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Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803874
Accessed: 28/08/2009 06:10

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ON THE NOTION OF KINSHIP

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Recent reviews on paradigmatic theories of kinship have brought this area of anthropological studies to a sceptical impasse. The point which was made particularly explicit by those reviews was the cleavage between anthropological concepts and the ethnographic data to which those concepts were applied. Recognising the cleavage, many reviewers, particularly David Schneider, proposed to reject the anthropological concepts of kinship, which were supposed to be severely biased by Western ethnocentric ideas. A brief review of the studies of Japanese kinship by Japanese scholars, however, suggests an alternative, as yet not fully considered approach, whereby analytic concepts and folk perceptions may be synthesised. By referring to a test case drawn from Yap, a model of the cultural construction of kinship is presented.

Introduction

I start this article with a recognition of the impasse in contemporary anthropological studies of kinship. Recent theoretical considerations of kinship have taken a largely sceptical approach. After the refutation of general theory by Leach (1961; 1982) and Needham (1971), paradigmatic studies of kinship, particularly those of descent, were critically reviewed (Gough 1971; Holy 1979; Anglin 1979; Verdon 1980; 1982a; 1982b; 1983; Kuper 1982; Schneider 1984; Moore 1985), and the results were devastating: not only were classic theories of descent rejected, but even the pertinence of the concept of kinship was seriously questioned. Kinship itself could no longer be the main factor in interpreting what had formerly been accepted as kinship phenomena, and most reviewers coincidentally formulated their alternative views in terms of locality, residence and/or economy. At the same time, they revealed Western ethnocentric tendencies in anthropology. Ethnocentrism is evident here in a double sense: while some reviewers pointed out the ethnocentric bias in leading anthropological theories of kinship, ethnocentric bias is discernible in the very way in which they criticised those theories.

This article is based on the suspicion that those reviewers, in undermining leading theoretical frameworks of kinship studies, have unduly denied the pertinence of kinship itself for anthropological theories of social phenomena. Reacting to this suspicion, I attempt through this article to seek an alternative possibility for kinship theory, and one of the major keys to doing so is a methodological reconsideration of those critical reviews. The matter of special concern here is ethnocentrism. In order to recognise and objectify ethnocentric bias in the study made by one particular group, a comparison with the methods of others will be helpful. For this purpose, studies of Japanese kinship by Japanese scholars are chosen

Man (N.S.) 26, 377-403
as a mirror for reflecting kinship studies by Western anthropologists. I will then formulate my alternative view of kinship, referring to Japanese and Yap societies. In conclusion, it will be shown that the alternative view is able to interpret many, if not all, of the controversial cases discussed by reviewers more appropriately in terms of kinship than in terms of locality, residence and economy.

*Internal and external approaches*

In this section, I will briefly review how Japanese scholars have interpreted the *ie*, the counterpart of the family in Japanese society.¹ Tracing the historical development of their interpretations, I shall focus my attention particularly on three distinct waves of research: pioneer studies, the work of Nakane, and the subsequent writings of her critics.

Specialists from various backgrounds – sociologists, historians of economic and legal systems, folklorists, etc. – began research on Japanese rural life in the 1930s. They were not at all indifferent to Western social science; Weber, Sorokin and Mauss, among others, were quite influential in the nascent studies of rural life. At the same time, the scholars shared a recognition from the beginning of their studies that rural life was so idiosyncratic that it should be interpreted in its own terms. Hence, they explained the *ie* without any systematic comparisons with other societies.

Although the *ie* was obviously based on the family, this system at the same time contained a variety of irregular elements. *Ie* often comprised both kin and non-kin members, but by singling out kin members and their spouses – Aruga (1971 [1965]) lumped them together as ‘kin members’ – scholars discerned a stem family in the *ie*. As a rule, the eldest son succeeded his father as the head of the *ie*. Hence, the *ie* was interpreted in terms of patrilineal descent (Oikawa 1967 [1940]). The principle of primogeniture further distinguished those ‘kin members in the succession line’ – Aruga’s category comprising the head, his predecessors, his successors and their spouses – from the rest, whom Aruga called ‘collateral kin members’ (1971).

The recognition of the stem family and primogeniture still left a variety of irregular members of the *ie* unexplained; these were the ‘adopted sons-in-law’, the adopted successors and the resident servants. The former two categories were concerned with the succession in the *ie*. The head of an *ie* who happened to have no sons but only daughters could arrange uxorilocal marriage for one of his daughters and make her husband (*muko*) his successor. People themselves interpreted this marriage in terms of adoption (*yoshi*). Hence, the in-marrying husband was categorised as *muko-yoshi* or an ‘adopted son-in-law’. In the more critical situation of having no children at all, the head adopted a child and expected the adoptee (*yoshi*) to perpetuate his *ie*. If the head adopted a female, he further recruited an in-marrying husband to the adopted daughter, and the husband was also called an ‘adopted son-in-law’. These adoptees were accepted into the category of ‘kin members in the succession line’.

The position of resident servants (*hokonin*), the third category of irregular members, was a particular topic of scholarly debate. *Ie* of the landed class often employed resident servants and managed agriculture on a much larger scale than the average peasant *ie*. The wealthy among landed *ie*, besides farming, ran petty
businesses such as rice-wine (sake) brewing and lacquerware manufacturing; they also employed resident servants. These employees were normally dependent on their employers' comprehensive patronage, and they lived a social life which was almost entirely incorporated into their employers' domestic life; some resident servants were related to the 'kin' members of their employers' ie with bonds of strong emotional, and in a sense 'familial', solidarity. A historical consideration also suggests how the ie with resident servants is not equivalent to the simple family. Industrialisation of the national economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally undermined the economic bases of the ie in rural areas. No longer able to employ resident servants, ie of the landed class were reduced to stem families consisting of 'kin members' (Aruga 1973). A comparable change was observed in urban areas, where commercial enterprises, even large-scale ones, which had been managed within the ie and dozoku (see below) systems, were developed into corporate enterprises; this economic change eventually transformed the solidarity of those systems into that of 'kinship' (Nakano 1978–81 [1964]).

'Collateral kin members', who did not participate in the perpetuation of their natal ie, sooner or later left the ie. They had three alternatives: they could obtain membership in other ie through marriage or through adoption; otherwise they could establish their own ie. In the last case, the newly established ie, categorised as bunke or a branch-ie, was placed in an inferior status in relation to honke or the original main-ie, and scholars coined the term dozoku to indicate the group consisting of a main-ie and its branch-ie. It was customary for wealthy ie to allow and help some of their resident servants to establish new ie, which were also categorised as branch-ie in relation to their patrons' ie.

In an attempt to cope with these empirical complexities, Kitano, among others, adopted an analytic approach to the ie; he devised a double framework consisting of the universals of the family, on the one hand, and the peculiarities of each empirical case of the family, on the other. The ie was a particular historical family form developed by Japanese society; as one of its peculiar features, it could incorporate non-kin servants on the same terms as proper 'kin members', as long as they shared with 'kin members' the personal piety to the traditional authority of the ie. At the same time, Kitano argued that the ie shared universal features of the family, particularly the strong solidarity of the 'nucleus of the family' — an idea reminiscent of that of the nuclear family (Murdock 1949). In his debate with Aruga, Kitano emphasised the effect of this universal solidarity which separated 'kin members' from non-kin servants within an ie (Kitano 1976a [1951]: 1976b [1965]).

By contrast, Aruga tried to interpret the ie in more synthetic terms. He identified the ie, the whole of it rather than an aspect of it, as the family in Japanese society. The ie was an integration of kinship and other factors — economic, political and legal. Therefore, the membership of resident servants should not simply be explained in economic terms. Relations in the ie were generally authoritarian, between the ruler and the ruled; in this respect the relation between the head and other 'kin members' was not essentially different from that between the head and resident servants. 'Collateral kin members' in particular were equivalent to resident servants in not participating in the perpetuation of the ie. Analytically, resident servants were non-kin members of their employers' ie. But some of them were
accepted by their employers almost in the same terms as adoptees. According to
the folk notion of the formation of a social person, his or her bodily and spiritual
existence was continuously constructed after birth through naming, feeding and
other forms of parental care. Referring to this folk notion, Aruga argued that, by
fostering resident servants through their stages of growth, heads of wealthy ie often
made substantial and spiritual contributions to the servants in a similar way to that
in which they contributed to their own children. Aruga also pointed out that the
solidarity of the ie and the dozoku was dependent on context: domestic solidarity
within these groups was particularly stressed when they confronted external social
circumstances (Aruga 1966 [1943]; 1971). In his debate with Kitano, Aruga was
not altogether clear as to whether resident servants could be regarded as ‘kin’
members of the ie or not. Nevertheless, his arguments on the whole suggest a view
that the incorporation of resident servants into their patrons’ ie is more or less
coterminous with that of the ‘kin’ members.

It was to this theoretical situation in ie and dozoku studies that Nakane, returning
from her study in Britain, introduced the anthropological theories of kinship then
current in the early 1960s. Her interpretation, representing the second wave in
the present review of Japanese kinship studies, was plain and definite; applying
concepts of the family, descent and other general concepts of kinship to Japanese
society, she doubted that these concepts could interpret the ie and the dozoku.
Considering the adoption of successors and sons-in-law, she pointed out that, as
potential adoptees, agnates of the adopter had no priority over non-agnates, as is
often the case in China, India and other societies with patrilineal descent systems.
Not all males maintained the membership of their natal ie; instead, all adoptees
were affiliated to the ie of their adopters. On the other hand, the ie accepted
non-kin from the outside, even if in the inferior status of resident servants. Hence,
so she argued, the ie was never a family; the membership of the ie was not ascribed
by birth, but instead was dependent on residence and economy. Because of these
functional factors, that of kinship was prevented from fully developing in the ie

Those scholars who are critical of Nakane’s interpretation are grouped here as
representing the third wave of research on Japanese kinship. Nakane’s under-
standing of family, descent and other concepts of kinship has been criticised as
being too narrow; Gamo, for example, accused Nakane of eventually reducing
the notion of kinship to that of biological kinship (1968; 1970). The scholars of
this group recognise, as Nakane did, that any general concepts of kinship will not
exactly correspond with those of the ie and the dozoku. Nevertheless, they observe
various elements of kinship in these systems which, they think, should not be
neglected. In order to interpret the ambivalent nature of Japanese systems, they
have tried to revise key concepts and give them broader meanings which are
adjusted to the reality of Japanese society.

Gamo analysed folk perceptions of kinship and stressed the corporate unity of
the ie, the key symbol of which was kamado or the family hearth. According to
the folk perceptions, ‘adopted sons-in-law’ and adopted successors were ‘kin’ in
the same sense that the ‘real’ sons and daughters were ‘kin’. Moreover, wives in
virilocal marriage were referred to by the folk category of musume or ‘daughters’;
they were at the same time the wives to their spouses, ‘daughters’ to their parents-
in-law, and 'daughters' to the ancestors of the ie to which they now belonged. Thus, the symbolic unity of the ie fully incorporated the in-marrying and adopted members into the folk notion of kinship (Gamo 1968; 1970).

Nakano has attempted to elaborate on the interpretations of pioneer scholars. On the basis of a detailed analysis of the dozoku among urban merchants, he argues that although resident servants, among whom several subclasses were distinguished, were never treated as equivalent to 'kin members' of their employer's ie, they were nevertheless incorporated into the ie. Because of this common membership of the ie, members could change their status from one class of membership (e.g. 'resident servants of the highest subclass') to another (e.g. 'kin members in the succession line'). Thus, the ie was the social mechanism by which various sorts of people, kin and non-kin, were classified into one category, the 'ie-members'. The dozoku among urban merchants was a development of this common ie-membership; 'collateral kin members' and selected resident servants of a main-ie established branch-ie. The dozoku was evidently based on a notion of genealogical connexion, which was reckoned not between individuals but between ie. Nakano deliberately distinguishes general concepts of kinship from those which he has devised for specifying relationships peculiar to the Japanese systems. At the same time, he suggests the possibility of redefining general concepts; if the ie-membership and the genealogical connection between ie can be connoted by general concepts of kinship, then, so he suggests, the dozoku could be interpreted as a form of kinship group (Nakano 1974; 1978–81; 1981).

These three approaches, reviewed above, to the study of ie and dozoku can be ordered in terms of a dichotomy between internal and external approaches to social reality. If the extreme internalist approach is represented by the rural people's own perceptions of their social life, closest to this are the approaches of the pioneer scholars, particularly that of Aruga. As members of the same Japanese society, they were so imbued with the assumptions appropriate to Japanese society that their theoretical interpretations tended to be entirely entangled with the peculiarities of the Japanese systems. On the other hand, the second wave, represented by Nakane, adopts an explicitly external approach; in order to interpret the Japanese systems through a comparative perspective, this approach defines analytic concepts of kinship independently of particular empirical cases and construes the defined concepts as generally applicable to a variety of such cases. By applying such general concepts to the Japanese systems, one can unequivocally recognise whether they conform exactly to what the concepts presume. Nakane's answer was in the negative. But at the same time, as the scholars of the third wave point out, this comparativist approach left not a few features of kinship unconsidered.

By contrast, the third wave characteristically attempts to bridge the gap between general concepts and Japanese realities. Scholars of this group, however, have proposed, or merely suggested, a limited conceptual revision, and their re-interpretations of Japanese systems are not altogether without problems. Nevertheless, I think that their attempts suggest, in a broader theoretical perspective, an alternative approach which can overcome the shortcomings of the second approach and synthesise the internal and external perspectives. The reconciliation of analytic concepts with folk categories that this approach attempts is useful but insufficient; the features of reality which are relevant to analytic concepts are not always identical
with those features that constitute the context within which folk categories are meaningful. Hence the third, synthetic, approach needs to be based on an elaborate understanding of the cultural construction of kinship.

Before proceeding further, I would like to glance briefly at recent developments in the anthropological discussion of kinship. In order to comment on these discussions, it is necessary to specify in what sense I use the term 'kinship', since the notion of kinship itself was questioned by some reviewers. I will try, in the course of this article, to arrive at an alternative idea of what kinship is, but until then, the meaning of 'kinship' must remain tentative. Adopting terms introduced by Barnes (1961), anthropological studies of kinship are concerned, not directly with 'genetic kinship', but with 'social kinship' (in the broader sense of this expression), of which two kinds are distinguished, namely, 'culturally defined physical kinship' and 'social kinship' (in the narrower sense of this expression).

My discussion in this article will be primarily concerned with how the idea of 'social kinship' in this narrower sense can be relevant as an analytic tool for kinship studies. It was, however, on this idea that sceptical scrutiny tended to concentrate. By contrast, the idea of 'culturally defined physical kinship' so far remains unchallenged. Nevertheless, it needs further specification, since there can be various views of what 'physical kinship' is. As Barnes (1961) points out, 'physical kinship' is no more than a hypothetical idea, but as applied externally to ethnographic facts, this idea is necessary for classifying folk categories taken from various societies as kinship categories. In order to avoid any ethnocentric bias in relation to the idea of 'physical kinship', I use it as indicating specifically those relations directly involved in the physical processes of procreation, particularly pregnancy and parturition. 'Kinship', in the following discussion, should thus be read in the sense of each society's cultural perceptions relating to 'physical kinship' in this revised sense. This definition of kinship, a tentative one, represents the narrowest meaning of the term, but I hold that it opens the way to further discussion of 'social kinship' more broadly defined.

Critical reviews of descent theories

Compared with the variety of approaches adopted by Japanese scholars, critical reviews of descent theories presented by Western anthropologists are particularly interesting; in a sense, they pursued a course of controversy parallel to that of the Japanese scholars.

When contemporary anthropologists reviewed those ethnographic studies of the Nuer, Tallensi, Tiv, Nayar, etc., which had been regarded as presenting paradigmatic theories of descent, the reviewers adopted an external point of view reminiscent of Nakane's (Gough 1971; Holy 1979; Anglin 1979; Verdon 1980; 1982a; 1982b; 1983; Kuper 1982; Schneider 1984; Moore 1985). They revealed that the examined ethnographies actually did not fit so well with theories as construed by the original ethnographers. Then, as a second step, the reviewers eliminated inappropriate concepts and theories, but none of them chose the third approach suggested by Japanese kinship studies, that is, to refine analytic concepts by referring to their counterparts in folk perceptions. Instead, they traced, as the most positive step they made, the same path as Nakane's and, turning their eyes away from kinship, they interpreted the social systems in question in terms of
functional considerations. Thus, the alleged descent groups among the Nuer, the Tallensi, the Nayar and the people of Yap are now recognised as groups based on ‘claims in cattle’, ‘territoriality’, ‘land and house’ and ‘land’, respectively (Verdon 1982a; Kuper 1982; Anglin 1979; Moore 1985; Schneider 1984).

My earlier comment on Nakane’s external approach applies equally to those re-interpretations by critical reviewers: they may well have left many features of kinship unconsidered. Verdon, for example, re-interpreted what Evans-Pritchard described as patrilineal descent groups (buth and thok dwiel) and bilateral kindred (mat) as groups or categories defined by claims in cattle. The claim in cattle was transmitted along certain relations among which father-son relations were pivotal, and the distinction between pater and genitor – or the culturally-defined physical father according to Barnes (1961) – was particularly prominent in that society. The position of pater was again based on cattle, the cultural medium of legitimate marriage (Evans-Pritchard 1951). Thus Verdon rightly traced the connexions among social phenomena in which the cultural representation of cattle occupied an integrative position. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that many paters were at the same time the genitors of their children. Moreover, together with Hutchinson (1980), I suspect that the cultural construction of the pater in Nuer society was based on that of the genitor. ‘Genitorhood’ was, and therefore kinship was, an integrative factor of Nuer society, which should be further considered.

If the choice made by the reviewers was a reflection of a certain bias, Schneider can be seen as representing that bias in an extreme form. His conclusion suggests that the bias was a Western ethnocentric one; his critical work (Schneider 1984) seems to be a strange mixture of ethnocentrism and a critique of ethnocentrism. He points out that anthropologists of earlier generations, because of their preoccupations, tended to see primitive societies as primarily based on kinship. Moreover, he reveals that the notion of ‘blood is thicker than water’ has been at the basis of the Western notion of kinship, and argues that anthropologists have in turn refined this Western notion into their analytic concepts of kinship. Armed with this ‘theoretical wisdom’, Schneider claims, anthropologists have interpreted ‘other’, non-Western societies as if they were virtually constructed according to the Western notion.

But for his own part, I find Schneider’s attitude to the Western notion of kinship strikingly ambivalent: re-considering his own description of Yap society, which he now rejects as being confined within the conventional ‘theoretical wisdom’ of anthropology, he insists that the folk terms of the societies under study should not be translated by ‘father, mother, genetrix’ and other such concepts of kinship, so long as the folk terms cannot be shown to signify exactly the same kind of ‘blood’ relations as their English counterparts do. If a society has no relations or groups which can be indicated by ‘analytic’ concepts of kinship – he referred to the Western folk meanings of these concepts to specify their connotations – then he refuses to recognise kinship in that society (Schneider 1984: 72 sqq., 80, passim). He apparently equates English (and other Western) folk categories with analytic concepts. Refusing ethnocentric misinterpretations of non-Western societies by Western ideas, he has committed himself to another Western ethnocentrism which construes the notion of kinship, both in folk and analytic usages, as a monopoly of Western languages. As an alternative approach, he recommends that anthro-
pologists should see 'other' societies as the native peoples see their own societies. Thus, he tries to adopt an extreme internalist perspective. But if anthropology is restricted only to this perspective, I suspect that it should constitute a reversal of Western ethnocentrism; that is, so to speak, a folk ethnocentrism. In order to overcome both kinds of ethnocentrism, a third alternative is necessary.

Schneider did not himself analyse Yap categories altogether in their own terms. He actually compared them with their English counterparts, and in so doing he objectified English as well as Yap folk categories. By implication, he put them together into one larger category, which could have been named 'kinship'. Thus he eventually approached the objective standpoint at which a third comparative approach is situated. The two sets of folk categories, Yap and English, were certainly different from each other; but once seen from that objective standpoint, they appear similar and comparable to each other as well. Since anthropological knowledge is inevitably described in particular, often Western, languages, this objective standpoint requires that at least a limited number of key terms should be elaborated into analytic concepts. It means that analytic concepts should be totally redefined in the theoretical context; in other words, analytic terms should be abstracted from the cultural context in which the same terms are used as folk terms. An analytic concept devised in this way will enable anthropologists to interpret its counterparts in Western languages as its variants.

The critical reviews actually undermined the theories of kinship they examined. Nevertheless, they also made it clear that kinship still remains a theoretical issue in anthropology.

A way out of the impasse

The notion of 'house' (maison) proposed by Lévi-Strauss (1982), although stimulating, does not seem appropriate for comparative use. First, it is not clear whether Lévi-Strauss considered a particular type of group, 'houses', or a particular type of society, 'house societies'. The idea of 'house societies' is as difficult and misleading as are those comprehensive characterisations of societies based on single aspects, such as 'patrilineal societies'. Secondly, even if the term 'house' is meant to indicate a particular type of group, Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'house' does not seem to represent a coherent group-like configuration, integrating the various factors mentioned.

Moreover, by the notion of 'house', Lévi-Strauss tried to establish a type of kin group with a conceptual status equivalent to another type, namely unilineal systems. He characterised the 'house' as 'compounding forces which, everywhere else, seem only destined to mutual exclusion because of their contradictory bends' (1982: 184), and listed as such 'contradictory' factors the pair of patriline vs. matriline and that of filiation vs. residence, among others. Contrary to his contention, however, the compounding of these 'contradictory' factors is not specific to what he called 'house societies' but is commonly shared by societies 'everywhere else'. Reviewers of classic theories of kinship have pointed out exactly the same phenomenal complexities of the alleged 'house' among those systems which had formerly been interpreted as based on unilineal descent. The 'house' is not actually antithetical to the unilineal system as Lévi-Strauss imagined. I recognise the descriptive usefulness of the term 'house'; it emphasises multilateral, multi-functional features of
corporate domestic groups. But the idea of ‘house’ as a distinct type of domestic group is unacceptable.  

If the notion of ‘house’ rather represents the general characteristics of those groups which traditional anthropological theories would have classified as corporate kinship groups, then it is necessary to consider kinship as constituting only one aspect of social systems. It means that the analysis of kinship should be focused on the position and function of kinship in the whole cultural construction of social systems. In this regard, Moore’s (1985) analysis of the taravad among the Nayar suggests a new approach to kinship. In a sense her argument is parallel to Nakane’s; she criticises preceding ethnographers who used to interpret the taravad as a matrilineal descent group, and proposes instead to see it as a ‘house-and-land unit’, emphasising the functional factors of residence and economy. But she proceeds a step further and, by analysing symbolic features of the ‘house-and-land’ unit, characterises it as the ‘definer’ of kinship relations observed within the same unit.

I myself have analysed the ie system in Izumo, Western Japan, in terms of its cultural structure. Taking account of the whole range of factors involved, I interpreted it as a cultural system internally articulated into four phenomenal levels. The elements on each phenomenal level are integrated into a relatively coherent semantic whole in relation to which the constituent parts at lower phenomenal levels are meaningful (fig. 1). The social entity called ie, literally meaning dwelling house, is perceived as existing independently of its members. To each ie, identified by its own particular features such as a proper name, social status and history, is attributed the main fundamentals for social life; it is not individual members but the ie itself that owns such properties as landed estates and dwelling houses and that manages the family businesses of agriculture, commerce, etc. I conceptualised this independent aspect of the ie as the symbolic ie. It regulates how the ie is embodied with members and how they live their social lives. The latter aspects of ie, which I called the embodied ie, comprise two phenomenal levels: hotoke or the dead, and the living members organised into a corporate group. The dead are aligned in a series of married couples, and the status system in the corporate ie is modelled on the alignment of the dead. Hence, the core part of the status system, which corresponds to what Aruga (1971) called the members in ‘the succession line’, consists of a series of married couples who are arranged in temporal terms: the preceding, the present and the future heads of the ie. Since corporate roles in the ie are divided between the sexes, I argued that the headship of the corporate ie is exercised by a male and female pair. The corporate ie contains a status which has no counterpart among the dead thus aligned in a series of married couples; incumbents of this status, who are equivalent to what Aruga called ‘collateral members’, are unable to maintain the membership in the same ie after death, so that they are destined to leave the ie to die in other ie. Members of an ie live together a corporate life led by the male and female heads.

Kinship phenomena are a part of this communal life and particularly centre on the youngest couple among the living members. Physical procreation establishes a ‘blood’ (chû) relation between the ‘real’ parents (jitsuno oya) and ‘real’ children (jisshi). Couples may also adopt children from outside their ie. Children, both ‘real’ and adopted, are accepted, to use Aruga’s (1971) words, as ‘kin’ members of the ie to which their ‘real’ or adoptive parents belong. The recruitment of members
through procreation and adoption is ordered by another factor, that is, the regulation by the symbolic, embodied and corporate ie; it is one of the prime duties of each couple to secure a successor. Hence, all the children of a couple are classified into two categories: one successor who is to join 'the succession line' and the rest who are, as 'collateral members', to leave the ie. As the criteria of succession, all 'real' children are prior to all adopted children; males in either category of children, 'real' or adopted, are more eligible than females of the same category; and finally, children of the same category and of the same sex are ranked by age. Hence, the majority of the couples among the dead and living members of an ie are related to one another by 'blood' kinship and the corporate ie generally tends to be organised as a stem family. An adopted son-in-law is paired with a female 'real' successor in default of male 'real' children and an adopted child is recognised as the successor when the adopter has no 'real' children. Thus, the cultural structure of the ie functions as a context wherein 'real' and adoptive relations comprise the folk notion of 'kinship' and wherein 'kinship' relations are articulated into a particular pattern (Shimizu 1970; 1987b).4

The system of ie I studied had already undergone the historical process which reduced the folk notion of 'kinship', once inclusive of non-kin servants, into a contemporary one which places more emphasis on 'blood' ties. Nevertheless, by referring to the cultural structure of the ie, the position of resident servants seems to be adequately interpreted. They, particularly those servants who were fostered by the employer from their childhood, are equivalent to the employer's adopted children in terms of recruitment (both are recruited from outside the ie), and to the 'collateral kin members' in relation to the succession of the ie (both remain secondary members of the ie, contributing not to the permanence of the ie but to its everyday corporate living). It may be argued that the cultural structure of the ie provides the framework wherein resident servants are accepted on the periphery of the folk notion of kinship. But in so far as such interpretation of the position of resident servants remains a matter of guesswork, it is not fully appropriate for
assessing how variable folk notions of kinship can be. Therefore, in the next section I analyse, as another test case, how Yap people constructed their notion of kinship. The analysis is intended to exemplify my alternative view of kinship. In order to avoid any pre-judgements, I will try as far as possible to describe Yap phenomena without using terms of kinship.

Tabinau on Yap

Before Yap society was transformed under the colonial administrative system, villages were the politically autonomous units, which in turn consisted of tabinau or domestic corporate bodies. One of the most conspicuous features of Yap society, which almost all ethnographers emphasise, is the personified nature of tabinau. This term indicates a unit of estate consisting of several platforms for dwelling houses, swamp and dry gardens for cultivating taro and yam, fishing areas in the sea, etc. The estate, however, was more than a simple material basis for domestic life; it was recognised as the constituent subject of society. Public roles, including the administrative roles of the village, were recognised as social attributes not of humans, but of estates, particularly of the central platforms in estates. Humans could only participate in public society as representatives, as 'voices', of the platforms. The whole population of a village was divided among the estates within it. The group of persons belonging to an estate was also called a tabinau, which I will describe as a domestic corporation.

This domestic unit ideally consisted of members of three generations – elders, senior adults and youths. Married couples of a tabinau (domestic corporation) dwelt in separate houses built on separate platforms in the same tabinau (landed estate). Public roles were indivisible and each role could be performed only by one man at once, who was the head of the domestic corporation to which it was assigned. The co-members of the corporation who, together with the head, were recruited by the former head usually established their own tabinau after their marriages. In spite of this fission, the original tabinau kept its identity unchanged. It was now the 'trunk' tabinau with superior authority in relation to the newly separated tabinau, and the two maintained strong solidarity in social life (Lingenfelter 1975: 24-32). This process of fission, together with the indivisibility of village roles assigned to domestic corporations, suggests that each domestic corporation used to be composed of one married couple for each generation, reminiscent of a stem family. Members of a domestic corporation died to join the collectivity of the dead (thagith), and each domestic corporation had its own set of thagith.

Elements of social life – social status, bodily states of persons, food, platforms, plots of land, etc. – were ordered in terms of purity (tabugul) and pollution (täay). Age and sex were particularly relevant to the state of purity and pollution among persons: males were purer than females and, within either sex, elder people were purer than younger. Therefore, among the members of a domestic corporation, the dead were the purest, and elders, senior adults and youths were assigned increasing degrees of pollution in that order, with adolescent single females in the most polluted state. Children were identified with their mothers. With this alignment of members, each male demarcated a social circle in which he, as the purest person, exerted authority; hence, the domestic corporation was internally ramified
into a hierarchical pattern in which the circles under the more polluted males were encompassed within that of a purer male.

The dynamics of social relations concerning kinship were observed particularly in the domestic corporation. Kinship relations were constructed and transformed in the process by which new members were affiliated to the domestic corporation. The main features of the process are as follows.

*The initial affiliation: birth.* The Yap folk theory of procreation was once discussed in the context of the ‘virgin birth’ controversy. Schneider first obtained an interpretation of monosexual procreation by women, but was later informed of data from Yap which he found incompatible with the former interpretation. Labby reported another folk theory depicting duosexual procreation (1976a; 1976b: 25-6), which also made Schneider reluctant to arrive at a definite conclusion (Schneider 1984: 28-9, 72-3). Scheffler, who regarded the idea of duosexual procreation as a cultural universal, was also sceptical of Schneider’s report of monosexual procreation on Yap (1973: 749-51). In any case, the difference between the two versions of procreation theory has, as Schneider (1984: 73) points out, few theoretical implications for the discussion of kinship in Yap society. Since I find the version of monosexual procreation credible, I choose this version for my analysis of relations of affiliation established by birth. According to Ushijima, it runs as follows:

A spirit called *maan* enters into the belly of a woman and performs the task of creating a foetus and impregnating her. The spirit may start that task independently. More often, however, a married couple, anxious to have a child, ask elders of the same domestic corporation to mediate their plea to the dead (*thagith*), who in turn work upon the *maan* spirit to impregnate the wife. The latter way of conception is believed to be more auspicious for the child, allowing it to live a longer life. The *maan* spirit can physically shape the foetus after the pregnant woman and her partner. Hence a newborn infant may resemble either its genetrix or her partner or both (Ushijima 1987: 143-5; 1989: 162-3).

The infant (*fak*) was firmly related to its genetrix (*citiningen*) by the fact of birth. For women the primary objective of marriage was to bear children to their husbands and to see to it that their own sons would inherit their husbands’ landed estates. The tie between a woman and the children to whom she gave birth was the basis of the group called *ganong*, to which we can apply the term ‘matriline’. The clan was compared to a hibiscus tree with spreading branches which touch the ground, take root there and then grow to spread further branches. A child, particularly a boy, born to a woman was like a branch touching the ground to root afresh. The platform which the newborn infant first touched with the head was supposed to be the one to which the infant properly belonged. Hence, childbirth should ideally be carried out on the landed estate to which the woman was affiliated through her marriage (Ushijima 1987: 136; 1989: 162-3; Schneider 1968a; 1984: 28).

In contrast to the genetrix, her partner – her husband or her sexual partner – participated only indirectly in the process of procreation. If the genetrix was married, her husband could work on elders and the dead of the same domestic corporation for the sake of his wife’s pregnancy and, by so doing, he indirectly associated the newborn child to himself and to his domestic corporation. Even such an indirect association is meaningful, since it distinguished newborn infants
into two classes: the more auspicious (fak-1 in fig. 2) and the less auspicious (fak
in fig. 2).

![Diagram of relations in the Tabinau]

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**Figure 2.** Transformations of relations in the *tabinau.*
The second affiliation: naming. A naming ritual was held soon after childbirth and the infant was named after one of the dead of the domestic corporation to which the genetrix belonged. If the genetrix was married, her husband performed the ritual to firmly relate the infant to himself and to his domestic corporation; he was now the citamangen to the named infant who was a fak to the former (both indicated with numerical index 2 in fig. 2). The ritual at the same time transformed the relation of the genetrix (citiningen) and her fak, which was now mediated by the relation between her fak and her husband. If the genetrix was divorced, she had to leave her fak in her husband’s domestic corporation, and if the husband re-married, not his ex-wife but his new wife was the citiningen of the fak (both indicated with numerical index 2’ in fig. 2). A married couple could perform the same ritual for an infant who was not born to the wife (non-fak-1 in fig. 2). Women who bore no or few children could ‘adopt’ (pof) close uterine kin and have them named in this ritual. In this case, too, the ritual qualified the named infant as a fak of the couple who were now called citiningen and citamangen, the same terms as for the genetrix and her husband. Thus, the naming ritual invested the named infant with full membership of the domestic corporation, irrespective of whether the recipient was born of a female member of the corporation or not (Ushijima 1987: 129-30; Schneider 1984: 21-2; Labby 1976b: 18, 20; Lingenfelter 1975: 25).

Apparently not all children born of an in-marrying wife are automatically affiliated to her domestic corporation; and not all affiliated children are born of a woman who married into the domestic corporation. The naming ritual operates as a mechanism of redefining social relations: the ritual held in a domestic corporation establishes and strengthens a candidate’s relations with the corporation and with its members; the more auspicious infants who have been distinguished in the initial stage (fak-1 in fig. 2) are preferred as candidates to any others; and yet the candidacy is open to unnamed infants in general (non-fak in fig. 2).

The third and final affiliation. The third process is concerned mainly with male fak in relation to their citamangen. All ethnographers emphasise that the relation between them was not finally established either by birth or by naming but was always dependent on the role performance by the male fak and his citiningen. The citiningen and her fak could claim their right in the citamangen’s land in exchange for their contributions to the citamangen. The male fak should, on the basis of his citamangen’s endeavour, solidify his position by faithful devotions to his citamangen, particularly by taking care of his citamangen in old age. Otherwise, the citamangen could legitimately expel his fak from his domestic corporation and accept anybody (non-fak-2 in fig. 2) as his fak, if the latter was willing to fulfil the fak’s obligation (fak-3 in fig. 2). As the fourth stage of affiliation, the citamangen, at his death, appointed one of his fak to succeed him as the head of his domestic corporation, and divided the lands in his charge among his fak. Ushijima reports that there was a category of confidential knowledge of the domestic corporation, which the head was supposed to pass (tathum) to his successor at his death (1987: 132). The fak’s relation to his citamangen (indicated with numerical index 4 in fig. 2) was now made unchangeable; the dying head gave his final recognition to his fak, including his successor, whose position no one could challenge (Lingenfelter 1975: 27; Labby 1976b: 21).
I suspect that ethnographers, describing these stages of affiliation, laid much more emphasis on the ideology of the *citamangen-fak* relation than on what the relation was like in practice. The two stages of affiliation were long drawn out, and could cover the *fak*'s youth and full adulthood. Considering the *citamangen*'s prerogative of renouncing his *fak*, I infer that by *citamangen* ethnographers specifically referred to the head of the domestic corporation in old age.

It is true that, as Schneider pointed out, virtually no elements of physical procreation are marked out in the relation between the *citamangen* and his *fak* at any stage of affiliation. This is also the case with the relation between the *citiningen* and her *fak* at least after the second stage of affiliation. Hence, Schneider refused to translate *citamangen*, *citiningen* and *fak* into any of the English terms 'father, genitor, mother, genetrix and child' (1984: 72 sqq., 80, 89, *passim*).

By applying the method with which I analysed the Japanese *ie* to the *tabinau*, we obtain the cultural structure of the *tabinau*, which happens to be quite similar to that of the *ie*. If *ie* and *hotoke* in fig. 1 are read as *tabinau* and *thagith*, respectively, that figure virtually represents the cultural structure of the *tabinau*. The whole process of affiliation is coherently correlated with this cultural structure of the *tabinau*, particularly at the level of the domestic corporation. When the process of affiliation proceeds one step, the focus of affiliation always shifts from an inner circle to the next outer one in the status system: at the initial stage, the relation of a newborn infant and its genetrix is relevant; but the final stage is focused on the dying head and his successor. Thus, the shifting focus of the process spotlights almost all stages of a person's life-course in successive order, from birth to death and thereafter. In other words, successive stages in a person's life are so constructed that the life-course is entirely integrated into the structure of the domestic corporation.

Another meaning of kinship

The four stages of affiliation observed in Yap domestic corporations are evidently constructed according to a common pattern of transformation. Each stage of affiliation consists of a specific set of acts, sometimes rituals, which select the recipients of the process and transform them into another state. By recapitulating the same process in abstract terms, we obtain a general mechanism of transformation as shown in fig. 3. The mechanism transforms persons (or relations or groups — hereafter only persons are cited, but the same holds true with relations and groups) in the prior condition, A, into the posterior condition, B. Not all persons with condition A automatically go through the process, whereas persons not in condition A can also be transformed into condition B. In both cases only those who fulfil the requirements of the posterior condition, B, are selected. The transformation defines the new condition, B, and as a corollary it also defines the residual condition, non-B. Except for the initial stage, the prior condition of a transformation is the posterior condition of the preceding transformation. Therefore, the distinction between conditions A and non-A is the outcome of the preceding stage. For persons in condition A, the process is cumulative in the sense that they are invested with condition B while retaining at least some elements of condition A. On the other hand, persons in condition non-A, when selected as recipients of the process, are simply transformed into condition B. Thus, those persons in B who have
formerly been in non-A represent the new condition, B, in a purer sense. For that reason, an ideological discourse of the transformation may put much emphasis on the creation of B out of non-A. But it should be noted as well that the posterior condition, B, is closely related to the prior condition, A, in the sense that the primary candidates of the process are those persons in the prior condition, A; persons in condition non-A are recruited only as their supplements. In some cases of transformation, it may be inferred that the residual condition, non-A, is introduced simply as an opposite of the main condition, A; such an opposite will make it explicit that the main condition alone is not altogether sufficient for the recipient to be transformed into the posterior condition, B. Except for the final stage, the posterior condition of one stage constitutes the prior condition of the next stage. Thus, transformation processes are connected with preceding or succeeding ones and make up a consecutive series of transformations.

By applying this general mechanism to the empirical process of transformation in Yap society, and looking at the resulting changes in the dyadic relations between partners, we have fig. 2. The state of each partner is not uniform throughout the process; the folk terms citamangen, citiningen and fak are polysemic, with different connotations in the different stages. I have distinguished different states of each partner in the figure by adding numerical indices. In spite of these differences, the same partners are given the same names throughout the process: for instance, a newborn infant in relation to its genetrix, citiningen-1, a newly-named infant in relation to citamangen-2 and a youth or an adult in relation to citamangen-3 are categorised uniformly as fak. The folk categories citamangen, citiningen and fak are based on what Needham (1975) called ‘polythetic’ classification. From this point of view, Schneider’s (1984) interpretation was unfairly biased. Out of his sheer denial of kinship, he put too much emphasis on the discontinuity between the prior and the posterior conditions of each transformation, and failed to grasp the polythetic nature of these categories. Since those elements which directly or indirectly indicate physical procreation are distributed among the referents in a polythetic way, the three comprehensive categories, citamangen, citiningen and fak, connote kinship – here I use the term ‘kinship’ in the narrow sense tentatively defined previously. Taking account of the fact that there are no other terms in the Yap language which exclusively indicate relations of procreation, I recognise the three categories as the Yap folk terms of kinship. If the ‘Western’ notion of kinship specifically denotes the relation of procreation alone, then we have arrived at another notion of kinship which is quite different from the ‘Western’ one. I shall
now proceed to further specify the epistemological bases of this new notion of kinship.

Referring back to the basic mechanism of transformation, fig. 3, we find it consisting of four conditions: two prior conditions, A and non-A, and two posterior conditions, that is, the B derived from A and the B derived from non-A. The four conditions can be categorised linguistically in various patterns, the possibilities of which are, however, logically limited (fig. 4):

(1) The four conditions are categorised separately,
(2) Two among the four are classified into single categories,
(3) Three among the four are classified into single categories.

Categorisations 2-1, 2-2 and 3-2 are concerned with the notion of 'fictive kin'. This notion is based on the initial recognition of A as 'kin'. Then, relying on the comprehensive classification of 3-2, the B derived from non-A is also recognised in terms of A, namely as 'kin'. However, they are not identical to 'genuine kin' (i.e., the B derived from A); on account of the parallel classifications of 2-1 and 2-2, the B derived from non-A retains the quality of non-A. Hence, it is categorised distinctively from the B derived from A. 'Kin' in the condition of the B derived from non-A are at the same time 'non-kin'; they are, so to speak, 'non-kin kin'. But the two 'kin' in this contradictory expression actually indicate different meanings in different contexts: the referents of this composite expression are 'kin' in the broader context of 3-2, but 'non-kin' in the narrower context of 2-2. Without specifying these contexts, but simply in an effort to avoid self-contradictory rep-
resentation, the term 'fictive kin' is devised. Schneider (1984: 22-3) rightly avoided the term when he analysed fak, citamangen and citiningen at the second and third stages of transformation. If 'non-kin kin' (the B derived from non-A) are 'fictive' kin, then 'genuine kin' (the B derived from A) are fictive too, since both are the outcomes of the same cultural 'fiction', that is, the transformation of A and non-A into B.

All the classifications in fig. 4 can be either valid or invalid depending on the context. The states before and after a transformation are not identical at all. Hence, in a context where the naming ritual is singled out, such as when it is seen from the point of view of a man as a citamangen-2, the difference between unnamed and named infants is marked out. But the difference between the two prior conditions, that is, whether the named children have been born to that man's wife or not, may remain irrelevant. Thus, categorisations 2-3 and 2-4 in fig. 4 are mobilised here. On the other hand, the same difference is critical for the woman who has given birth to the child who is to be named. Thus, only categorisations 2-1 and 2-2 in fig. 4 are meaningful to her. (Schneider apparently took the man's point of view when he underestimated the significance of this difference for women.) In spite of these distinctions, the same person is called by one of the categories, fak, citiningen and citamangen, throughout all four, or at least the last three, stages of transformation. Thus, categorisation 3-2 is used for the most comprehensive categorisation. This suggests that social life in Yap frequently involves those social contexts where these comprehensive categories are meaningful.

If the general mechanism of transformation, fig. 3, is reiterated, then we obtain a cumulative series of transformations (fig. 5), which transforms the initial condition, A, into the final condition, N. It is assumed that certain, if not all, stages of transformation integrate residual conditions – non-A, non-B, etc. – as well as the main prior conditions – A, B, etc. With these premises, we can understand how the revised notion of kinship indicates more inclusive meanings than the simple relations of procreation. If a certain condition in this transformative scheme, for instance B in fig. 5, is analysed as directly or indirectly indicating the physical process of procreation, then all the conditions constructed through consecutive transformations, namely C, D, up to N, can be postulated as related with kinship. These kinship-related conditions constitute the analytic basis for identifying folk categories as those of kinship in the broader, revised sense of the term. By plotting

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**Figure 5.** The basis for kinship categories.
an actual folk category onto this scheme, one can identify whether it is a category of kinship or not: if a folk category consists of some of the kinship-related conditions, like the one enclosing C and D in fig. 5, then the category is considered a folk category of kinship. If a folk category directly indicates physical procreation, like B in fig. 5, that is a category of kinship by procreation.

Anthropologists who write in English can adopt English terms of kinship, 'father, mother', etc., and use them as analytic concepts. As noted previously, when used in this way, these English terms should be entirely abstracted from their cultural context and be given distinct analytic meanings; once so defined, they are to be used as general concepts indicating comparable folk categories. In this analytic usage 'father', for instance, represents all those folk categories which incorporate, in the construction of their meanings, certain conditions directly or indirectly indicating the male physical procreator. Folk categories fak and citatingen, at least at the initial stage of transformation, contain conditions directly indicating physical procreation; hence, they are folk categories of kinship and can be described as the Yap categories of 'children' and 'mother', respectively. In the context where the citatingen in the first stage is singled out, the term can be described as the Yap 'genetrix'. The term citamanen does not contain any conditions directly indicating physical procreation; but conditions at the first stage indirectly associate a man with the child born by his wife. Thus, the category citamanen can be identified as the Yap category of 'father', without the meaning of 'genitor'.

The cultural construction of kinship: a model

According to the idea outlined in the previous section, a folk term is considered to be one of kinship so long as it conforms to the analytic scheme of kinship categories drawn up in fig. 5, no matter how minor may be the position occupied by the perception of physical procreation in the whole construction of the term. Folk categories of kinship identified in this way are presumably polysemic, so that their referents can also be identified in terms other than those of kinship: they may at the same time refer to things economic, political or ideological. Schneider (1984) rightly criticised the preoccupation, in kinship studies, with seeing social entities - persons, groups and relations - primarily from the point of view of kinship. I have also pointed out the same tendency among Japanese scholars (Shimizu 1970). Nevertheless, the multifaceted character of social entities does not justify the underestimation of the factor of kinship in their constitution. I would now like to invest this scheme of kinship categories with more concrete content by presenting a working model for the cultural construction of kinship (fig. 6). As a guide to the analysis of empirical systems involving kinship, a model consisting of the following three phases will be useful: kinship-by-procreation, constructed kinship and ideological kinship.

Many, if not all, societies have folk categories which directly indicate physical procreation. These categories belong to the phase of kinship-by-procreation. Kinship-by-procreation will be further invested with social, particularly legal, attributes and transformed into other states. All states of kinship thus transformed out of kinship-by-procreation are classified as constructed kinship. As in Yap, the transformation process of kinship in a particular society may recruit outsiders or 'non-kin' - they are regarded as 'non-kin' in different senses at different transformative stages
into folk categories of constructed kinship. Kinship-by-procreation often concerns the definition of persons at the initial phase of their social existence. Constructed kinship, on the other hand, implies that kinship-by-procreation alone is insufficient to make persons fully acceptable in society. A person’s identity is further constructed through the process of growth up to adulthood, which is often punctuated by a series of life-cycle rituals. The same process of growth may accompany further construction of kinship; spiritual and substantial bonds may be formed between a person and his or her caretakers; legal regulations may legitimise relations other than ones of kinship-by-procreation in the same terms as those of the procreators and their children. Thus, as a general tendency, kinship is culturally constructed in those social circumstances in which the most basic part of social life is lived. It may, then, be expected that the domestic group, which itself tends to be multilateral and multifunctional, constitutes the main context in which the notion of kinship is culturally constructed. Some states of kinship may also be defined in a larger context extending beyond the domestic group, such as networks of alliance and personal kindred.

When a domestic group is charged with multiple functions, the structural arrangements for different functions may contradict with each other or with a certain aspect of kinship constructed within the group. As a solution to these structural anomalies, that aspect of kinship may be redefined and adjusted to other, contradicting functions, whereby, as in Yap, ‘non-kin’ may be incorporated into the newly constructed kinship. Moreover, kinship may provide a structural device to meet the functional requirements of broader social circumstances. Social space outside the domestic group is not always open to individual persons. To the extent that membership in a domestic group is an indispensable condition for a person
to live his or her social life, persons or a group of persons who fail to affiliate to their 'own' domestic groups in a 'normal' way would seek shelter in other domestic groups. In such a situation, they may be accepted by a host group in the same terms of kinship as the proper 'kin' members.

In spite of the actual, complicated construction of kinship through several stages of transformation, the whole construction of kinship may be represented in a much more simplified form which selectively emphasises dominant features of kinship construction, particularly the features of kinship-by-procreation. I would distinguish this phase of constructed kinship as *ideological kinship*. A symbolic apparatus emphasising the unity of domestic groups, such as the notions of genealogy and ancestors, often mediates this sort of ideological discourse of kinship. Anthropologists, trying to understand exotic societies through research, inevitably rely on native people's perceptions of their own societies. Ideologies of kinship are particularly helpful to anthropologists in formulating their understanding of kinship. I suspect that the cleavage between analytic frameworks for kinship, on the one hand, and empirical data presented in ethnographies, on the other — the very cleavage which invited critical scrutinies by the reviewers of classic theories — may be a recapitulation, in the technical terms of anthropology, of the discrepancy between folk ideologies of kinship and folk perceptions of the remaining phases of constructed kinship.

As noted previously, the model should be read in such a way that the three phases of kinship observed in a society, when simply juxtaposed with each other, may be mutually contradictory. The multiple construction of kinship in a society is comparable to a series of circles partially overlapping with one another (fig. 7). 'Kin' in one context of constructed kinship may consist of 'non-kin' and 'kin' in another context, and the latter distinction can also be fluid as the focus of distinction shifts. The context-bound nature of kinship is also suggestive from the point of view of historical change; when a social condition sustaining a certain state of constructed kinship is no longer what it used to be, then that state of kinship will cease to be marked out as before.

This model of kinship construction suggests that Yap society is not at all unique in the construction of kinship. We observed that in rural Japan various sorts of persons — 'real' children, adopted children, resident servants including those fostered by their employers — were continuous with one another in a polythetic way. Thus, the pattern of multiple circles (fig. 7) holds equally true for the construction of kinship in rural Japan. When a couple secured a 'real' son as their successor, for instance, the distinction between the son-successor and the rest of their children, both 'real', adopted and foster, was emphasised. As 'collateral' members not participating in the succession of the *ie*, younger 'real' sons could be treated as equivalent to foster children or even to resident servants. On the contrary, an adopted child was fully qualified as the successor in default of 'real' children. In this sense, the difference between 'real' and adopted children and that between adopted and foster children were relative to the context. The devices of adopting successors and of adopting sons-in-law were not illegitimate at all; but they could be felt deficient when compared with the most pertinent successor who was the 'real' eldest son of his predecessor. The succession by a daughter and her in-marrying husband did not jeopardise the ideology of *ie* which emphasised the continuity of
the *ie* through a ‘blood’ line which, when unspecified in detail, was generally presupposed to be an agnatic one. The notion of kinship in Japanese society has undergone a historical change, and the new notion which emphasises ‘blood’ relations has been firmly established in modern Japan, to the extent that today many anthropologists and sociologists fail to recognise the fact that the notion of kinship could once embrace a broad range of ‘non-kin’ such as resident servants.

It is not only in Yap and Japanese societies that the multiple construction of kinship is to be found. Even among so-called unilineal descent systems in Africa, as the reviewers of classic theories pointed out, there are ample reports of cases in which non-kin or non-agnates affiliate to ‘patri-lineages’ in one way or another. Among the Nuer, as noted previously, the cattle exchanged as bridewealth are a cultural medium by which a variety of relations other than the procreative genitor-child relation are incorporated into the legitimate pater-child relationship. Affiliation to maternal groups is also subsumed into the agnatic ideology of dominant clans (Evans-Pritchard 1951; Gough 1971). Among the Yakö, ‘patri-lineages’ contain non-agnatic co-residents, whom Forde (1963) considered to be their ‘adopted’ members. Genealogical knowledge is manipulated and adjusted to actual socio-political relations (Bohannan 1952). Some lineages affiliate to larger ‘agnatic’ lineages as the latter’s ‘accessory’ segments, although they do not actually trace agnatic descent from the apical ancestors of the larger lineages (Middleton & Tait 1958). The discrepancy between unilineal descent and the actual constitution of groups is often interpreted in terms of the ideology of descent (Sahlins 1965; Keesing 1975). Those anomalous cases do not exactly conform to the principle of unilineal descent, but my model interprets them in terms of kinship constructed in various ways. By referring to other areas, particularly Oceania, one can find further examples of cases in which, in spite of agnatic or uterine ideology, the multiple construction of kinship is exhibited.9
On the other hand, some systems, such as the Western system described by Schneider (1984; cf. 1968b), apparently have few elements of constructed kinship. By referring to the model, we will be able to understand to what extent the factor of kinship in those systems is confined to the phase of kinship-by-procreation. Suppose an observer for whom ‘kinship’ simply means kinship-by-procreation. When he approaches a complex system (like E in fig. 7), he would find elements of kinship only in a restricted aspect of the system (like B within E in fig. 7). Then, he would naturally be inclined to interpret other aspects of the system (C and D within E, and the whole of E in fig. 7) in terms of economy, politics, ritual or whatever, but not in terms of kinship.

Conclusion

In this article, I have briefly reviewed Japanese studies by Japanese scholars and also reconsidered recent reviews by Western anthropologists of paradigmatic studies of kinship. By comparison with a third approach which Japanese studies have suggested as an alternative to external and internal perspectives, Western reviewers are inclined altogether to deny elements of kinship in social systems. Concluding the comparison of Japanese and Western studies, I pointed out that kinship, if seen as one of the constituent factors of social systems, still deserves further anthropological attention which should be focused on the position and functions of the factor of kinship in the phenomenal whole of the systems under consideration.

As a test case, I analysed ethnographic data from Yap. It was shown that a mechanism of transformation is recurrently activated within the domestic corporation and that the resultant series of transformations multiply the construction of kinship relations. I argued that all the constructed relations which are transformed consecutively out of the initial phase, namely kinship-by-procreation, can be regarded as kinship in a broader sense of the term. A further analysis of the mechanism of transformation suggested that different folk definitions of kinship in different phases of kinship construction can, when simply juxtaposed, contradict one another, and that folk definitions of kinship are always context-bound. Summarising these features of kinship construction, I proposed a model of kinship consisting of three phases: kinship-by-procreation, constructed kinship and ideological kinship.

I admit that I have presumed the folk notion of procreation as the minimal basis for discerning kinship in social phenomena. In both Japanese and Yap cases to which I referred for empirical material, folk perceptions interpret the domestic groups, the ie in Japan and the tabinau in Yap, as being the proper sites of procreation and hold that the process of kinship construction is implemented in the same domestic groups. Hence, it may reasonably be presumed that the domestic group is a prerequisite for the folk notion of kinship; that it constitutes the very context in which various phases of kinship are constructed meaningfully. Certainly, one can doubt whether these presumptions hold good generally within human societies. It may be argued that by referring to the notion of procreation I have virtually loaded folk notions of nature with too much interpretative power, clashing with critical discussions against the conceptual dichotomy of nature and culture which has been suspected as reflecting Western ethnocentrism (MacCormack 1980; Bloch
& Bloch 1980). The presumption of the domestic group as a prerequisite for constructing kinship may also be at variance with criticisms of another conceptual dichotomy, between the domestic and the public; critics have revealed Western bias behind that too (Yanagisako & Collier 1987). I find that, as with the reviewers of kinship studies, Western critics of these two conceptual dichotomies have been too ready to deny their validity in the name of avoiding misconceptions rooted in Western bias. Whether or not the physical process of procreation has inherently restraining effects on social relations is not relevant to my theoretical concerns. That process is not simply something externally given to human societies. It seems to me that human societies, which are articulated into domestic groups, have found the process of procreation very appropriate for constructing a series of specific relations, namely kinship, upon it. In any case, to take these topics further, and to demonstrate the validity of the presumptions on which I have based my arguments, would require another article.

NOTES

This article is an outcome of research conducted with financial support from the Japan Foundation while I was an academic visitor at the London School of Economics in 1989. I am deeply grateful to these institutions and particularly to Maurice Bloch, without whose co-operation the research would have been impossible. I am especially indebted to Maurice Bloch, Johnny Parry and Joan Lewis for their thoughtful advice and heartfelt encouragement; to participants in the Departmental Seminar at the LSE, discussion with whom was a real challenge for me; to John Knight, on whom I could always test my ideas, and to Susie Davies and Peter Goldsby, whose advice on my English was most helpful in making my points clearer. Finally, this article has benefited greatly from detailed reading, critical comments and editorial suggestions by Tim Ingold and two anonymous readers. I alone, of course, assume full responsibility for its contents.

1 Since the *ie* was structurally correlated with the *dozoku* (the Japanese counterpart of the lineage), most scholars have presented their interpretations of both *ie* and *dozoku* together. For my current purposes, however, it will be sufficient to focus my review primarily on interpretations of the *ie*.

2 Gamo (1970) overestimated the kinship unity of *ie*-members in terms of *kamado* or the hearth. I would emphasise the ambivalent status of the in-marrying woman; she remained a marginal member of her marital *ie* and at the same time retained a marginal membership in her natal *ie* until she succeeded to the female head of her marital *ie* (Shimizu 1987b).

3 Now that the family, a particular combination of kinship relations, is recognized as no more than a constituent aspect of the multifunctional domestic group, another category is necessary in order to indicate the domestic group itself. I think that *house* and its counterparts in other languages — *maison*, *ie*, etc. — are the most appropriate for this purpose, *so long as* their analytic usage is not hindered by connotations specific to the cultural contexts from which they are taken. When this condition is fulfilled, ‘domestic corporation (or group)’ in my description may be read as ‘house’.

4 Bachnik (1983) presented the idea of multifaceted *ie* and analysed the process of succession. Her interpretations on these topics contain many parallels with mine, which was originally presented in full detail in Shimizu (1970) and (1972-73). From my point of view, however, her conclusion on the aspect of kinship in the *ie* seems to be based on an external, analytic idea of kinship, which is quite close to Nakane’s. She argues that kinship relations among individuals are articulated in terms of the corporate ‘positional *ie*’ (i.e. the status system in my interpretation). By construing the ‘positional’ facet as distinct from that of kinship, she presumes that kinship consists of a set of ‘blood’ relations defined egocentrically. I wonder, then, how corporate kin groups could be interpreted; the idea of descent, for example, presupposes that the descent link can be distinguished from that of complementary filiation; but how is the distinction to be made — on the grounds of kinship or some other functional considerations? Even if we accept Bachnik’s interpretation of the *ie*, problems remain. The relations comprising the ‘the positional *ie*’ are represented, in folk perceptions, in terms of kinship. Analytically also, the very idea of ‘the positional *ie*’
is meaningful only when set against kinship relations among individuals; therefore, the very composition of 'the positional *ie*' is unintelligible without reference to concepts of kinship. Thus, kinship in fact pervades the entire *ie*.

3 Where references are unspecified, I have relied on Labby (1976b), Lingenfelter (1975) and Ushijima (1987) for ethnographic data on Yap society.

4 After leaving Yap, Schneider received a piece of news: one of his informants was killed by his wife's brother; the murderer justified his act at the public trial by saying that the victim openly accused him, the murderer, of having had incestuous relations with his sister, the victim's wife, and thus of having begotten one of the victim's (legal) children. Schneider thought the alleged accusation by the victim inconsistent with the notion of monosexual procreation which the same person had previously asserted (Schneider 1968a).

5 First, Labby's information was obtained almost two decades after Schneider carried out his research and in the days of rapid acculturation under the United States administration. Nevertheless, Ushijima could obtain, a decade after Labby, information endorsing Schneider's version of Yap procreation theory (1987). Secondly, the people of Yap are not exceptional in Micronesia in having a notion of monosexual procreation; a comparable notion was held, at least as a formal doctrine by men, by peoples of atolls in the vicinity of Yap until Christianity was propagated there after the second world war (Kazuhiro Komatsu, personal communication). Thirdly, it seems to me that Schneider was confused not by information from Yap but by his own Western preoccupations. He was once puzzled by a seeming inconsistency between the notion of duosexual procreation for pigs and the notion of monosexual procreation for humans, since he presumed that pigs and humans belong to the same category, animals. But, according to the people of Yap, humans are not pigs, hence the different modes of procreation (Schneider 1968a). Schneider was puzzled again by the news of the homicide (see note 6), which he thought to concern the same human procreation. But Yap people considered that those who committed incest were degraded to the order of animals like pigs (Schneider 1957; Labby 1976a). Hence, children can be born out of incestuous liaisons. An assertion of the incestuous procreation is fully compatible with a notion of the monosexual procreation of humans.

6 When this model is applied to persons, then 'kinship' should be read as kinship positions, like 'father', 'mother', 'child', etc. When it refers to relations, then 'kinship' represents the 'father-son' relation, etc. In regard to groups, 'kinship' means stem family, polygamous extended family, patrilineage or other types of kinship group.

7 Some of the combinations of 'contradictory forces' which Lévi-Strauss observed in what he called 'house' groups can be solved within the conventional framework of descent theories. The succession by a son-in-law, which he considered contradictory to patrilineal descent, is apparently concerned with such a corporate role which is restricted to men. Therefore, it can be considered as a variation of the succession by a female agnate's agnatic offspring, which reminds us of what Fortes (1970 [1953]) called 'complementary filiation' in unilineal descent systems. This idea implies that so-called unilinear descent is actually a composite of unilinear descent with subsidiary cognatic descent. Therefore, a typically agnatic system shares to a certain extent the features of cognatic descent systems (Keesing 1970). Agnatic lineages in China perpetuated themselves through female agnates in default of male agnates (Wolf & Huang 1980). As far as its kinship constitution is concerned, the Japanese *ie* can be treated as equivalent to an agnostic lineage reduced to the minimal scale; it often suffers from the want of male agnatic successors; hence the high frequency of the cognatic succession through female agnates. From this point of view, the 'adopted son-in-law' does not at all imply a structural idiosyncrasy of the Japanese *ie*, but is simply a function of the quantitave scale of the *ie* (Shimizu 1987a; 1987b).

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**A propos de la notion de parenté**

**Résumé**

Des études récentes des théories paradigmatiques de la parenté ont mené ce domaine des études anthropologiques vers une impasse sceptique. Ces études ont rendu un point particulièrement explicite: la division entre les concepts anthropologiques et les données ethnographiques auxquelles ces concepts sont appliqués. Reconnaissant la division, beaucoup de critiques, en particulier David Schneider, ont proposé de rejeter les concepts anthropologiques de la parenté qui étaient supposés être sévèrement déformés par des idées ethnocentriques occidentales. Une revue rapide des études de la parenté japonaise par des lettrés japonais, suggère, toutefois, une autre approche qui pour l’instant n’est pas pleinement considérée, où les concepts analytiques et les perceptions populaires peuvent être synthétisés. En se référant à un cas d’essai venu de Yap, un modèle de construction culturelle de la parenté est présenté.

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