# BECOMING JAPANESE:
## A SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW OF CHILD-REARING

*Introduction*

Studies of child-rearing have proliferated on the other side of
the Atlantic but, apart from a couple of classic works in this
country, the subject has been at least neglected if not positive-
ly scorned.  As Philip Mayer pointed out in the ASA monograph on
socialization, this avoidance applies to the topic of sociali-
zation as a whole,[1] and even this book focussed on one aspect -
the socialization of adults and youth rather than that of young
children.  Audrey Richards suggested in the same volume (ibid.,
p.7) that this general neglect could well be related to the
scorn poured by British social anthropologists on the early
American culture-personality school and what she calls 'the
traditional British fear of psychology'.  Some interest has been
taken in this Journal in the possibility of an anthropology of
children as a self-contained group, and in the consequent
problems of classifying 'children' as a group opposed only to
'adults'.[2]  However, most studies of the role of adults in

[1] Philip Mayer, *Socialisation: The Approach from Social
Anthropology* [ASA Monograph 8], London: Tavistock 1970, p. xiv.

[2] Charlotte Hardman, 'Can there be an Anthropology of Children?',
*JASO*, Vol. IV (1973), pp. 85-99; and 'Children in the
Playground', *JASO*, Vol. V (1974), pp. 173-188; Elizabeth Munday,
'When is a Child a "Child"?  Alternative Systems of Classification',
*JASO*, Vol. X (1979), pp. 161-72.

rearing children are almost exclusively psychological or
psychological-anthropological, and largely carried out by
Americans and their followers in other countries, including
Japan.

This paper is an attempt to illustrate that, at least in the
Japanese case, it is possible, as Mayer claims in the ASA volume,
'to study socialization by regular social anthropological means,
without special recourse to psychology, and ... that it is also
possible to draw in psychological concepts, where desired, with-
out necessarily distorting anthropological explanation.' Mayer
points out that if the reluctance on the part of British social
anthropologists to study child-rearing is based on the adherence
to Durkheimian social fact, it is ignoring one of the very
examples used by Durkheim in illustrating his definition of the
concept, namely 'the way in which children are brought up'.[3]

There is, of course, considerable variation in the way in
which 'socialization' is defined. Some definitions emphasize the
role of the recipient of socialization, others that of the agents
involved. Those writers who follow Mead insist that the term to
be used in the case of a particular society is 'enculturation',
whereas 'socialization' is a universal phenomenon.[4] My concern
here is quite simply with the system of classification being
passed on - with the social categories into which the world is
divided and by which social life is therefore constrained. A
child in any society learns to perceive the world through lan-
guage, spoken and unspoken, through ritual enacted - and indeed
through the total symbolic system which structures and constrains
that world. Since much social learning takes place in the first
few years of life, which are not easy to recall as one grows
beyond them, many categories which are in fact socially relative
are perceived as quite natural and normal. Thus for an outsider
trying to make sense of another society, such basic differences
may not come easily to the surface.

Indeed, the Japanese-American anthropologist Harumi Befu has
recently attributed what he sees as a persistence on the part of
Westerners to interpret Japanese society in terms of what he calls
a 'partial model' to the fact that foreign academics have 'not
been socialized from infancy to develop tentacles sensitive to
cultural cues which are essential for evaluating cultural

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[3] Mayer, op.cit., p. xvi.

[4] See, for example, David F. Aberle, 'Culture and Socialization',
in Hsu (ed.), *Psychological Anthropology*, Homewood, Illinois: The
Dorsey Press 1961, p. 387; J.A. Clausen, *Socialization and
Society*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1968, pp. 3-4; Mayer, op.
cit., p. xiii; T.R. Williams, *Introduction to Socialization:
Human Culture Transmitted*, Saint Louis: C.V. Mosby 1972, p. 1.

propositions (e.g. meaning) at the gut level'.[5] While Westerners evidently cannot rectify this deficiency entirely - nor, indeed, would it be considered advantageous by all to lose the outsider's view - it seems likely that a study of adults' interactions with small children could in any society add an important perspective to an understanding of its fundamental principles. In looking at what adults choose to impart to children, one sees also what values adults emphasize in their efforts to mould the new generation.

In the British case the neglect of this area could reflect an ethnocentric attitude to the early period of development. Care of small children is a low-status activity in this country and one which receives little public support. In Japan, in contrast, men as well as women launch into long discussions on the subject at a theoretical level, innumerable books are published by a variety of prestigious people - a head of the Sony Corporation having contributed a volume entitled *Kindergarten is Too Late* - and speeches and classes are arranged locally to aid mothers and others who are actually involved. The otherwise rather poorly developed welfare system provides care vastly superior to that of many European countries, including day nurseries and pre-school educational facilities, which are available to nearly all Japanese children. There are also more rites and ceremonies accompanying pre-school development than in the rest of the life-cycle put together.

The native term for child-rearing - *shitsuke*, which is written with a Chinese character with the literal meaning of 'beautifying the body' - is translated in Japanese folklore dictionaries as 'inculcation in the child of patterns of living, ways of conduct of daily life, and a mastery of manners and correct behaviour', all with the aim of creating 'one social person' - a person who can take a full place in society.[6] Homonyms of the word are used to apply to other acts of creation or 'making-up', such as the 'tacking' or 'basting' used to form the shape of a kimono before it is sewn firmly, and the careful attention to young plants, including rice seedlings and *bonsai*, so that they grow in a desired way. Another word which is often associated with *shitsuke* is *kitaeru*, which may be translated as 'to discipline', but which is also used for 'to forge' in the sense of heating, beating into shape and strengthening by subsequent hardening a metal object, a process particularly associated with the traditional production of the culturally important Japanese sword. Thus the forming of people may be compared to the moulding and perfection of objects of great symbolic importance in Japanese culture, and the business of

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[5] H. Befu, 'A Critique of the Group Model in Japanese Society', *Social Analysis*, no. 5/6 (1980), p. 42.

[6] *Nihon Minzokugaku Jiten* [Japan Folklore Dictionary], 1979.

child-rearing is regarded as a socially vital activity involving skills to be cultivated with the same investment of time and careful attention.

Adults involved are expected to put the child's training before any other activities, and the methods they use may involve considerable modification to their previous lives. The maintenance of a congenial atmosphere is considered of prime importance and much is taught by means of example - definitely different from the English phrase 'do as I say, not as I do' - and repetition. There is thus a great deal of ritual activity which lends itself conveniently to social analysis. Praise and punishment, while not totally lacking, are consciously tempered in the interest of maintaining an atmosphere of expectation of compliance - a 'good' child is not one who obeys authority of a Western variety, but one who knows how to behave properly and does so spontaneously. The ritual activity involves surrounding adults as well as the immediate caretakers, so that the categories being emphasized are reinforced throughout the life-cycle.

To analyse some aspects of the system of classification being presented to the child, what follows is divided into three stages of pre-school development, as perceived in an indigenous view. This should show how the important categories emerge and are reinforced, as the child is gradually introduced to a wider and wider circle of social experience in preparation for entry to primary school. The first stage is literally the 'suckling' stage, which is ideally spent largely in the home; the second is a period when the child is encouraged to play outside and gradually form relationships with other children in the neighbourhood; and the third is introduction to the more formal relations of social life as experienced in the nursery or kindergarten. While moving through these stages, I want to borrow and bear in mind a typology drawn up by Befu in his efforts to counteract the 'partial model' of Japanese society and show how this approach may contribute to a more complete understanding of this society. His chief criticism of Western interpretations is that they place too much emphasis on what he refers to as a group model, contrasting this with the individualism of the United States and other Western countries. He points out that this is not a proper comparison since it pits an ideology of collectivity against one of personhood, and totally ignores that of interpersonal relations.[7] To avoid such criticisms I have considered each of his 'culturally defined conceptual elements' as they are presented to the child in the Japanese case. The order in which he has schematized them happens to correspond to the order in which they are emphasized during a child's development, although it will be seen that one is not neglected just because another is introduced (see Figures 1 and 2 on the next page).

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[7] Op.cit., p. 40.

*Figure 1. Befu's Diagram: 'A Typology of Culturally Defined Conceptual Elements and Some Ideology Definitions'*

| CULTURALLY DEFINED CONCEPTUAL ELEMENTS FOUND IN ANY SOCIETY | IDEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS | |
|---|---|---|
| | U.S. | JAPAN |
| Personhood (self) | 'Western individualism' | |
| Interpersonal relationships | | |
| The collectivity | | 'Japanese groupism' |

Source: *Social Analysis* [Special Issue: Japanese Society, Reappraisals and New Directions], No. 5/6, December 1980.

*Figure 2. My Gloss on Befu: The Stages at Which Befu's 'Conceptual Elements' are Emphasised to a Child*

| HOME | NEIGHBOURHOOD | NURSERY/ KINDERGARTEN |
|---|---|---|
| Self | Self | Self |
| | Interpersonal relationships | Interpersonal relationships |
| | | Collectivity |
| *1st Stage* | *2nd Stage* | *3rd Stage* |

## The First Stage: Home

The chief emphasis during the first period is on the creation of
security. This actually begins even before birth, when a
pregnant mother is told that her moods may affect the foetus in
her uterus, so she should try to establish a calm atmosphere in
which to live. Once the baby is born this atmosphere should be
upheld, where possible, and the baby should be shielded from
fears and anxiety. If it cries it is assumed to be expressing a
need, even if only that of loneliness, and it is usually
attended to swiftly. Indeed, a good mother is supposed to be
able to anticipate her baby's requirements, the beginning of the
art of non-verbal communication which she should later pass on to
her children for dealings with other people. Early interpersonal
relations include a good deal of physical contact, and should be
characterized by the comfort and care of the familiar and
practised members of the immediate family. The stated concern is
with the baby's developing emotions, which should be exposed in
these early stages only to calm, security and happiness.

Once these principles have been established the details of
early care may well be rather variable, and mothers may or may
not feed regularly, may or may not use bottles rather than the
breast, may or may not buy a cot and a push-chair. The first aim
is to understand the baby's pattern of expectation and form a
relation of trust with the child. Western practices which have
been rejected are opposed to this general principle. It is
unlikely, for example, that a baby will be given its own room
away from the rest of the family, or entrusted to relatively
strange baby-sitters. If a mother must work outside the home,
and there is no grandparent to take care of the baby, then she
will try to find one regular, individual caretaker in the
immediate neighbourhood, so that the baby's home routine may be
interrupted as little as possible. The few nurseries which
accept babies under one year old usually allow only very small
numbers in familiar enclosed surroundings. Ideally, however,
such a baby should be in its own home, surrounded by the
familiar and attentive faces of its own family.

During this period the baby's awareness of self-identity is
encouraged in various ways. Amongst the first words that it
hears constantly is its own name, and an early response,
eventually articulated with the word *hai*, is praised as an
accomplishment and encouraged as an important element of *shitsuke*.
This unique ability of the baby to reply to its own name is
noticeably related to the establishment of self-identity, since
children only a little older are often addressed by role terms
such as elder sister or bother. Other words that the baby soon
becomes familiar with are concerned with bodily functions, often
associated with the boundaries of its physical self, such as
feeding, crawling, walking, dressing, washing and bathing. In
each case the training involves the gradual encouragement of
self-control. A baby in any society will eventually attain the
ability to take care of itself in these respects, but in most

cases Japanese caretakers do not wait for these things to happen naturally. They carefully guide the child in the proper way to do things, often through clearly-defined physical aid, and the child learns to impose a cultural order on its physical development.

Another way in which this cultural order is imposed at this early stage, largely though some of the same activities, is on time and space. Again, distinctions are made linguistically, but they are also emphasized in non-verbal ways, including a great deal of ritual. The baby's life is divided into several clearly-defined periods of different activity. Even if they are not situated at regular intervals during the day, as used to be thought desirable in Western manuals of child-care, the periods associated with eating, playing, bathing and going out are separated from other parts of the day in ritual ways. To consider only the last of these introduces one of the most important dichotomies for understanding Japanese society.

A word with the literal meaning 'going-out', also used to apply to clothes reserved for such occasions, is accorded an honorific prefix 'o', which lends a ritual air to the very word. The child is often washed before it is dressed in such garments, the hair is brushed, and there is a doorway ritual of donning shoes and pronouncing special phrases of departure. On return there is a different phrase, the shoes are removed, and the child may well be washed again to remove the dirt (or pollution) of the outside world. An older child is encouraged to gargle on coming in, a skill one manual of child care expects earlier than the ability to clean teeth. The mother's language and whole attitude is likely to change while they are out, even in her treatment of the child, for she must put on her public face to the outside world and deprecate members of her own family relative to others she might meet.

This distinction between the inside and the outside of the house is emphasized in many other ways. As a baby begins to move about by itself it will learn that there are certain definite limits to its freedom, and one of the most clearly defined boundaries is that marking the space separating the normal floor level from the outside door. There is often a steep drop down to the place where shoes are kept, so that an approach in that direction will be diverted or discouraged with the word for 'danger' (*abunai*). Even if there is no great fall, the area is regarded as 'dirty', and will still be out of bounds unless shoes are donned. In fact, while children in Japan are allowed to get away with many things - as long as the mother feels they know what they *should* be doing - one of the few things they *must* do is take their shoes off when they come in, and put them on when they go out.

*The Second Stage: Neighbourhood*

In contrast to the security which is fostered in the very early
period the child is now, at this second stage, deliberately
introduced to the notions of danger and fear.  Where we might use
a more positive phrase, such as 'be careful', the word *abunai* is
heard frequently as adults go about with small children in Japan.
At first, the word is associated with dangers in the home, such
as hot stoves or places where a child might get its fingers
caught, and mothers sometimes use a sharp smack to warn a child
away from such things, as well as introducing the association of
unpleasantness with them.   Gradually, however, smacks are
replaced with threats of punishment which tend to emphasize the
inside/outside dichotomy.  A variety of supernatural beings are
invoked for this purpose, but so are strangers passing by,
policemen and other unspecified outsiders, and a well-known, if
only rarely used punishment is to lock a child outside the house,
particularly after dark.  The dirt and danger associated with
even approaching the outside door is the beginning of the
important distinction which is being developed between the
security and safety of the inside of the home, established by
early attentiveness, and the dangers and associated fears of the
outside world.

Of course, the larger world may be safely negotiated if the
child remembers certain rules.  At first it remains close to its
caretakers, who will protect it from any danger.  The American
commentators, Ezra and Suzanne Vogel, noted that whereas American
mothers reassure a child that it need not be afraid, Japanese
ones acknowledge the danger but reassure by offering their own
protection.[8]  They thus remain on the child's side, and maintain
this position by attributing threats of retribution for misbe-
haviour to outside agents.

At the age of about three, however, a child is usually
allowed to play outside with its friends.  By this time it will
have acquired an understanding of places to play and places to
avoid, and it will have built up an outside area safe to play in
as long as it follows the adults' directives.  It gradually
establishes a new inside group of friends in the neighbourhood,
and if such children stick together, mothers tend to rely on each
other to be available in case of emergency.  It is important to
note terms used here: the terminology applied to children and
adults encountered in the neighbourhood is borrowed from the
family, so that older children's names are suffixed with terms
for 'elder brother' or 'elder sister', and other parents are
addressed and referred to as aunts and uncles.  The terms for
grandparents may also be applied to other elderly people living

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[8]  Ezra and Suzanne Vogel, 'Family Security, Personal Immaturity
and Emotional Health in a Japanese Sample', *Marriage and Family
Living*, Vol. XXIII(1961), p. 163.

in the neighbourhood.

All this would seem to blur the inside/outside distinction, but for the ritual associated with stepping across the threshold of the house. The phrases articulated at such a time by members of the family are quite different from those used by callers. When the latter leave the child is encouraged to invite them to come again, quite a different phrase from that used to see off a house member. A behaviour change in its mother will indicate to a child when a member of the outside world has provoked a public face inside the home, and certain parts of the house may be reserved for formal and less formal visits. The members of the house thus become a clearly-defined 'inside' group, distinguished ritually from others even though similar terms may be used to address them. The identity of this group is given the commonly used term *uchi*, which while literally meaning 'inside', stands for the people, belongings, customs and idiosyncracies of the entity. It is contrasted with terms meaning 'outside' and 'other' in reference to other people, their belongings and customs.

The terminological categories supposedly based on family relationships may in fact be defining the wider 'inside' group of the neighbourhood and more distant relatives, for which spatial boundaries are more difficult to discern. In rural communities and other close-knit neighbourhoods there are a number of groups to which adults belong, and children form such groups once they enter primary school, but for younger children these familiar terms of address are probably the clearest way they have of acknowledging known members of the wider world. In any case, these form a more nebulous entity than that of the household.

Rather more important for the teaching of principles of interpersonal relations at this stage is the way relationships also distinguish people according to age and generation. These distinctions work towards achieving an ideal of harmony and happiness amongst the children at play. Thus as soon as a quarrel develops over toys, the older child is encouraged to demonstrate its superior age and experience by giving in to the younger one. Privileges associated with superior age help to make this palatable, and possibly help to reduce sibling rivalry, since there is a fixed pecking order when each of the younger and older may benefit. In the neighbourhood, the whole group will support the ideal of benevolence from older to younger child. The use of the terms for older brother and older sister as a suffix to the names of any children older than oneself makes clear at all times the relative ages involved. When a new child joins the group it is always important for others to establish relative ages before play can proceed. Linguistic distinctions of this kind are necessary when a younger child asks an older to play, the phrase used implying that the older child is offering the favour of playing, and the same terminology is used when adults ask older children to play with younger ones. There is an implicit obligation for the older child to help the younger one, if

necessary, which entrusts the older child with a degree of responsibility.

This training in interpersonal relations is geared towards the maintenance of harmony and the congenial atmosphere which parents try to create for their children. The ideal amongst children playing is that they should be *nakayoku* - on good terms, at peace, harmonious, and able to play happily with anyone. This is emphasised by adults as important training for smooth social relations in later life, and much time is taken to establish the source of discord when children quarrel. Great pressure is then put on the recalcitrant child to apologize, and 'sorry' is one of the few phrases that mothers insist that their children pronounce clearly. The injured party must also accept the apology so that a state of harmony may be restored.

Crying is no longer indulged, and once an apology has been secured children should return to being cheerful and *nakayoku*. Indeed, a crying child is now laughed at, scorned into being 'brave' or 'strong', and adults actually encourage other children to ridicule a cry-baby as *okashii* - 'strange' or 'peculiar', different from the happy, cheerful child who represents the ideal. The force of this insult is greater when we consider another ideal often expressed that children (as indeed all people) should be *jūninnami* - 'ordinary', 'like everyone else'. In extreme cases, however, adults will eventually give in to a child who is unable to achieve control, again in the interest of maintaining harmony and trust.

The development of the self continues in this second stage. For example, when a child is deemed able to understand reason it is encouraged to consider how it would like to be at the receiving end of the antisocial behaviour it might be handing out, or to put itself into the position of other people to see how they might react in certain situations. This is part of the training in non-verbal communication, developing in the child a self-awareness in order to understand how others might feel. The concept of individual ownership is implicit in phrases often used, such as: 'That toy is yours, but lend it to the baby who isn't old enough to understand that yet', or 'Lend that to your friend! How would you like it if she didn't let you play with her toys?' It is also said to be important at this stage to teach children to look after their own things and to do things for themselves. Parents also encourage children to formulate views and express their opinions, although too much forcefulness in this respect is seen as a problem. The aim is self-knowledge rather than self-assertion, and an understanding must be gained of the limitations of self-interest. Parents seek to correct selfishness in their children; the word used for this concept implies an untrained state - in other words, children are expected at first to be selfish, but should be taught to recognize this and control it.

*The Third Stage: Kindergarten/Nursery School*

The third stage in the child's pre-school development introduces the formal social relations of kindergarten or nursery school. For some weeks or even months before a child is ready to enter such an institution adults will try to prepare for a smooth transition to this new experience. The words which recur frequently in this preamble are *tomodachi*, which may be roughly translated as 'friends', and *tanoshii*, which means 'fun'. The child is said to be lucky because it will have the chance to make lots of new friends with whom it will be able to have fun. There is no doubt about this abundance of 'friends' because everyone in the class will be referred to constantly as a 'friend', so that the child needs to make no effort in this respect. The friend here is not someone you choose, or who chooses you, but is the name given to the large number of children who now share a new 'inside' group in the kindergarten or day nursery.

The characteristics of all these children, which distinguishes them from those one has known in the neighbourhood, is that they are all deemed equal in the eyes of the teacher and other adults in the establishment. Amongst themselves the children may well know their exact relative ages, especially when they have celebrated one another's birthdays, but, symbolically at least, they are regarded as equally entitled to the teacher's attention. Sex differences are played down too, since the uniforms are usually identical for boys and girls, and few activities are differentiated or even allocated on the basis of gender. In some kindergartens the form of address may differ - the suffix *san* being used for girls, and *kun* for boys - but in others the affectionate term *chan* is still used for both sexes.

The emphasis laid on the 'fun' one will have continues at the kindergarten or day nursery, so that a child who is reluctant to go there, or to stay when its mother leaves, is regarded as most strange and peculiar - *okashii*. It is quite inappropriate, then, to cry at such places, and if a child fails to control itself in the early stages the teachers may encourage it to come in and enjoy itself. Most caretakers expect to spend about a week at the beginning of each new school year giving special attention to new children. If crying persists, however, the child will find itself ignored, as the teacher must attend to the important matter of making life *tanoshii* for all the other children in the class - often as many as forty. There is really nothing for a reluctant child to do but join in and have fun with the others. It may take some time, but since little attention is paid to a crying child, it eventually learns to gain the self-control required.

The chief object of these establishments, and the new experience they provide, is to introduce the child to *shudan seikatsu* (group life) in preparation for subsequent entry to school. Among the most important new rituals to be learned here are those which initiate and end the day, and these seem to have

an important role in defining the group as it gathers each day. The routine of changing shoes and clothes on arrival is similar to that practised at the entrance to the home, and marks off the inside of the classroom from the rest of the world. This is followed by considerable ritual activity, varying from one place to another, but usually including some movements in time to the teacher's piano playing, a song sung lustily in unison, greetings, and the reading of the register.

Again, the inside is associated with the group which gathers there and the fun they have together, so it is appropriate that a child who is reluctant to join in may stand alone outside. The children often play outside, or attend special classes in other rooms, but they go together on these occasions. Thus to threaten to send out a child who misbehaves is again a very effective sanction. As at home, the inside is made secure and attractive, this time with the concept of 'fun', so that the outside can be effectively opposed as an unattractive and 'strange' place to want to be. Thus the child who has been much fussed over as an individual now finds itself among a large number of other children, all equally important in the teacher's eyes. This entity of the whole class is referred to and addressed by the teacher with a personalized collective term, *mina-san*; and children are urged to take care of kindergarten property because it belongs to *mina-san* - everybody.

Co-operation should characterise behaviour within this group, and the aim should again be harmonious interaction. As far as possible the adults encourage children to put pressure on each other to co-operate in the activities for them, so that stragglers are urged to pull themselves together for the sake of the group. For ritualized activity, such as that preceding meals and snacks, the teacher sits down and plays a tune at the piano, signalling the time for preparations, and hungry children make sure that the others respond quickly. The discipline thus enforced is close to that described by Piaget in *The Moral Judgement of the Child* - bound up with mutual agreement and co-operation, rather than constraint imposed by unilateral authority.[9]

The ideals of co-operation are also advocated in stories and television programmes which constantly reiterate the theme that co-operation can achieve so much more than individual endeavour. The Japanese modification of the story of *Three Little Pigs* illustrates this very well. In a popular English version the first two little pigs, who it will be remembered build their houses of straw and wood, are eaten up by the wolf, who is finally outwitted by the clever third little pig who not only builds his house of bricks, which withstand the huffing and puffing of the wolf, but also single-handedly entices his predator down the chimney to his death in the boiling water of

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[9] J. Piaget, *The Moral Judgement of the Child*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1932, p. 365.

the cooking pot.  The same end meets the wolf in the Japanese
version, but not until the first two little pigs have escaped
from their flimsy homes and joined the third pig, with whom they
co-operate to catch the wolf, and with whom they live happily
ever after.

Even this modified version did not satisfy some four-year-
olds whom I saw watching a hand-puppet play of the story at their
day nursery.  As soon as the mother pig sent her charges off
down the road, a couple of smart boys at the back began shouting,
'Why don't you build a house together?  It's much better to
co-operate, you know!'

The results of co-operative efforts are used to express the
collective identity in various ways.  In the classroom there are
often grand illustrations to which each child has contributed,
such as a sea full of individually fashioned fishes, a wood full
of trees, or a train full of people.  Many establishments teach
the children the rudiments of music and rhythm, and concerts and
displays demonstrate class co-operation in this respect.  One
kindergarten I studied had an eighty-piece orchestra for children
in their last year (i.e. aged five or six), which played
classical pieces by Mozart and Vivaldi.  The same group rehearsed
an impressive drumming display for the annual sports day, when
one could also witness the value placed on co-operation by
parents, in the long line they formed to take pictures of the
grand tug-of-war.  In southern Japan hundreds of children who
attend one kindergarten put on a complicated marching display,
during which they create tableaux and form words, an event often
televised and always attended by a large audience.

Potentially hierarchical roles within the class are distri-
buted in strict rotation, which introduces the child to the
principle of democracy in its strictest sense.  Every day two or
three members of the class will have their turn to serve the
food, to order the others into line, or to represent the class in
some ceremonial activity, so that each child experiences all
sides of this interaction.  Thus when a child is asked to do
something by another whose role he or she will eventually also
have to play, he co-operates in the hope that others will co-
operate when it is his turn.

Other manifestations of hierarchical principles continue in
interpersonal relations in the institutional setting, since
children have plenty of time for free play, inside and outside,
as well as for organized activities.  Usually, children in the
same class, who are in principle equal, know each other's ages
well, for interaction in the playground, which then follows rules
similar to those in the neighbourhood, although physical strength
and force of character have parts to play here too.  Certainly,
relations between children in different classes follow the age
lines, and there is a definite hierarchy between classes at
gatherings of the whole unit.

Finally, it should be reiterated that a child does not
disappear as an individual into this new collective entity.  As
Piaget pointed out, it is 'the essence of democracy to replace

the unilateral respect of authority by the mutual respect of the autonomous wills'.[10]  Co-operation, then, far from denying the development of personhood, actually implies autonomy, or, in Piaget's view, 'personalities that are both conscious of themselves and able to submit their point of view to the laws of reciprocity and universality.'[11]  This is precisely what is overtly sought by Japanese parents entering their children into kindergarten - self-awareness sufficient for the understanding of others, self-knowledge in the interest of maintaining harmonious social relations.  As Durkheim pointed out long ago in *L'Education Morale*, 'the attachment to social groups...far from checking individual initiative...enriches personality'.[12]

Raum argued a similar point based on his observations of Chaga children.  He takes issue with Rousseau's idea that the *amour de soi* of the 'tendency towards the unfolding of the self in a spontaneous manner' is opposed to and restrained by the relations of social life.  Raum argues that juvenile spontaneity does not work itself out *in vacuo*, but defines itself by reference to the cultural environment.  He argues, therefore, that individual nature and society are not at educational poles: 'Society exists only in individuals and individuals realize themselves only in society'.[13]

Children in Japanese kindergartens and day nurseries spend long hours with each other, and they come to know each member of the group very well.  During the course of the day the teacher also picks out individuals for praise and reproach.  Representatives have to be chosen for races at sports day or special performances in concerts, and there is also time for children to speak in front of the class about their own personal experiences and thoughts on particular incidents and events.  The teacher also has the benefit of a detailed personal form filled out by the parents for each member of her class, and she visits all their homes soon after they arrive at the start of the year.

As well as experiencing 'group life', children in these establishments are expected to develop qualities of character such as perseverence and effort, independence and self-reliance, 'creative expression' and the ability to know and express one's own mind.

Thus children in the third stage come to develop in a new sense as members of a group whose identity they learn to appreciate, and for whose benefit they realize they must sometimes control their own personal interests.  Through such

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[10] Ibid., p. 366.

[11] Ibid., p. 372.

[12] Quoted ibid., p. 356.

[13] O.D. Raum, *Chaga Childhood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1940, p. 386.

training they achieve a new identity of their own as members belonging to, co-operating in, and enjoying the benefits of a collective organization.  This gives them an important extra dimension in which to operate, a dimension which is less developed in the West;  and I suggest that it is because of this lack that Western observers may tend to lose out on some of Befu's 'cultural cues' mentioned above.  For, as several anthropologists and linguists have pointed out, although the terminology I borrow here is that of Basil Bernstein, the closer the identifications of speakers, and the greater the range of shared interests, the more restricted and predictable is the speech they employ.   Much of the intent of communication can be taken for granted so there is less need to raise meanings to the level of explicitness, or what Bernstein terms 'elaboration'. Thus a speaker wishing to individualize his communication, Bernstein argues, is likely to do it by varying the expressive associates of the speech, so that more concern may be found with how something is said and when, its metaphoric elements, and the interpretation of silence.  The unspoken assumptions are not available to outsiders.[14]

    We are all aware of this type of communication in close personal relationships, but socialization in Western societies seems to involve variable amounts of experience in interpreting non-verbal cues, which are anyway picked up in a much less self-conscious manner.  In Japan, where speech is often quite accurately predictable and thus 'restricted' in Bernstein's sense, meaning in relationships must often be sought elsewhere. Early socialization in anticipating the needs of others through self-awareness, reciprocity in inter-personal relationships, and the experience of group identity, provides a firm basis for skill in this respect.


*Summary: Some Structural Principles*

It seems possible to summarize some of the important aspects of a child's early upbringing by drawing up a series of oppositions which emerge as important in the system of classification being presented.  First of all, there is an opposition set up in the early years between the security and trust of the inside of the home and dangers and associated fears of the outside world.  It is not a completely clear-cut distinction, since there may be dangers in the home, and the outside world is made safe as long as certain conditions are fulfilled, but the clustering of associations would seem to support the scheme:

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[14] Basil Bernstein, *Class Codes and Control*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974.

| | |
|---|---|
| Security ( *Anshin* ) | Danger ( *Abunai* ) |
| Trust ( *Shinrai* ) | Fear ( *Shinpai* ) |
| Inside ( *Uchi* ) | Outside ( *Soto* ) |
| Family ( *Kazoku* ) | Others ( *Yoso no hito* ) |

It is especially apt when we realise that the Japanese term *uchi* refers not only to the inside of the house, but also to the people who belong to that group, so that if one goes outside with members of that group the distinction is anyway somewhat blurred. It is also with these people that one's relations of trust are first established and one's fears allayed in a situation of potential danger.  However, there are other people, possibly close relatives or neighbours at first, in whom children are gradually also encouraged to place their trust, and the outside world becomes more manageable as the child grows up a little and begins to experience other 'inside' groups, such as the neighbourhood and kindergarten.

The first simple set of oppositions widens out, then, to incorporate a larger group of friends, relatives and potential caretakers, and a larger number of principles comes into operation in interpersonal and collective behaviour with these people. The principles first established in the neighbourhood seem to be reinforced more formally in kindergartens and day nurseries, and it seems possible to draw up another set of oppositions based on the ideals of behaviour and their alternatives:

| | |
|---|---|
| Cheerful Child ( *Akarui* ) | Cry Baby ( *Nakimushi* ) |
| Harmony ( *Nakayoku* ) | Quarrels ( *Kenka* ) |
| Having Fun ( *Tanoshii* ) | Strange ( *Okashii* ) |
| Like Others ( *Jūninnami* ) | Peculiar ( *Okashii* ) |
| Compliance | Ridicule |
| Belonging | Left Out |
| Cooperation | Ostracism |
| Inside | Outside |

The alternatives are discouraged at first, as the opposite of the ideals, and the Japanese words given are used in these contexts;  but as one proceeds down the list, they become so unpleasant that there becomes less and less need for discouragement and the oppositions represent my interpretations of behaviour.  In fact, there is really no alternative at all.  Ultimately it is not a matter of co-operating with the group or being individualistic, as Befu sees the Western view representing things,[15] it is rather co-operation or being left out, being happy like every one else or being laughed at, a choice between compliance and ostracism. The only alternative to joining in at kindergarten is to stand outside, either because one has not yet summoned up the self-

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[15] Op.cit.

control to participate, or because one has been sent there for
interrupting the harmony of the class. It is a matter of being
one of the group, or being nothing at all. In the end it is not
really a choice. It's the way of the world.

A parallel set of oppositions which is being developed is
that concerning the relationship between the self and the rest of
the world. Early training has gradually made it possible for the
individual child to define itself as a discrete identity, but it
also teaches it about the control it must exercise over the will
and behaviour of this being. Although the difference has
probably not yet been clearly articulated, it will eventually
learn that there is behaviour appropriate for the outside world
and behaviour appropriate for the various groups to which it
belongs. In fact, the self is becoming a complicated being with
a face and appropriate behaviour for each of the arenas in which
it operates.[16] Again, we seem to return to the important basic
distinction between the inside and the outside, this time that
of the individual being:

| | |
|---|---|
| Self ( *Jibun* ) | Others ( *Yoso no hito* ) |
| Selfish ( *Wagamama* ) | Kind, Thoughtful |
| | ( *Yasashii, Omoiyari* ) |
| Own thoughts & feelings | Face shown to the world |
| ( *Honne, Kokoro, Hara* ) | ( *Tatemae, Kao, Kuchi* ) |

In this case the inside and outside of the individual being is
distinguished, and as may be seen in the last line, there are
various Japanese words used to refer to the inside self as
opposed to the 'face' shown to the world. These are translated
in various ways, including 'private' and 'public', 'informal'
and 'formal', and more literally for the second and third of each
set, 'heart' and 'face', 'belly' and 'mouth'.[17] The self is
distinguished, but it must be controlled in the various represen-
tations of itself required by the outside world. The mechanisms
governing inter-personal relations and collective activity
require selfishness to be suppressed and an appropriate face to
be presented.

This summary provides some elements of the system of
classification presented to small Japanese children by those
adults involved in their care, and reinforced by other children
around them. The oppositions presented here are embodied in the
language used to speak to small children, the ritual surrounding
their everyday life, and the structured activities of the first

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[16] Cf. Shumpei Kumon, 'Some Principles Governing the Thought and
Behaviour of Japanists (Contextualists)', *Journal of Japanese
Studies*, Vol. VIII no. 1 (1972), pp. 16-17.

[17] Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, Honolulu:
University Press of Hawaii 1976, pp. 159-60.

educational establishments they attend.  They seem to represent
a Japanese view of the world which is thought appropriate to
present to children, apparently varying little from family to
family, or from school to school.  It may be that amongst
children themselves a different set of values is shared in the
way that Hardman has described for English children.  The set
described here has been obtained mostly by observing adults and
the way they interact with children, often taking advantage of
the children's inclination to co-operate with one another, but
nevertheless they are the values of the adults.  I hope that
this paper has illustrated that these child-rearing activities
do provide legitimate and revealing material for social anthro-
pological analysis, which make for a more complete understanding
of one particular society.


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