

Social Relations

Rethinking En 縁: From Kinship to Friendship

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En is originally a Buddhist concept for indicating causal relations, but it is also a term that is used regularly in Japanese social life. It has also proved to be a very convenient term in academic analysis. *Chi-en* and *ketsu-en* are good examples. In the former, the term indicates local social relations, the latter to relations of kith and kin. Also, compound terms that utilize the word *en*, such as 'kin groups' and 'residential groups' or 'local society' are connected to references to society and group. Moreover, within the East Asian civilizations sharing the Chinese writing style, there is a special quality in the application of the term *en* to newer types of human relations. To give two examples, the corporate or company relations of Japan (*shaen* 社縁), and the academic relations (*hagyeon* 学縁) of the Republic of Korea. In recent years, a new type of *en* seems growing. This is developing around friendship, and may be called *yuu-en* 友縁. In this paper, I would like to propose this new concept and discuss its validity.

Inside/ Outside and the Discourse of Politeness

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In my presentation, I would like to examine the concepts surrounding the use of politeness in Japan. The use of politeness has been discussed as part of the larger discussions on group orientation or *uchi/soto* distinction commonly found in Japan, both in larger social organizations and in traditional households. By using the findings from my fieldwork at hair salons in Japan that I conducted in 2004, I hope to show that the concepts on the use of politeness is still very useful in understanding the ways people interpret the relationships they are involved. At the same time, I suggest that the concepts need significant modifications: The use of politeness is far more open to process than expected, which is something more than simply functioning to constitute the group boundaries and hierarchy. In particular, I focus on the sense of social distance people evoke through the uses of politeness which introduce various fertile meanings and differing points of view in interaction.

Matagi: Hunters as Intermediaries between and “Wild” and “Domestic”

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Images of rural Japan are dominated by insular villages engaged in irrigated rice cultivation. This paper will present a different perspective by focusing on the *matagi*—traditional hunters in the beech forest uplands of northeastern Japan. ‘Hunter’ in this instance implies an intimate association with the natural world. A key to success is mobility, not just in obtaining material resources, but in marketing them to communities that lie well outside the local area. *Matagi* attitudes toward the environment are symbolically enacted through their veneration of the *yama no kami*, or mountain god, which, rather than a matter of literal ‘belief,’ is perhaps more correctly understood as a personification of ecosystemic relatedness. The paper will focus on the

role of the *matagi* as intermediaries between the forested mountain and domesticated lowland environments, and particularly on their recent promotion through ecotourism and the popular media as instructive models for “coexisting with nature.”