

Some Observations on the fundamentals current of thought of the Japanese people

Yoshiki Hoshino

[I]

If my friends want to study about Japan, My friends have to understand about the mind, heart and spirits of the Japanese people. Many foreigners who have looked over and have had a general knowledge of the Japanese literature, picture in Japanese style, Noh, Kabuki, Japanese movies, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrine, Kimono, Japanese garden and Japanese-style dish so on and maybe say as follow: "I know and have the knowledge of Japan." But I think that they can merely understand mental structure of the Japanese people except how to take into consideration of the view of Japanese axiology. Accordingly, I dare to say to my friends, "At any rate, being as homestay, get into conversation with the Japanese people by the easy language of Japan step by step and with disregard to the Japanese grammer, and my friends will be able to understand the Japanese language and gradually the Japanese mental structure can be understood by my friends. Then, My friends can find how the Japanese people are sensitive people."

Well, I am fond of traveling, so that I had visited many well-known or no-well known attractions and had talked about miscellaneous things with the many field-peoples. From these my experience, I my self recognize how the language and condition of living of

Japan can be difficult. Of-course, I'm not able to understand a Tōhokoku accent (a Tōhoku dialect), Izumo accent (dialect) and Okinawa accent (dialect), for example. Moreover, the latest words which are used by young men in Japan are not easily understandable by an elder like me. Naturally, it is different between original dialect that very in different localities and the latest young men's words of to-day. Both of words, of course, are culture. However, the former have a qualification of like an intangible cultural asset, but the latter have not above qualification for the present, I think.

Language is culture. But, if my friends want to know the genius some country's culture, at least, you have to understand through the language that you are going to visit the country, and my friends have to make a living in some country that answers your purpose. Besides, you need to assort one historical country. To live or to make a living maybe show you the inside of language of the country. Many friends of mine in West European countries and America cannot speak the language of Japan almost all. For they have firmly believe that the English, French and Spanish are international language, and moreover the most of all Japanese people be able to speak the English.

However, as the matter of cause one ought to pay out much money and times. But, especially it has very difficult problem for young men. So I want to talk to you lightly on the inside of Japanese mental structure as a middle-age man. Of course I am not a specialist about the culture and physical anthropology.

My English is, so-called Japanese English and is not the King's English and American's English. Then, I think that this some observation maybe have many mistake on the English Grammar. But I believe you are able to understand with your excellent fine understanding.

〔II〕

(1) Well, Mr. Kenji Suzuki, he is a well-known Japanese announcer in the Nippon Hōsō Kyokai (the Japan Broadcasting Society). He

published a book in '85. It's name is "KIKUBARI-NO-SUSUME" (On the advice of sympathy, Kōdan-sha 1985.)

I think that sympathy is no longer in the almost latest Japanese people's memory, especially in the young Japanese people. Then, I want to search by myself "What is the basis of sympathy of the Japanese people."

In Japan, recently, the many bullying by schoolchildren's group are of frequent occurrence in the school. This is caused by the insufficiency of consideration for their friends. But I think that this form of the basis of phenomenon will be gradually changed the value judgment of the Japanese people's living (Nomura-Sōgō-Kenkyusho, Nihonjin-no-Seikatu-Kachi-Kan. Toyō-Keizai-Kenkyu-sha. 1980.)

(2) In order to understand for sympathy, I want to get some hints through the Japanese people's actual life. In our undeniable fact, the Japanese life ways are composed by two essential points, I think.

1st: Giri

2nd: Ninjō

Of course, I know that my indicated two points are very rough points.

Well, it is very difficult for me how to express the meaning of these two words "Giri" and "Ninjō" by good English. For, "Giri" and "Ninjō" have many meanings. If I translate into English, "Giri" by force, I am able to express in English word, or "Duty," "Obligation," "Sense of Honor," and "Courtesy." That is to say, these English words are all included in "Giri."

For example, I can use it like this:

- i) be torn between love and duty.
- ii) fail in (to perform) one's social duty.
- iii) do one's duty by a person.
- iv) be faithful.
- v) have no sense of duty, be ungrateful.
- iv) from a (sheer) sense of duty.

Next is “Ninjō.” Ninjō is probably equivalent for the English words, “Human feeling”, “Human nature” and Humanity.” The Japanese people are in daily use like this:

- i) the milk of human kindness.
- ii) the secrets of human nature.
- iii) warmhearted, kind, humane.
- iv) unfeeling, coldhearted, heartless.

Some Professor of Management in Japan says in other words about the Giri or duty and the Ninjo or human nature. He has used as follows: (a) “Wa,” (b) “Makoto,” (c) “Amae” and (d) “Iki.” And he has tried to explain the Japanese management and business. But, these words have peculiar meaning and senses. In the near sense of the word:

- (a) “Wa” or do make sense of “Harmony.”
- (b) “Makoto” means to “Sincerity,” “Trueheart” and “Faithfulness.”
- (c) “Amae” means to use “Behave like a spoiled child,” “A fond (an indulgent) mother,” “Allow,” “Overlook,” “Forgive a person for one’s fault,” “Trust,” “Confide in” and etc.
- (d) “Iki” means to use the word for “Stylish,” “Smart-looking,” “Dapper,” “Chic” and some time we use for the word “neat and clean.” However, “Iki” must be used properly by the education, pedigree, breeding and ... of a companion, if you want to use that word.

[III]

At any rate, it is very difficult to explain these words by good English but, in here, lose no time in dividing into two word groups as follows: Figure I

A words Group element	B words group element
i) Giri 1	a) Wa 3
ii) Ninjō 2	b) Makoto 4
	c) Amae 5 d) Iki 6

For both groups of words have deep relations with each other.

Well, for making short, I shift from giri to element of Giri, from Ninjō to element of Ninjō, and from Wa to element of Wa... etc., and enter in number 1, 2, 3... as the above table (see Figure I).

In the back of each element is always the desire to cause a (chain) reaction to some element, and the other side each element want to cause a (chain) reaction by some element (Fig. II, III, & IV). The complicated Japanese human behavior is watched.

—=direction that translates into instinctive behavior

d=desire

e=element

Figure II

Case 1

(1) d — e 1 — Giri behavior only

(2) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 2 \\ \searrow e 1 \end{cases}$ — Ninjo behavior only

(3) d — e 2 — Giri and Ninjo behavior

Figure III

Case 2

(1) d — e 3 — Wa behavior only

(2) d — e 4 — Makoto behavior only

(3) d — e 5 — Amae behavior only

(4) d — e 6 — Iki behavior only

Case 3

(1) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \searrow e 4 \end{cases}$

(2) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \searrow e 5 \end{cases}$

(3) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

(4) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 4 \\ \searrow e 5 \end{cases}$

(5) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 4 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

(6) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 5 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

Case 4

(1) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \rightarrow e 4 \\ \searrow e 5 \end{cases}$

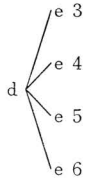
(2) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \rightarrow e 4 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

(3) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \rightarrow e 5 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

(4) d $\begin{cases} \swarrow e 3 \\ \rightarrow e 4 \\ \searrow e 5 \\ \searrow e 6 \end{cases}$

Figure IV

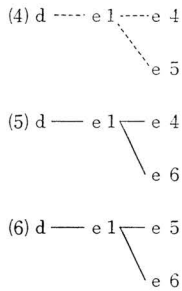
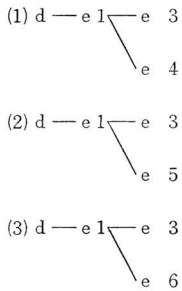
Case 5



Case 6

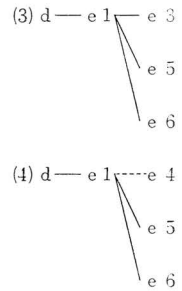
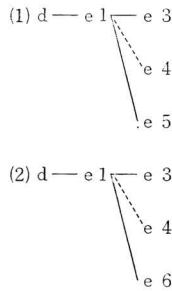
- (1) d—e 1—e 3 Wa behavior let in Giri
- (2) d—e 1—e 4 Makoto behavior let in Giri
- (3) d—e 1—e 5 Amae behavior let in Giri
- (4) d—e 1—e 6 Iki behavior let in Giri

Case 7

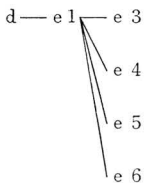


...=insignificant element

Case 8



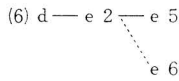
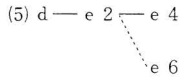
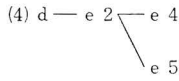
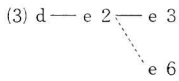
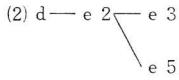
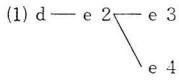
Case 9



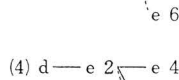
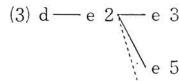
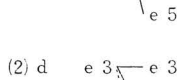
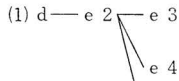
Case 10

- (1) d—e 2—e 3—Wa behavior let in Ninjo
- (2) d—e 2—e 4—Makoto behavior let in Ninjo
- (3) d—e 2—e 5—Amae behavior let in Ninjo
- (4) d—e 2—e 6—Iki behavior let in Ninjo

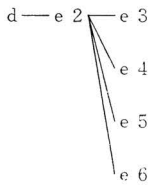
Case 11



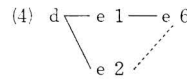
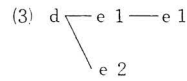
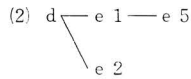
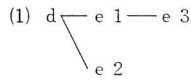
Case 12



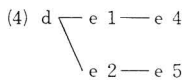
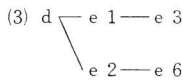
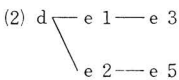
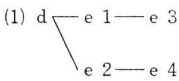
Case 13



Case 14

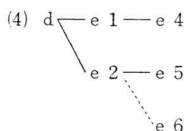
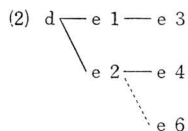
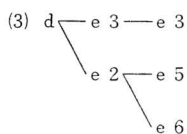
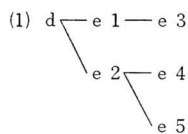


Case 15

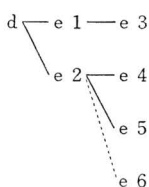


Some Observations on the fundamentals... (Yoshiki Hoshino)

Case 16



Case 17



The above figures show the cases of typical behavior of Japanese people, I think. Then I'll do mention one example for one case. For, examples are too many to be cited. Of cause there are many exceptional cases in an actual way of Japanese life. Example,

Case 1 Behavior (1): "I have just dropped in, as I have happened to come this way."

Case 2 Behavior (4): "I was anxious about you through I don't tell you in so many words."

Case 3 behavior (4): "That teacher is generous in marking, then I love him."

Case 4 behavior (3): "Let's keep an open mind toward each other."

Case 5 "Let a matter drop without taking any definite step about it."

Case 6 behavior (3): "I cannot in honor, accept this money."

Case 7 behavior (2): "I have to make a peace with my first cousin once removed."

Case 8 behavior (2): "He makes a gift of salt for his enemy."

Case 9 "He make a big money for child of his wife by her former marriage."

Case 10 behavior (2): "I will tell him to be more careful in the future."

Case 11 behavior (3): “two friends live on the same staircase of apartment house.”

Case 12 behavior (4): “I want your daughter for my son’s wife.” toward a foreigner’s parents.

Case 13 “an old woman walks on arm of her husband.”

Case 14 behavior (3): “I’m doing this as a matter of duty. I hope you will not take it amiss.”

Case 15 behavior (5): “He is best with perplexing difficulties for his best friend.”

Case 16 behavior (4): “I’ve done everything I can for him, but I can not do it perfectly.”

Case 17 the Japanese people’s behavior who is nearly complete.

[IV]

In the above behavior, the Japanese people always is in pursuit of happiness for themselves. To pursuit of happiness, they regard “En” as importance. “En” has these sense as follow:

- (i) relation, connection
- (ii) ties, bond
- (iii) karma
- (iv) chance

The Japanese people want reliance in member of a home and in each family’s relations. The member of home, of cause, are father, mother, son and daughter. However, if the father is a son in law, he has no construction power in his family. Many Japanese family have adopted a patriarchal system. Then the qualifications of the head of family is in how to control of the “Giri”, “Ninjo” and in house management, his qualification is how to cultivate the emotion of “Wa”, “Makoto”, “Amae”, and “Iki” for his family.

Moreover, the Japanese people, mostly, have a custom which comply with each family and they regard it as important, and they dislike to leave a bad precedent, for example, in a family’s religion, marriage, occupation, and etc... But these custom cannot easy break. If one person want to break it, he has to contend

Some Observations on the fundamentals... (Yoshiki Hoshino)

with his family and family's way of thinking or how to think "Giri", "Ninjo" and "Wa", "Makoto", "Amae", "Iki", and he has to get a faculty to take a his train for himself or to take a international train for himself.

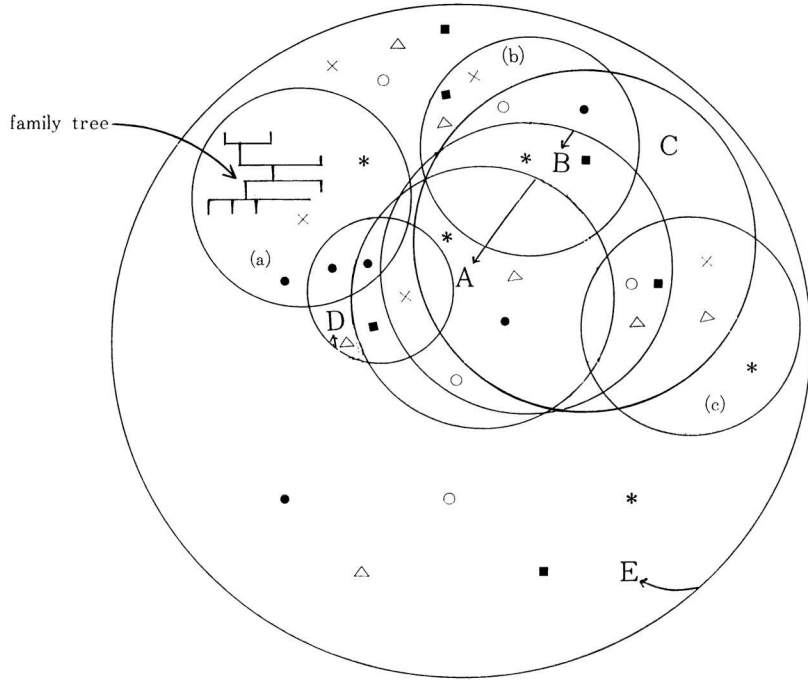
Thereupon, I talk to you how to break the family's custom. This answer is to get some qualification under the Japanese bureaucratic society or to make a fortune under the Japanese capitalistic economy. In here, academic background preferenceism and fortune preferenceism were born since the Meiji Restoration (1867). That is to say, the fundation of lengthwise society has been composed in that era. The Meiji era is very important era in education system, law system economic system and political system without life system. About this points, I want to leave the job over for specialist in your university.

The lengthwise society is a kind of competitive society. The Japanese people always have to hold in his heart, otherwise he goes down in the society or his is a defeated person.

The competition is in his family, relation, school, company and etc. Especially, selection is very severe in selection system like a selective examination in school, university, company or officialdom system.

This hight competition which the lengthwise society had made, without one's knowledge, has acknowledged in the Japanese society. But, "Amae" element in that society has formed a many kinds of system, for instance, in educational system, management system and so on. Some one says that this system is Iki system form other-side. Becasue, in spite of competitive society, the Japanese society always prepare his escape in advance, and suitable systems have been made in somewhere of society. For example, the typical system is a preparatory school. Well, on the following systems in Japanese enterprise or

- i) all life employment system
- ii) engaging an employee system through personal connection of employment.



- (a)·(b)·(c)—different family societies.
- A—educational societies,
- B—enterprise societies
- political and Economical societies
- D—religious societies
- E—Japan societies
- ×—Giri spirit
- Ninjō spirit
- △—N aspirit
- Amae sprit
- makoto spirit
- *—Iki spirit

(a)·(b)·(c), A·B·C·D·E → Competitive societies
 competitive societies+[(×)+(○)+(△)+(●)+(■)+(*)] → So and so societies
 or symathy socity

Some Observations on the fundamentals... (Yoshiki Hoshino)

- iii) wage system in consideration of laborer's long service and experience.
- iv) each enterprise labor union system of labor union management relation.
- v) inclusive welfare facilities system.

How do you think?

I think that the above systems have a kind of an outlet systems's character form the competitive society.

[V]

At any rate, the foundation of Japanese society is a competitive society which is surrounded by "Giri", "Ninjo" and so on. The Japanese people says to an alien when some cases happened, "I am sorry" or "Excuse me". But both expressions have same meaning in Japanese language.

European or American people probably be used on different meaning between "I am sorry", and "Excuse me". Why? Answer is contractual society or not. For, the Japanese people who understand the sense of "Giri", "Ninjō", "Wa", "Makoto", "Amae" and "Iki" need not how to differ between "I am sorry" and "Excuse me". This solution is?