better express her interpretation of unique elements of Japanese society. She proposes two terms, *Frame* and *Attribute*. The former roughly corresponding to

the notion of *horizontal* and *concrete* focal points of identity, while the latter to *vertical* and *abstract* ones. For an instance, as an example of a *Frame*-based identity, one may derive identity from his concrete parental family, or concrete parental company (the overlap of which we had discussed above). As an example of *Attribute*-based identity, one may simply derive his identity from his general role of a parent, or his general occupation role. In her book, she argues the specificity of Japanese social identity models rests in their unusual emphasis on frame, relative to more attribute-oriented Western, Indian and Chinese societies (Nakane, 2008)[13].

With a bit of generosity in interpretation, this understanding can be seen as roughly corresponding to the idea of *Ma* vs. *Logos* (immediate, context-defined, vs. permanent, externally-guaranteed intrinsic-property defined), as we were trying to establish. In fact, the term Nakane uses for *Frame* in her native Japanese is 場 (*Ba*), meaning "space, field, area" - much overlapping with our understanding of the term 間 (*ma*) as "interval" or "inbetweenness". A not-so-different take on this subject can be also seen in Eisenstadts (Eisenstadt, 1996) definition of Japan as a "non-axial" society.

Joy Hendry (Hendry, 1997) seem to discover similar principle, in what she identifies as "wrapping" culture - that is the strong emphasis on surroundings (wrap) of an object rather than on the properties of the object itself. As her study explores, this emphasis on contextuality can be traced through all dimensions of Japanese life, from gift-culture past architecture, to division of social responsibility and hierarchical positions. And again similar note can be found in famous Empire of Signs ((Barthes & Howard, 1983), particularly in notes on "voids" and "framing". Another example of

[13] It is worth mentioning that that Nakane's analysis has been subjected to multiple criticisms. Joy Hendry, (1995) suggest it as overly generalizing. Other authors, such as Ochiai, (1997, 2013) or Ryang, (2004) criticize it for alleged cultural essentialism, generally relying on wester-centred analytical tools of power, dominance, and „critical philosophy" and consequently accusing Nakane of contributing to male-centric, highly hierarchic society. I will reserve myself here to stating that I find criticisms of both latter authors less than convincing, or even fair.

similar line of reasoning can be found in Bachnik, (1983) and her use of the term 分 (*bun*) (part, role).

This usual focus on relative positionality towards concrete focal points can be traced even deeper into the culture, namely the Japanese language itself. A good example could the use or relative positional suffixes to demonstrative word classes, commonly known as the *ko-so-a-do* system.

For those uninitiated in the difficulties of Japanese referential terms, suffixes *ko-*, *so-* and *a-* (written in simple hiragana: こそあど) are used to specify (spatial or symbolic) position or proximity of referred objects relative to both the speaker, and the recipient. Suffix do- is then used for interrogative forms.

Ko- informs us that the referred object is closer to the speaker than to the recipient. Such as in cases as このペン *kono pen* (the pen that is closer to me), これは何ですか *kore wa nandesu ka* (what is this thing close to me / pertaining me). こちら *Kochira* (meaning literally "my side" or "my direction") means "here" (as in "here close by me"), but it is very frequently used as a substitution for "I/We" (as in our company, our family etc…). This can be illustrated on a common phrase こちらは何とかします *Kochira ha nantoka shimasu* (literally "We (our family, company, institution) will do something (about it)).

Analogically, so- refers to objects closer to the recipient of the utterance. それ *Sore* (that thing close to you), そこ *soko* (over there (on your side)), and again, そちら *sochira* (your side, you) is used to both mean "somewhere closer to you", as well refer politely to recipient or recipients parental institution.

A- then refers to objects that exist outside of the imagined speaker-recipient line, or objects that are deemed equally distant to bother. あれ *Are* (that thing over there (in a distance)), and of course, あちら *achira* which again, may be used either to

denote a direction towards a distant place, but also being often used to refer to a third party or institution: あちらは何をしますか *Achira ha nani wo shimasu ka* – ("What are they doing?").

The emphasis on relative position among concrete focal points become even more pronounced when we look into *keigo*, Japanese honorific use of language. Here we find three major patterns of formatting honorific utterances: 尊敬語 *sonkeigo* (respectful language), 謙譲語 *kenjougo* (humble language) and 丁寧語 *teineigo* (polite language). To explain the full extent of the functionality of this model would easily make for an article of its own (it is worth remembering the "proper" use of these three modes of speaking is often misunderstood even among Japanese native speakers): But suffice to say that the proper use is derived relative social positionality / ranking of speaker, listener, and object of reference: allowing for either explicit lowering of one's own (or his parental institution) social standing (humbleness), elevating the social standing of the object of reference (respectfulness), both in further relation to the social rank of recipient, which is then established by implication.

This contextual emphasis has led some researchers to conclude that Japan and Japanese language are heavily subjective compared to Indo-European cultural regions (Watanabe & Švarcová, 2000). I find such conclusions to be misleading. Subjective and positional do not have the same meaning.

It seems to us that all the evidence points out to the emphasis on constant awareness of relative positionality of concrete focal points is much further ingrained in Japanese mental conceptualizations of the surrounding world than merely being an object of artistic fancy.

CONCLUSIONS

Here we move to the most controversial claim of this paper. It is my firm belief that the "uniquely Japanese" function-focused, relative-position-of-concrete-focal-points oriented understanding of kinship (and categories in general) - isn't at all uniquely Japanese at all. It is as universal as kinship itself. It just happens to be misaligned with our axiomatic, absolute-reference based academic intuitions based on logocentric understanding of the world. Herein lies the disappointment of Schneider and Needham: the realization that even our kinship models don't actually fit our absolute-reference based, essentialist expectations about the nature of the world. This indicates that the mistake has been, from the start, not in the conceptualization of kinship, but rather expectations of it: the essential and absolute-reference based framework typical for what Eisenstadt calls "axial" societies has always been a heuristic tool on its own: a useful but entirely hypothetical framework.

The fact that Japanese society seems to invoke relative-position specific context sensitive emphasis more than logocentric western societies only serves to make the underlying functional dimensions of kinship more transparent, as they are not obfuscated by a layer of presumed or implicit notions of essentialism, and confusion or disillusion it instills. Taking inspiration from their "true" relativism and re-adjusting our understanding of kinship categories and expectations we impose on them may prove to be largely beneficial in healing and perhaps reunifying our academic toolset.

All of this leads us to believe that troubles that modern kinship studies have encountered had stemmed from entirely mistaken expectations and assumptions about the function and nature that kinship possess. While the rather exceptional level of emphasis on relative-position of concrete focal points (the "perspective of *ma*" as we proposed), seems to be uniquely pronounced in Japan, we believe it is just a symptom of more universal element of human perception of relatedness and mutuality. To be more specific, I believe that kinship terminology has ALWAYS served above all as

a tool to map out and help to navigate concrete-reality based mutual relationship between individuals in concrete-context driven scenarios. We propose a tentative theory that in fact, it has always been a primary heuristic tool to identify high priorities for distributing resources efficiently during complex, long-lasting cooperative behavior. When we talk about resources, it is worth keeping in mind, that we include attention, patience, sympathy, intimacy etc… into that category. While not commonly thought of as "resources" these all include investment of energy, time and effort that are always in limited supply. Flexibility and contextuality of Japanese kinship usage seem to reaffirm this suggestion.

The recent "turn to symbol" and criticism of logocentrism coming from the likes of Derrida, Foucault, Culler or White did not seem to make things much better. While correctly identifying the underlying dangers of Logocentrism, they seem to have failed provided sufficient alternative tools, and instead focused on deconstruction without laying foundation for new constructivism. Much like Schneider rejected the very notion of kinship because it did not fit his logocentric, essentialist expectations, rather than abandoning said expectations, much of Derrida's criticism of logocentrism also seem to reflect disillusion and rejection of western intellectualism, rather than a call for new coherent expansion of it. The fact of the matter is that there seems to be general lack of desire for constructivism, as opposed to deconstructivism, especially when it comes to subject of kinship.

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that rejection of "kinship" or waning interest in general, universal kinship structure studies had heavily correlated with the "decline of western family" as identified by Popenoe, 1993)or more recently Kagitcibasi (Georgas, 2006), and I do believe much of this is related to fundamentally misguided expectations of (mostly western) academic circles about the nature of kin and family ties. Latent unilinear evolutionism (especially dangerous in modern transformation of Marxist ideologies (see Peletz, (1995); Stacey, (1993)), stemming from highly idealistic and essentialist grounds, overemphasis on strictly economical and conflict-rooted resource-and-power sets), and unacknowledged ethnocentric

assumptions about family development convergences, all particularly common in sociology (Georgas, 2006), further contributed to mishandling the subject matter.

In conclusion: I propose that kinship is a "Void" category, yet not (as Schneider wanted us to believe) a meaningless one. Rather, it's a category that is defined by the very notion of symbolic mutually relative positionality. That is to say: from the necessity to act and to choose who and how to treat specially under constant pragmatic restriction of daily life. We have been desperately exploring void space, instead of looking just beyond its borders: the relative positionality of those very concrete people that it connects. Much like empty spaces on a map tells us where things really are, "the void" of kinship helps us understand how people relate to each other.

By acknowledging kinship as "void", we can also overcome Needham's worry about the lack of substitution rule applying to kinship in general. While "empty", kin terms are rooted in patterns of explicit, and largely universal human experience. The "void" of kinship terminology, much like the "void" of *ma*, is a discrete one, delimitated by concrete referents. Such "Void" intervals can be tenaciously measured and even described much like we can measure and compare relative positions between any two physical objects.

Concepts such as kin distance – while now deprived of essential properties such as the degrees of biological, genetic proximity – can still be maintained and compared across cultures on functional and pragmatic bases. We may not compare terms – which may be very well void – but we can compare repeating patterns of contexts, patterns of reproductive pairs statistically frequently maintaining certain forms of proximity to each other and selected individuals in lower generations, engaging in similar acts of cooperation and mutualism. Even when deprived of its essential dimension, the pragmatic reality of (expected and acted-upon) patterns of behavior among specific, concrete persons of interest still persists as a tangible object of study and potential subject of comparative analysis.

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LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF USED ABBREVIATIONS

P = parent, C = child, Si = Siblings,

F = father, M = mother, S = son, D = daughter, B = brother, Z = sister,

H = husband, W = wife, La = In-law

e- = elder (as in eB = elder brother). y- = younger (as in yZ = younger sister)