

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

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### Ethnography in ancient Japan: a theoretical essay about Kinship

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To reach a house, you must first enter the gate. The gate is a pathway leading to the house. After passing through the gate, you enter the house and meet its master. Learning is the gate to reaching the Way. After passing through this gate, you reach the Way. Learning is the gate, not the house. Don't mistake the gate for the house. The house is located farther inside, after the gate is passed.

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#### Abstract

**Background.** This article refers to a line from my field research in Japan from 2012 to 2015, being a stage reference for my PhD in Social Anthropology and aims to relate some ethnographic facts collected with practitioners of Japanese swordsmanship (Kendo) - among them, Japanese and non Japanese – through the relationships made in the *dōjō* (the training places). The aim is to make an analogy between the *notion of house* within anthropological theory that remains an important practical concept for building a kinship and the studied case. By kinship and relatedness we understand the ways to make relatives, or an analytical mode for their mutual relations. ‘Relatives’ here have a more free sense, as ways of making relationship without implying human reproduction. In short, we use the training hall as the unit of analysis with the notion of House that tells us about building a kinship beyond blood. The plan is to relate some facts about the fieldwork, which operate in the concepts of *hierarchy*, *family* and *Dōjō* in a relationship with the notion of House, trying to build a model of interpretation.

**Aim.** To build a model of interpretation based on the concept of House, since it looks like a suitable proposition.

**Methods.** I used the following materials: bibliographic, structured forms, semi-structured interviews and conversations in *Dōjō*, and the method was *ethnography*, or the living experience of data research. The *ethnographic* fieldwork was conducted in Brazil (2007-2011) and Japan (2012-2013). In Japan, we conducted ethnography in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kanagawa Ken and Ibaraki Ken. The data collection was structured in the form of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, collected in Japan with Kendo practitioners of all possible nationalities. The questionnaires were applied at Kendo events or training sessions or sent by Facebook and email.

**Results and Conclusions.** A new discussion about the anthropology of Kinship using a new analytical framework regarding the concepts of Hierarchy, House and *Ie* (Japanese House).

#### Introduction

I lived for almost three years in Japan, from 2012 to early 2015, with a few interspersed visits. On the one hand, these three years are naturally not enough for a satisfactory understanding of Japanese culture, its overlaps, its complex connection with other cultures, and its multitude of layers. Something will always escape one who has not been brought up in a particular culture. Nevertheless, with a humble sense resulting from the

difficulties experienced along the way, the years I spent in Japan opened my eyes to a somewhat broader understanding of and insight into notions of kinship. I had contact with many persons involved with Japanese martial arts, both Japanese and non-Japanese. Through those meetings and conversations, I began to realize that this work would take much longer to research than I first anticipated. Many other researchers have already spent their lives studying my topic in Japan, i.e., concerning the concept of *ki* (life force or energy) and its relation with

the condition of human “being”; thus, making a science of something fleeting and yet so present in everything, and everyone. Its multifaceted role in nature and culture served as the underpinning question for my research.

In this paper, I will introduce reflections and thoughts more than definitive conclusions. The medium for my study is the traditional Japanese sword art of Kendo. I will present beliefs of Kendo practitioners to analyze notions of “house” related to the concept of “*ie*” (Japanese house or clan) and “*dōjō*” (martial art training hall), and investigate how this relates to the concept and construction of the Body through an initial interpretation of kinship. In short, the objective of this paper is to present data on these concepts, and see how they are related.

### To Be and to Become

I collated data in both Brazil and Japan in training halls through actual participation in Kendo. This point needs to be emphasized in order to understand under what kind of conditions this study was conducted. Kendo involves rigorous physical training, and special relationships are forged between practitioners. This is important less for the issue of Kendo theory – which matters less to anthropologists than practitioners – than the ways to make relationships, and relationalities<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, Kendo is a particular medium for reaffirming a sense of “Japaneseness,” i.e. a way to demonstrate “a becoming,” both in and outside Japan. While living in Japan, I realized that there is a myriad of modes of subjectivity quite distinct from each other, but which are connected to a constellation of varied cultural practices. Being Japanese, in this sense, poses two questions. First, how does one individual identify themselves as being Japanese? Second, how can we construct a matrix for comparison? There are different subjective processes which are labeled by the broad concepts of Society, Nationality, Culture, and Place. These labels can be highly complex and cause more problems than they solve. In this case, I opted to simplify my approach and focus on the place where a person is, and what activities are engaged in there.

In the martial ways (*budo*), there are specific modes of subjectivity that are not readily visible in the postmodern Japanese environs of Akihabara, or unrelated to the quest for large multinational brands in the consumer paradise of the Ginza. For some people, being Japanese is to be an employee of a large company like Hitachi or Mitsubishi; it means to frequent drinking parties (*nomikai*) after work, sacrificing family time in the process. On the other hand, being Japanese for others, is to seek a peaceful life, and to be in contact with the old indigenous practices, in which the past is inextricably linked

with the future. Of course, this does not mean a denial of the present; people still rely on smartphones, laptops and the many other gadgets of the capitalist world.

Several people with whom I had contact during the research in Japan were like this [including non-Japanese], and just for comparison purposes, others – to whom the law gives Japanese status – bind to other cultures, other ways of subjectivity that would have little to do with Japan. We have to recognize this point since just to say ‘Japan is this or that, and everyone is Japanese’ does not recognize local specificities. Just as it would be impossible to dismiss regional realities and very different places where we can see a whole constellation of ways of being and becoming, so it would be for the case of Japan, and different modes of subjectivity present in the archipelago.

According to Morishima [2010: 8-9]:

*Kendo* is education. Making a true Japanese. This is the ultimate aim of *Kendo*. Currently, the Japanese who are not Japanese have greatly increased. There are many Japanese with undefined nationality. In this way Japan’s future is critical. The Spirit of *Kendo*, spirit of bushido, externalize it in daily activities, and teach it to the disciples. Then society will improve, *Kendo* will improve. Will have the courage to rebuild Japan. This is the mission of those who practice *Kendo*. [Author’s translation]

From the point of view of an anthropology of which I am a representative, we could recognize a definition of Japanese Culture through three points. First an underlying hierarchical principle of Japanese social organization; second, by native word and third, by Kinship. There are Japanese and Japanese, Morishima [2010] would say. And, despite a few Japanese non-Japanese, there is also the non Japanese, Japanese. So we will make a provisional definition of Japanese as a positive adjective. And we will discuss cases that can be aligned in modes of transformation that presuppose Japan as the horizon, which is a horizon near a heroic past.

Anthropologists evaluate and compare Cultures, and another culture may well behave differently, as it is the case for several of them. So, how to deal with the difference seems to be an important issue. In this sense, kinship among other things can be viewed as a machine to create people. This machine has different versions and most appropriate anthropological articles describe its operations. This does not mean that it loses importance to, building an individual especially relationships that are not limited to individuals / families, and that the times even pass through the blood as a central criterion.

### Kendo – a machine to the past?

Kendo is a space of mythical and ritualistic speeches about the moral and spiritual conduct of many practitioners both Japanese and non-Japanese. I developed my field research in the Japanese Associations Clubs in Brazil and many

<sup>1</sup> About the concept of relatedness and their use in Laboratory of Migration Studies at UFSCar, see [Machado 2014, 2015].

places in Japan. Kendo means the “Way of the Sword” and it is a way of Japanese swordsmanship that uses armour and bamboo swords for fighting, with body movements and a moral code, summarized in *Bushido*<sup>2</sup>. It does not mean that people<sup>3</sup> live by this code and it is always open to observation. The code itself is only an indicative aspect of a problem and can be seen as a synthetic way to summarize a given idea of *Japaneseness* experienced by those people. These practices, although they occur all over Japan and in many countries on all continents<sup>4</sup> have certain specific features that are located closest to a *Japanese* heroic past. That is a sufficient reason for so many people entering these training halls to look for that past. Viewed from inside, the relationships are subtler. For example, in a *dōjō*, that I had practised in, in Tsuchiura, the *Sensei* (70 years old, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan, ex-Kendo coach of Tokyo Police, the famous *keishichō*<sup>5</sup>) owned his Kendo, Ittōryū master with *menkyō-kaiden*<sup>6</sup> gives Kendo classes for children, teens, and parents.

First, families accompany the training, which means that mothers and fathers attend. They help to clean, serve tea and anything else that is needed. Second, *dōjō* is inhabited by relatives, alive and dead. Alive, who visit because of their children and their relations with the *Sensei*. Dead, because of the pictures that are hanging on the walls, consisting of relatives in general and *Senseis’ lineages*, and alive though not present, such as photos of children who have gone through this space, indicating a line of training that does not end with the *Sensei*, but stretches to the past and also to the future, being as the *Sensei* is an intersection of several ways, of many people. Now let’s see the social position of *Sensei* in relation to the other positions inside the Training Halls.

### About the *Dōjō*

In Japan, there is a social and environmental structure for Martial Arts training in many cities. Usually, the big stadiums for martial arts are called Budōkan (hall

to practise martial arts) and within these, there are *dōjō* or training halls. There are famous *dōjō* in Japan of varying sizes, depending on the fame and history of the *Sensei*, contemporary or past. This is the case in several Universities, and we can usually find these halls on a reduced scale in Schools since the *Kendo* course is elective for students; as well as for Police Departments and Companies. These training spaces are gymnasiums for martial arts that have a special wooden floor, inscriptions on the walls, and the famous *Kamidana* that is a small oratory of delicate wood and finely ornate, where is given a notion of *divine* for *Shintō* [Kuroda 1981]. People treat these places with care. Every day of training, it is cleaned in the beginning and at the end, either by children or adults. Typically, if there are children, it is they who do the cleaning.

On the other hand, regarding the Japanese *dōjō* we note that often they are true extensions of Japanese houses, especially in the case of fixed locations owned by a *Sensei*. Small gatherings happen, conversations and of course training. There is *dōjō* famous for its history, for example, the *dōjō* of the Kashima Shrine<sup>7</sup>, in Ibaraki Prefecture, dedicated to martial arts. It always gets pilgrimages of martial arts practitioners in the New Year. The Shrine is dedicated to Takemikazuchi no Kami<sup>8</sup>, called the Deity of the Storm, Thunder, and the Sword. In this Shrine *Bokuden*, the ‘Sword Saint’, attained enlightenment [Sakai 2010].

About the *dōjō*, a basic structure can be observed: a space and a set of relations. The Space is variable and has several ways of construction. On the other hand, about relations, teachers observe attitudes and behaviors towards the *dōjō* since the slightest slip sheds light on the “spirit” of the practitioner, like everything in Japan. The training place seems to be ‘sacred’ to the Japanese Swordsmanship; since it is there that the learning can be developed. The practitioners demonstrate respect for the place, the concept of “energy” that arises in this place; by

<sup>2</sup> *Bushidō* “武士道”. Refers to virtues and moral ways of conduct for samurai in the Edo period, and subject of a series of books by samurai and monks, including Yamamoto Tsunetomo, Takuan Soho, Miyamoto Musashi, Yagyu Munenori etc. Inazo Nitobe was distinguished themselves by their famous book of the same title. These virtues were concepts passed orally in Japan, from generation to generation and can be summarized in seven principles: Righteousness, Courage, Benevolence, Respect, Honesty, Honour and Loyalty.

<sup>3</sup> Please, read the second chapter of my Thesis (2010a).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.Kendo-fik.org/index.html> [October, 2014]

<sup>5</sup> 警視庁 Japanese metropolitan Police – the training of metropolitan police is famous worldwide and many Kendo practitioners visit the department looking for training.

<sup>6</sup> 免許皆伝 *Menkyō-Kaiden* – A Certificate of Master in this School.

<sup>7</sup> お正月 The Kashima Shrine receives around 600.000 persons every year, according to the Shrine information.

<sup>8</sup> 建御雷之男神 Takemikazuchi, Kashima-no-kami, one of the deities of the storm, thunder, martial arts, and the Sword. In the book *Kojiki* the name of this deity is 建御雷之男神 “Brave-Awful-Possessing-Male-Deity”. He also has alternative names: Takefutsu (建布都神 “Brave-Snapping-Deity”) And Toyofutsu (豊布都神 “Luxuriant-Snapping Deity”). In this temple is located the 要石 – Kaname stone or pivot stone. This stone marks the position of the fish, below the soil of the Kashima temple area, and this fish [Namazu (鯰)] is controlled by Takemikazuchi deity, whose work is keep it quiet by the sword. If not, earthquakes occur. Chamberlain, Basil Hall [1882]. Section VIII, The slaying of the fire-deity. A *Translation of the “Kojiki,” or a record of ancient matters*. Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Tuttle publishing, Global Grey 2013.

the bow they make when they enter and leave the *dōjō*. The bow – *Ojigi* – is a compliment and a cultural event in order to show respect.

In Japan I saw this. People respect the training place, cleaning it before the training and later as well. At Tsukuba University several times I saw younger students cleaning the training hall after the Kendo section of the main group. I once asked why, and was told it was because they were *kōhai*, i.e. new students. I also asked about the reason why there were no men cleaning the hall's floor, and they were unable to answer me. About it, I think it is related to the gender gap persistent in Japan, although there were women and men practitioners who have similar responsibilities. In various *dōjō* where I went, women were always present. In schools, for example, they accompany the children and serve tea or water to the teachers, and especially in the case of mothers, help in cleaning and serving tea to other practitioners. On gender difference, other authors have pointed out that there are marked differences in Japan [Yanagisako 1992; Singer 1989], and that these differences are located notably in different tasks for each gender. Although with the labor supply for women and the diversification of functions, which means that women have to work and are not confined to household chores, yet there are tasks that are usually done by women. However, from a broad perspective, the gender difference in Japan scores another order of things and agencies, indicating that the man also has close attitudes to the female universe – as in caring for the family and friends of the same age they grew up with – and the woman closest to man – as in the dominance inside the residence, as opposed to the man, who has it out of house. Thus we are not assuming gender equality in Japan, quite the contrary, since it does not exist [Kitamura 2008].

Returning to the *dōjō*, the other structure could be summarized with the following series of events:

- ‘Sacred’ and ‘profane’ – The training spaces are ‘Sacred’ for practitioners and it requires a kind of rule, called *Reigi*, to be made even when no one is there. We must direct our eyes to *Kamidana* and to bowing then, back to the center of the *dōjō* and repeat it. The word ‘center’ is not taken as virtuality, having a concrete existence. The idea of the center goes through all the practice and philosophies of Kendo and constitutes an important concept because this can be seen from the bodies through the vital energy concept in addition to the ‘energy’ being situated in the training place.
- Meditation – before the beginning of the training and also at the end, opposite to *Sensei* in parallel line, practitioners perform the meditation.
- Training: divided into three stages: warm-up, basic training and advanced training of movements with struggles. At the beginning and end of the fights,

there is a moment for acknowledgments and comments on points to be developed.

- At the end, people gather for conversations where a more experienced dimension of kinship appears.
- Completion and return to the ‘profane world’. When a person leaves the *dōjō*, he should do the same compliments that were made early on to leave the training place.

In Kendo there is a basic hierarchy system. First professors (*Sensei*)<sup>9</sup>, the senior students (*Senpai*)<sup>10</sup> and beginner practitioners (*Kōhai*)<sup>11</sup>. This primary hierarchical system is the basis of any hierarchy in Japan, working in any relation, inside of Companies, Schools, Universities and of course in martial practices as my informants noticed. This hierarchical principle is important and ties the past to the future. There are hierarchies of martial arts schools in Japan, and importance is attached to understanding the attitudes of each even if unconscious, on this master and disciple connection, and the responsibility related to this connection. The *Senpais* are the mediators between the novice and the *Sensei*, and finally, the beginners<sup>12</sup>. This hierarchical system is vitally important to understand the Japanese Social Structure. The other systems used it in a similar logic and its operation takes into account basically the *temporality*. The longer a person has spent at a given activity, the more a person should know, and teach. Secondly, it can work in any Japanese relationship, in terms of teaching-learning-working activities.

The *Sensei* is treated with deference because he is responsible for teaching and also for the people who train with him, as well as having the credentials for teaching. We can see here how a given Kinship system operates, because the *Sensei*'s position connects the past to the future. There are (lineages) hierarchies of schools in Japan, and importance is attached to understanding the attitudes of each and the connection between master and disciple and the responsibility related to it.

For example, the moment of presentation is a very special occasion. All *Sensei* I had met in Japan were presented to me in a formal way, that is, I was presented by a third person, followed by bows and conversations. For the Kendo *Sensei*, on the other hand, the formal presentation is more marked, since it is normally made with people kneeling on the ground, where after the presentation and bow we can start conversations. I was introduced to I. *Sensei* by *Sensei* T. thereby, and the request to teach me Kendo previously occurred before the meeting. Well, the presentation is always important, because it is also when an assessment on a more subtle

<sup>9</sup> 先生 *Sensei* – Teacher.

<sup>10</sup> 先輩 *Senpai* – Veteran.

<sup>11</sup> 後輩 *Kōhai* – Beginner.

<sup>12</sup> About this, see Lourenção [2014].

level takes place. Concerning that, I had many chances to see such conduct in relation to Kendo teachers. The Japanese in general have respect for teachers and in my talking with informants, they all pointed to how this relationship was very strong, although it has been changing more recently. I asked the reason for this change, and was told that it was changing because of parental interference in schools and changes in the Japanese social structure [Kawamura 2003, 2008]. At universities, this position is also being noticed. Although people argue in favor of or against change, in Japan, on the other hand, the position of a Kendo *Sensei* is very prominent and socially important. In a patrilineal society which chooses to transmit knowledge through master-disciple relationships, the oldest have vital importance. The word *Sensei* is indicative: 「先生, in Japanese, indicates the one who is born before.

But relations are presented not only by rules. Moments of relaxation, generosity and care also happen, especially when gatherings take place. In practice with T. Sensei, for example, he has his moments of relaxation, although he is serious when practising. On the other hand, when this happens, K. Sensei more a graduate teacher following T. Sensei that I was introduced to in Japan, about 50 years old] remains affectionate. In Sensei I's *dōjō* women also treat the children with consideration when *Sensei* is rigid. I am not sure if this works as a system. Teachers alternate the way they relate to practitioners, but women are most affectionate in general, at least the older women. With this information I do not wish to say - a la Radcliffe-Brown - about the psychological structure of alternating feelings in the Kinship in Japan, even though a correlation between attitudes and terminology system can be seen in case [Levi-Strauss 1996: 53]. This is just an observation of the field, which shows a balance between the rigidity of attitudes and liberality to rely on a given set of relationships, also dependent of gender.

The second type of relationship that is expressed by the people who are in the second group are veterans or *Senpai*, which are subject to socio-motivated charges for maintaining exemplary conduct since they are the mediators between teachers and beginners. This position is important once they explain and expand the knowledge that the *Sensei* teaches. This position is always under control because it is expected of those people that they are the ones who will take the position of *Sensei* in future, and they often hold similarities in relation to *Sensei*'s behaviour. T. Sensei once told me to teach Mr. Abe, a practitioner of 35 years, musician, who started to train in the *Iaido* group. He gave me this responsibility and he was curious, since I had become a veteran in relation to Mr. Abe and I could reflect that, from a certain point of view, Japanese become “Japanese” through these practices also. There were many things that Abe was unaware of about Japanese Culture, and I had to teach him.

Finally, the third group is given by the position of *Kōhai* or beginner. In short, beginners - and other practitioners by the way - are subject to disciplinary mechanisms in order to instill the system of rules operated in Kendo. They will be subject to constant observation, which *Sensei* and *Senpai* will correct their movements towards how to keep the body, how to perform movements, in summary, how to behave.

In Japan, people become *Japanese*. And from one point of view, they can also not become, when they want to live according to other philosophies. But still, this system is valid. It is true that it can be modulated or decreased in its operation, especially in cases where it raises questions about the position of *Senpai* in educational processes, but it remains a system of organization of social practice. K. Sensei told me several times about how I was more Japanese than many people she knew. The case of Mr. Abe began to demonstrate this; in my weekly training, in the care with which I treated people, and the knowledge of some *Japanese* rituals, caused surprise to these people, until the point of being treated as a person from Japan. I was no longer just the Gil of Brazil; but began to become Jiu 「慈雨 - Welcome Rain of Kendo and *Iaido* studying *Ki* and the Japanese Culture. Let's see a few examples.

### Kinship makes relatives

Dido San, 38 years old, Italian, married in Japan to a Japanese wife with two children, was one of the *Senpais* I met during practice, and he has a long history in Japan. He lived there about 8 years, has been studying the language and culture in Tokyo and after that he went to work in Japan; according to our conversation, he was motivated by Kendo. At one point, he met I. Sensei and went on to study Ittōryū<sup>13</sup>, and it changed some things he saw in Japan since he became part of a ‘big family’, in his words. He told me that, from an Italian point of view, it was a very good thing to find a teacher like I. Sensei, because soon he began to feel as a family. He also appreciated the fact that as an expert swordsman, he had an open heart to whoever wanted to learn from him. Furthermore, I. Sensei was in Italy by invitation of Dido, to teach in Ittōryū seminar, and this made I. Sensei feel bounded by a relation of reciprocity to him. He has since been coming to Japan annually for seminars and training, and providing at this time his 6<sup>th</sup> Dan in Italy.

Ikatsu P., 38 years old, English, married to a Japanese wife and with a newborn son, working in a Secondary School as a teacher of English, came to Japan after living in Australia and studying there, where he married his wife. Mainly interested in Kendo and martial arts, he came because of the family and work in Japan, making

<sup>13</sup> School basis of modern Kendo.

residence in Kanagawa. According to “P”, life in Japan was possible for the family that cultivated an interest in martial arts, and wanted to live there because of his wife and child. He told me that Japan would be funny because you always seem to be in family: at home, at Kendo *dōjō*, or even in *Izakayas* with friends. That, he said, was one of the things he liked about living there. In addition, he made a change in his name, getting the name Ikatsu from his wife. One reason for this is the issue of child nomination, as for the child to receive the compound surname, [Ikatsu P.], it is necessary that the father also has the same surname. The composition of surnames must be made in the local city hall [to change the husband’s last name in this case]; the Ministry of Justice is only involved in cases in which the wife asks for a change of surname or a new compound name is being created.

Fisherman, 28 years old, English, married to a Japanese wife, two children, working in *Kendo* supply store in international sales, came to Japan in 2009 to enhance his Kendo skills and met his wife and married. He says that Japan is the best place to have the kind of life he has, to take care of the family, training and work, and expects to live more years there, and to be the winner of the European *Kendō* Championship in a possible future. He recognizes that he must have something inside the heart to want to live in Japan and he feels as if he has a Japanese heart, so much that he likes to live and learn there. He says life was not easy at first but motivated by the Kendo and his desire, he learned to love Japan. He says that it is not only by Kendo that we can recognize a person as Japanese, and that it takes hard work and training for this.

McCalling, 40, Scottish, English teacher, married to a Japanese wife, lives in Osaka since he arrived there 10 years ago. He came as a student of computer science by Monbukagakushō, but the underlying reason, he said, was the Kendo. He maintains a website with information and English translations of famous papers and books, being an important reference for Kendo people to make the translations of these texts. He also gives several tips about training in Japan and is also an editor of several books on martial arts. We had an interview in 2013 when he told me that he really loves living in Japan and training there because it was strange to anyone. According to him, the important point is to have a Japanese spirit which to him is something possible to do with confidence. In addition, this would not be a Japanese quality only, since they have to work on it, thinking through *Japaneseness* notions.

Castellanni, Italian, about 50 years old, Kendo 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, she holds a Master in oriental history and in electronic engineering awarded by the University of Bologna. She lived about a year and a half in Japan, working at Tōzandō Kyoto, Kendo supply store. She came to try the 7<sup>th</sup> Dan examination, and begun training with M. K. Sensei, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, ending up making a close friendship with him. I interviewed her along the M. Sensei’s event, in Novem-

ber of 2013, when in this opportunity we talked about Mario Sensei, Italian, who died at age 84 [2012]. He was graduated in 4<sup>th</sup> Dan and did not change the graduation until his death. The wife of Mario Sensei donates his Do<sup>14</sup> [Chest Shield] that might become a trophy in a championship of the World Kendo Network. In this event, he was honoured, remembered and added into this family.

Four narratives highlighted here came from men of European countries married to Japanese, most with children and just one came from a woman not married. This is unintentional since I have in the database about thirty-five percent of women practitioners, a large part married or in relationships with Japanese men. On the other hand, at this time I just highlighted a few examples that put in question the centrality of the Family and the analysis will bring in my thesis the testimony related by a gender approach. Well, how to put these experiences into something intelligible?

### About the house and the Dojo - building a model

The notion of house has an important connotation in the case of martial ways, specially in Kendo, since it is a metaphor for kinship and a sense of corporality inside Japanese Culture. Just a comment about the ‘Training Houses’ – the training halls are given in some places where *Sensei* teaches. They treat their students with care and respect and make relationships in these spaces, not only obligations regarding training. About the house, two things are important - the inner space and the arrangement of elements that recount the relationship and the relationship established with the living and the dead.

*Dōjō* perpetuates the memory of *Kinship* through which members repeat, year after year, the same rites. In addition to the transfer of assets [material and immaterial], the operation of hierarchical mechanism is made possible by the existence of ties between practitioners in the *dōjō*. The temporality of training and grades allows the hierarchy, and it is indicative for a comparison about kinship hierarchy and birthright in Japanese families [Benedict 2002: 48-68, 87-106; Vieira 1973: 110-127; Beillevaire 1986: 287-340]. The concept of temporality is one which is important for an understanding of Japan, and to operate especially in martial studies. This brings me to the other central concept related to temporality that is Freedom. Let me explain: The older a person becomes, the more it increases the chance to be free in the Japanese Society. At the end of an interview, I went to have dinner with Sensei K., 7<sup>th</sup> Dan Kendo, 50 years old, Kendo *Sensei* at K. University. We went to a Soba restaurant, not far from the University. We had a talk over two hours about Kendo and other matters. About the topic of Freedom, we had an agreement on one point,

<sup>14</sup> 胴 Dō – Chest Armour.

that the elderly in Japan have more freedom, including and especially within the Kendo. After a hierarchical life in relation to *Senseis* and *Senpais*, comes a moment of freedom when they are older, but some Japanese see that by this way, comes the time for them to apply their knowledge to improve and to teach.

Second, the members are known in this ‘family’ space through *zekken*, which are nameplates bearing the surname and the *dōjō* names in which such individuals are linked. The surnames are written on this board positioned on the armor being the fringes from which it is located (familarly) by connecting the family name to the *dōjō* and hence the bond between master and disciple [Beillevaire 1986: 303].

Third, the terms to designate temporality of training maintain the relationship. *Sensei*, *Senpai* and *Kōhai* are positional terms of hierarchy within the *dōjō* and are independent of gender, although there is the fact that the Sensei’s position is apart from it due to a homology with the householder position; Bachnik [1983: 164] argued that Kinship terms for the Japanese Culture can be positional or assigned by succession. The kinship terminology in Japan is the type of ‘eskimo’, symmetric and self-dependent for differentiation [Beillevaire 1986: 330-340]. There is the same use of the terms for blood relatives and relatives by marriage. In the case of adoption, for example, they are considered as positional terms. Well, inside the *dōjō*, and depending on the possible relationship between practitioners, kinship terms are usually used.

Fourth, the *dōjō* are places of families who have a role in its constitution as well as the ‘House’ is a family’s domain through perpetuation and transmission of material and immaterial goods including the *Butsudan*, *Kamidana* and lineage - material or immaterial. [Lourenção 2010b]. In Japan, in addition, the *dōjō* marks family lines, determined by the lineages of *Sensei*, both in terms of the style they practice, and in terms of the Sensei’s relationship towards their own *Sensei* and *students*. And these lines define people. Regarding this, two teachers with which I have had contact within the Kendo in Japan attest to this connection and a kind of kinship: I. Sensei (*Ittōryū Ono-Ha* Master) and T. Sensei (*Mushōshindenryū*). From them, I can retrace their own genealogies, arriving at the founders of those schools, and on the other hand, arriving at their students as well.

According to Levi-Strauss<sup>15</sup> [1986: 186-187] in Europe and in many societies around the world - as in

<sup>15</sup> About the House, Levi-Strauss tells [Dictionnaire de L’Ethnologie, 1992: 435]: *La maison est une personne morale, détentrice d’un domaine composé à la fois de biens matériels et immatériels, et qui se perpétue par la transmission de son nom, de sa fortune et de ses titres empli d’une réalité fictive, tenue pour légitime à la condition que cette continuité puisse se traduire dans le langage de la parenté ou de l’alliance, ou le plus souvent les deux ensemble.*

Japan - the medieval houses have exactly the same characteristics, defining the ownership of a domain composed of tangible and intangible assets - the “Honors” - among them are located even supernatural treasures and such things. And the important point is, in order to perpetuate them, the ‘houses’ appeal widely to kinship, whether it’s by guild or adoption. In the absence of male heirs, and sometimes in competition with them, sisters and daughters could ensure the transmission of goods, powers and honors [Levi-Strauss 1986: 186-187, 1981: 153 ff].

Perhaps this model may be appropriate to think about how the Dojo - *as a kind of Japanese House* - can be interpreted in an anthropological analysis. About this hypothesis, see Lourenção [2010a: 76-101, 2010b] about the reason that the notion of House applied to Dojo presented possible ways to diversify the Kinship [Machado 2006, 2006b, 2011, 2014], [Carsten 1995, 2004] and why it makes sense, in ethnographic contexts, to use the theory of House [Levi-Strauss 1981, 1985, 1986, 1992; Carsten, Hugh-Jones 1995] and House-Dojo [Lourenção *Idem*]. About the appropriate relationships and the application of this model, see Lourenção [2014]. On developments on it and use in our laboratory in Brazil, see Machado [2013].

### ***Ie* and the House – about Kinship and problems**

Firstly, the *Ie* – Japanese house – as a Kinship problem bring doubts to the models used so far, made mainly by Europeans and Americans [Shimizu 1991]. Well, *Kazoku* in Japan is usually understood as the nuclear family and the *Ie*, as the ‘house’. However, scholars from other fields of social sciences began to study the Japanese rural environment in the 1930s, when classic studies about kinship had enough influence in Japan and began to focus on the concept of *Ie*, since it was one of those key concepts that presented problems for a kinship theory. Among them, it was noted that the *Ie* had issues regarding relatives and non-relatives, consanguinity and affinity; and although it could be considered as ‘family’ in the broad sense, it had a variety of irregular terms, such as those mentioned above, and problems caused by birthright, adoption, leadership, etc. [Shimizu 1991: 378].

Although *Ie* can be based on the family, problems are not solved with the kinship tools used. As a rule, the eldest son should succeed his father as head of the family [*Kazoku*<sup>16</sup>]. Here, the *Ie* was interpreted as a patrilineal descent [Oikawa 1967 / 1940], apud Shimizu [1991]. Aruga interpreted it from birthright, distinguishing family members from the line of succession putting aside collateral relatives. However, this solution has brought problems as well, since relatives other than the line of succession, the so-called “Adopted sons in-law”, as adopted

<sup>16</sup> 家族

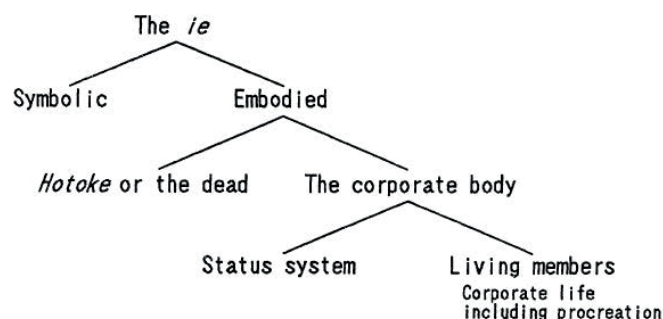


FIGURE 1. The cultural structure of the *ie* (from Shimizu 1987b:88).

successors and servants, as how they should be interpreted if they were seen as relatives? The solution was to focus on the first [in case of those who haven't had children in line, as well as in the case of only women] through the practice of *Muko* [husband's case] *yōshi* [adoption], that is, he became an adopted son [Muko-yōshi]; as adopted relatives, according to the debate, they could run the line of succession<sup>17</sup>.

On the other hand, servants would be a matter of debate for a while in the Japanese Academy (1978-81 Nakano [1964]); (Oikawa 1967 [1940]), apud Shimizu [1991], since they were incorporated into the house and were recognized by a familial solidarity, and became members of families and houses. Taking into account the rise in urban areas – or as seen in Japan, the rural-urban areas – mainly in the post-war period, transformations occurred, but in principle, relations from the *ie* are not profoundly changed at this time, and what was seen in terms of familial structures and solidarity in rural areas moved and started to work inside family businesses, through a formalization of kinship ties. However, the debate between the two interpretations made by Aruga and Kitano, the first who attempted to interpret the *ie* in a more synthetic way, based on consanguinity, and the second, by a more broader sense, incorporating the related ones continued until the late 60, when Nakane [1964, 1967, 1970] returned from England and sought to apply those studies of the 60s, where she look at the main concepts of descent and family, and begun to doubt that these concepts could explain the *ie* and *Dōzoku*. This was the second movement of Japanese studies [Shimizu 1991]. In short, she said that *ie* cannot be understood as family instead of a extended family, since membership

is denied by blood / birth itself and its subject to a residence and local economy.

The third wave of studies came from the critical work of Nakane. For example, Gamo [1968, 1970] accuses Nakane of seeing the family as just a result of biological kinship, focused on consanguinity. Naturally researchers led by Gamo discussed the notions and concepts of kinship, and they saw that many were not adaptable to the case of *Ie/Dōzoku*; however, he also argued that it had aspects that could not be overlooked. Gamo analyzed the important symbols and reassessed defending the idea of *Kamado*, or the “heart of the family.” According to the definitions given by his informants, adopted children and adopted relatives' successors are the same as blood relatives. In addition, the symbolic unity of *Ie* widely incorporates relatives by marriage and adoption [Gamo 1968, 1970]. This would be an interesting debate avenue, since it points to a line for a social relationship, unlike one based only on blood itself.

It is useful to think of the *Ie/Kazoku*, since it considers other aspects beyond the framework given by corporate groups of kinship. For the case of *Ie*, four levels may be considered, according to Shimizu [1991: 385-386]: the social entity means *dwelling house* [unlike *Kazoku*, regarding the nuclear family] and is sensed as independent of its members. For each house there is identification by name, social status and history. Shimizu calls this aspect the symbolic *Ie* and regulates how their social lives are built. The other aspect, which he calls the corporate *Ie* (embodied *Ie*) is established on 2 levels: *Hotoke*, or the dead, and the living, organized into a corporate group. The dead are aligned by wedded couples, and the status of systems in the corporate *Ie* is modeled by this alignment. Here, these precede the couples, preceding the future leaders of the *Ie*, which will establish through marriage the division of labor between the genders and the continued survival of the House. In this case, there is hierarchical dominance of a man over the adopted, the child born to the adopted, of men over women, but within the limits of kinship, the rules for adoption remain valid. This model, naturally, is focused on an evaluation of blood at the expense of possible ties and manipulated

<sup>17</sup> There are various cases of adoption to Japan, although the adoption of son in law is the most common (*mukoyōshi*) according to Beillevaire [1986: 318]. But can count on the adoption of a couple (*fūfu-yōshi*), which is the direct way to perpetuate the ‘house’ when the impossibility of a relative in the consanguine line, which leads to a double order consanguinity process. At this also can be seen in Bachnik [1983] and Shimizu [1987].



arrangements. This was a criterion listed by Shimizu, taking into account their study of rural fields in Japan at the end of the twentieth century, but he points out that the *Ie* cannot be only interpreted based on blood ties and, in most cases, blood is relegated as one aspect, smaller, in front of others.

Well, the first point to note is the possible comparison between *Dōjō*, *Ie*, and the *notion of house*.

First, *Dōjō* can be understood as house, where all the other relationship can be retraced. The symbolic *Dōjō* is in conformity with the lineages; it's built-in through the linkages taking into account the families and other relationships; the status of the system and, therefore, the members and relationships. Second, would it be related? Does it satisfy the conditions? Well, the conditions are met and acquisitions are made, and these people are sometimes treated through (the) family ties, language and keep the consistent attitudes. In the case of a series of *Dōjō* in Japan, we see some constants leading to a kinship. The basic unit consists of three generations: older, seniors and young. Second, the important points are birth, naming and bodily productivity through training. Inside the *Dōjō*, we have only one, and that is training – for Japanese – and sometimes naming (for people who become members) in cases where they are not born in Japan [in case of births in Japan, it retraces up from the family name]. Third, and crucially, the Japanese case shows a dimension of kinship-building, in which we could distinguish three – or more – moments of construction. The first, on the relationship by procreation; the second, for the construction of the body itself, and the third through an ideological alignment.

On the first, of course, we would have the notion of birth and belonging to a family relationship provided by consanguinity. On this, the relationship that starts, point and makes the child, and your body – nomination, power, religious rites, etc. On the second, kinship by construction implies that in Japan the birth itself is insufficient for people to be accepted in society: food, religious rites, age groups and joint activities etc are needed. In this case, various activities enable the body and the person to that stage. And it is inside it that most Non-Japanese are incorporated, in families, *Houses* and *Dōjō*. Finally, an ideological kinship, and at this stage we can also see non-Japanese. We see a symbolic apparatus that certifies the binding, as emblems of the house, past *Sensei*, schools [流派], belonging and affiliations etc.

These three ways can be seen as progressive in time, but may also be seen as concentric as is the case of rural areas of Japan and, it seems, valid for *Dōjō* in urban areas and family companies. Although blood has become something that defines families in modern Japan, for various reasons and relationships, kinship as a multiple construct [beyond blood] can still be found.

## Conclusion

The analogy between the *notion of House* and *dōjō* within anthropological theory can be made and I wish to point that this is a theoretical exercise, but maybe it helps to understand some facts of the fieldwork research that researchers sometimes leave unexplained or cannot understand. I think the Notion of House allied to *dōjō* can become a practical concept that makes it possible for us to think how people build families and Kinship in the situation of a few martial arts. On the other hand Kinship can be understood in a broader way, not only by blood relations, as we have seen. So, for this purpose, maybe the concept of House can be suitable, and maybe with this article a new discussion about anthropology of Kinship by a new analytical framework regarding the concepts of Hierarchy, House and *Ie* [Japanese House] can be possible for further developments.

What is 'given' and what is 'made'? [Wagner 2010; Viveiros de Castro 2009]. That depends. That depends on the relationships from which Kinship is made. Everything accounts for this relationship, not just the blood, the body or the soul, or the land; the house and the plants and flowers – which also exist – also account for it. The Japanese Kinship poses this kind of problem and difficulty. “It depends on”, maybe is a graceful exit. On the other hand, the idea of mutuality of being [Sahlins 2011; Machado 2014] is quite interesting to think about the way in which kinship relationships are made in Japan, including non-Japanese; persons involved intrinsically in the existence of other people, living the lives of others and sharing the deaths of others. In short, and above all, the experience of these people shows participation into the lives of others.

The *Ie* can be socially constructed as well as just being a matter of genealogy; It can be interpreted with an emphasis on the biological, at birth, the role of man and woman, body transformations, and ancestors and substances, including the Spirit (*Ki*, *Seishin*), blood, semen. In the postnatal stage: eligibility, residence, reincarnation, adoption, friendship, shared suffering. And ideologies such as schools, lineages, ties which bind age, gods etc. Now we see that the notion of *Ie* allows a series of Kinship operations in practice. Far from dividing, it would be better just to state that these concentric steps constitute kinship, and that this relationship unfolds in its members, Japanese and non-Japanese. The human being – or *ningen* [人間] is a space into a person. A break, filled by others, relationships, family relationships, substance, morals, ways of life, agency, nature, culture. What would the *Ie* for a kinship be? Most likely filled through inter mutually, involved interests; organizational processes and manufacturing, deployment, mutuality. More than the mutuality of being it would perhaps be appropriate to think of the *mutuality of becoming* relatives. Perhaps here is the detail, missing in the *Ie*, and in the scholars's notions of House.

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## Etnografia w starożytnej Japonii: esej teoretyczny dotyczący pokrewieństwa

**Słowa kluczowe:** hierarchia, rodzina, pojęcie Domu, japońskość, pokrewieństwo

### Abstrakt

Tłó. Artykuł dotyczy badań terenowych autora przeprowadzonych w Japonii w latach 2012-2015, jest związany z pracą doktorską z antropologii społecznej. Jego celem jest przedstawienie etnograficznych faktów zebranych pośród adeptów szermierki japońskiej (*kendo*), z pochodzenia Japończyków oraz pochodzących z innych krajów, poprzez relacje dokonane w miejscu szkoleniowym, zwanym *dōjō*. Celem pracy jest stworzenie analogii między pojęciem *Domu* w ramach teorii antropologicznej, która pozostaje ważną praktyczną koncepcją budowania pokrewieństwa, z badanym problemem. Przez pokrewieństwo autor rozumie sposoby nawiązywania relacji wśród krewnych lub analityczny sposób tworzenia wzajemnych stosunków. Słowo „krewni” jest dość luźno rozumiane, jako sposoby tworzenia relacji bez dosłownej reprodukcji. W skrócie, *dōjō* jest wykorzystywane jako jednostka analizy z pojęciem

Domu, który mówi o tworzeniu pokrewieństwa poza więzami krwi. Celem pracy jest powiązanie pewnych faktów dotyczących badań terenowych, które działają wewnątrz koncepcji hierarchii, rodziny i *dōjō* w związku z pojęciem *Domu*, starając się zbudować model interpretacji.

Cel. Budowa modelu interpretacji oparta na koncepcji Domu. Metody. W pracy wykorzystano następujące materiały: bibliograficzne, zorganizowane formy, pół-strukturyzowane wywiady i rozmowy w miejscach treningowych, a metodą była *etnografia* lub życiowe doświadczenie wykorzystane przy zbieraniu danych do badań. Etnograficzne badania terenowe przeprowadzono w Brazylii (2007-2011) i Japonii (2012-2013). W Japonii, przeprowadzono badania etnograficzne w Tokio, Osace, Kioto, Kanagawie Ken i Ibaraki Ken. Dane zostały zebrane w postaci ankiet, formalnych i nieformalnych wywiadów, zebranych w Japonii z adeptami Kendo różnych narodowości. Ankiety przeprowadzono w czasie pokazów i szkoleń Kendo lub wysłano poprzez e-mail lub Facebooka.

Wyniki i wnioski. Nowa dyskusja o antropologii pokrewieństwa w obrębie nowych ram analitycznych w odniesieniu do koncepcji Hierarchii, Domu oraz *Ie* (japoński dom).