

**Fields, Networks and Frames:
Advertising Social Organisation in Japan**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on three kinds of overlapping social co-ordinates – fields, networks and frames – as they are worked out in the day-to-day activities of a large Tokyo advertising agency. Its aims are threefold. Firstly, it shows how the three social forms of fields, networks and frames interlock in a dialectical manner that permits both macro- and micro-levels of sociological analysis. It thus presents methodological approaches hitherto perceived to be different in emphases or interests as complementary rather than at odds with one another. Secondly, it takes up and re-examines the notions of network and frame as developed within the specific context of Japanese social organisation. Thirdly, it is a statement in favour of anthropological studies of business as a means towards understanding how industries and organizations function in a global economy.

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One of the problems that used to attract the attention of scholars writing about Japanese society in the 1980s in particular was the (Durkheimian) relation between ‘individual’ and ‘group’ (e.g. Befu 1980, Moeran 1984). Another was the nature of hierarchical and horizontal relations in what was referred to by one Japanese anthropologist as a ‘vertical’ society (Nakane 1967, 1978). Pairs of indigenous concepts also began to form part of this discourse as anthropologists turned their attention to how, in their everyday lives, Japanese made a marked distinction between formal, public and informal, private behaviour (expressed in the shorthand of *tatema* and *honne*), as well as between inner, backstage and outer, frontstage behaviour (for which the terms *uchi* and *soto*, and *ura* and *omote* were used) (e.g. Nakane 1970; Bachnik and Quinn 1994). Although interesting and important discussions have taken place in these arenas, and although I am often wary of Euro-American cultural biases in the development of our disciplinary concepts, I have tended to believe – in reaction to the Orientalist dilemma – that these indigenous terms might more usefully be framed within general sociological theory, rather than as a specific discourse of Japanese cultural particularism. It is for this reason that I wish here to reconsider the organisation of Japanese society in the context of my ongoing study of media and advertising (cf. Moeran 1996, 2001).

This reconsideration focuses on three kinds of overlapping social co-ordinates – fields, networks and frames – in particular as they are worked out in the day-to-day organisation of the activities of a large Tokyo advertising agency. To move from and fully integrate theories from Bourdieu to Goffman, by way of Hannerz, during the course of a short essay is, perhaps, a little ambitious. Certainly, I am unable to follow their multiplex ramifications in as much detail as I would have liked. But my aim here is to sketch out a possible approach to the study of Japanese social organisation – and of business organisation, in particular – by showing that the three social forms focused on interlock in a dialectical manner that permits macro- and micro-levels of sociological analysis.

Fields

Pierre Bourdieu first developed the idea of a ‘field’ of cultural production, in particular to that of art and literature, but did not to my knowledge apply it to the

advertising or media.¹ A ‘field’ comprises both the interactions between individuals and the structural relations between social positions occupied and manipulated by social actors (who may be individuals, groups or institutions). It thus assigns positions to social actors in the field, as well as a ‘space of possibles’ consisting of other positions these same actors may strategically occupy (position takings) during the course of interaction. A field is thus a network of relations and consists both of forces and of struggles (Bourdieu 1993:29-30).

The field of advertising production consists primarily of advertising agencies and its clients, as well as market research consultants, production companies, and studios and agencies of various kinds related to the world of entertainment (photographers, musicians, models, fashion and hair stylists, make-up artists, and so on). It also includes media organisations such as newspaper and magazine publishers, radio and television stations. In this respect, the field of advertising extends into and brings together related fields of media, fashion, film, and music that – together with other fields of advertising (in the United States, Britain, Japan, and so on) – constitute (pace Hannerz 1992) a *field of fields*.

The kinds of positions offered to and adopted by participants in these fields include choices between commercial and highbrow, documentary and infotainment, the market and creativity, consecrated and untried, and so on. For example, advertising agencies in Japan (and elsewhere) approach particular sponsors and media organisations who are known to be well disposed towards one kind of television programme or another kind of cultural event, and so encourage institutional homology around certain cultural forms. By its very position in the field, a distillery is more likely to support a sporting event than an animated cartoon film for children, which would appeal more to a toy manufacturer while the visit of a Russian ballet troupe would not.

At the same time as mediating between different fields, an advertising agency operates within its own field, offering packages that it knows will not or cannot be offered by rival agencies. By accepting that it is ‘right’ for a particular package, an advertising client consolidates the position that it has already taken in the field of media production, converting economic into social capital. For example, a petrochemicals company, anxious to regain social credibility after an oil spill, may well be persuaded to sponsor a series of television documentaries on the environment. Its decision will at least in part be influenced by the fact that the series is to be aired by a television network known to be ‘serious’ and offered to it by an advertising agency also commonly admired for being ‘intelligent’ – two characteristics that support its perceived identity as a ‘socially responsible’ corporation.²

Let me now give a more concrete example of how a particular field may function with regard to positions and position-takings. The advertising agency in which I conducted my research some years ago was founded in March 1956, four years after the Japanese government had issued its first television license and three years before the country’s first television network was established. Because the Agency was a latecomer in the advertising field, it had to find a way of getting round the stranglehold then exerted by the large, firmly entrenched agencies which had been in business since around the turn of the century and which had, as a result, built up seemingly impregnable networks of personal contacts among those responsible for the sale of advertising space in the main medium of newspapers.

The obvious potential and increasing popularity of the new medium of television provided the upstart agency with the opportunity it sought, since at that time commercial television stations were desperate for programme ideas that would attract both sponsors and audiences. Moreover, established agencies were for the most part reluctant to invest in a new medium when they were living comfortably enough off the old ones.

So the Agency first made use of personal contacts formed through its founding member who had previously worked in the publishing industry to go into magazine advertising in a big way. It then managed to forge a link between various forms of print medium and the visual medium by first transforming printed comics into animation films. In 1964, it televised the *manga* series, *Eightman*, which immediately drew more than 30 per cent audience ratings. Then, two years later, it televised *Super Jetter*, simultaneously arranging for serial rights of the story, which was in book form only, to be published as a children's comic magazine. Next, it transformed a drama about baseball, *Kyojin no Hoshi*, into an animation series that drew the highest annual ratings for all television programmes during the next three years. By 1973, the Agency was creating its own animation series – for example, *Majinger Z*, which fuelled a long-term 'robot boom' among young children in Japan – and these it was able to sell to publishing houses to be printed in comic magazines. The high-tech robot cat, *Doraemon*, is the Agency's all-time hit.³

The Agency's success in the field was not limited to media products, but extended to other organisations involved in the financing and production of such products. In establishing a niche market for itself in television and magazine publishing, the Agency was able to enter into business relationships both with major corporations anxious to sponsor its animation programmes and with television stations keen to put on popular new programmes. The latter, through their own business networks of sponsoring corporations, then introduced the Agency to first class (or 'first stream' [*ichiryū*]) sponsors that it would not otherwise have been able to reach because of its low position in the agency hierarchy. Moreover, the fact that television stations in Japan are closely linked to newspapers in terms of investment capital, personnel and news supply (Westney 1996:60) allowed the Agency to create contacts with advertising departments therein and so to break down the monopoly on newspaper space buying hitherto held by the large and well established agencies.

This example illustrates well the strategic possibilities that characterise the field of advertising in Japan. By the simple strategy of transforming different print media into television programmes, and vice versa, the Agency was able to link the two partly separated fields of publishing and television, on the one hand and, on the other, to make use of contacts developed therein to enter into other related fields. Moreover, it also initiated long-term partnerships with toy manufacturers in particular and in some cases profited from merchandising rights associated with its programmes. Such partnerships (as we shall see below) have in large part depended on the cultivation of personal networks among those representing the organisations involved.

We thus find three superimposed layers of production that involve: firstly, the advertising work itself; secondly, the individual players or actors involved in the production of the advertising work; and thirdly, the institutions that constitute the structured field of advertising production, all of whom are constantly (re)positioning themselves strategically *vis-à-vis* others in the field. Together they fashion, create, manipulate and maintain an intricate web of symbolic, cultural, social, educational

and economic capital discussed by Bourdieu. The field of advertising (as well as other related fields) contains within it, but goes beyond, the 'population' of organisations and individual people linked therein by their interaction.⁴ It is the field as a whole and how it is constituted that together condition the ways in which advertising forms and messages are produced.

The driving force in both formal and informal relations in the field of Japanese advertising is the system of accounts, which then affects both networks and frames. Accounts are the sums of money that enable advertising and media organisations to function in the first place. Unusually, advertisers in Japan do not allocate the whole of their account to a single agency, as they have hitherto done for the most part in Europe and the United States of America. Instead they split their accounts – by medium, by product line, even on occasion by agency (with one doing marketing; another creative; another media buying, and so on) – and thus provide two or more agencies (depending on the size of the client company) with smaller sums of money.

Because they involve not just advertising itself, but sales strategies, corporate imaging, media and other forms of promotion, accounts tend to determine the functional units – sales, marketing, promotions, media buying – into which every agency is structured. At the same time, the broad nature of an account makes cross-divisional co-operation essential within an agency. Moreover, precisely because Japanese corporate advertisers prefer to split their accounts and to distribute them as comparatively small sums of money among a number of different agencies, agencies need to operate numerous small organisational units (of client groups and account teams) to handle them – a point to which I shall return in my discussion of frames. Finally, by their successes and failures, accounts contribute in large part to employees' ability to rise up through the ranks to senior management and thus affect an agency's promotional system and formal organisational structure (cf. Moeran 2000).

Two more points should be noted here since they affect the nature of the field. Firstly, the system of split accounts favours advertisers in that they have a competitive lever with which to control those working in the agencies contracted. In other words, the split-account system creates and sustains a system of hierarchical power relations between advertisers and agencies. But it also favours agencies to the extent that, if they lose an account, the financial implications are not such that – as with an American agency that loses a large account – their overall stability is threatened.⁵ In other words, lay-offs do not usually occur as a result of an account being lost.⁶

Secondly, precisely because accounts are split, agencies' account executives are always tempted to get a larger slice of the advertising cake that they have already been given. There are two aspects to this. On the one hand, an advertising agency is prepared to carry out low-level, less obviously visible, aspects of advertising and promotion on behalf of a large, well-known client, in the hope and expectation that it will eventually gain access to more lucrative, above-the-line contracts (for television advertising, for example). The split-account system thereby encourages an advertising agency to expand its activities into all aspects of Japan's consumer and other markets. On the other hand, this market mechanism of financing the work of advertising agencies encourages informal contacts between account executives and their counterparts in client companies. This is because it is the personal relationship, rather than a more professional approach to executing an account, which ultimately determines whether an account stays with a particular agency, is increased, decreased,

multiplied, or withdrawn.⁷ In other words, the very number of accounts – and the competition that they generate among agencies, media, production companies and other organisations in the advertising industry – makes interpersonal relations an even more important factor in Japanese business relations than they already are in other advertising industries where accounts are not split.

Networks

It should be clear from the above that a field in media production at least, and more generally in business organisation, comprises networks of one kind or another as an important sociological principle of interaction. The concept of social network, to paraphrase Srinivas and Bêteille (1964:165-6), helps us understand the linkages existing in a field between different institutional spheres, as well as between different systems of groups and categories. Networks ramify in all directions and stretch out seemingly indefinitely – which makes them very difficult to study and talk about coherently. At the same time, they also intersect, running parallel with each other for a while before branching off on their separate paths, so that a field – like a city or the ‘world system’ (Hannerz 1980, 1992) – becomes a ‘network of networks’.

In other words, in business an organisation’s environment consists of a network of other organisations in the field (and related fields) in which it operates. Not only this, but in certain important respects every organisation is itself a social network (Baker 1987). The positions of actors in a network of relationships explain their actions, which both shape and are constrained by that particular network. It is the network characteristics of an organisation that enable a comparative analysis of all organisations operating in a field (cf. Nohria and Eccles 1992:4-8).

Already, however, network analysis faces another difficult task: how best to analyse and properly integrate relationships between *individuals*, on the one hand, and *collectivities* like business corporations, on the other. As we know, the concept of network was first developed by anthropologists like John Barnes (1969) and Clyde Mitchell (1969), when they became involved in the study of ‘complex’, rather than ‘simple’, societies. It seemed like a useful way of moving analytically beyond the kind of enduring relationships in a social institutional framework that they had analysed hitherto (Hannerz 1980:172-3). In contrast to such anthropological studies of networks, which have for the most part focussed on individuals, scholars interested in business organisation in one way or another have tended to look at both formal and informal inter-firm relationships that together create a complex web of organisational ties.

This two-stranded nature of network analysis is particularly obvious in scholarly accounts of the organisation of Japanese society. On the one hand, there is work that looks at different types of actors in exchange transactions, the norms of reciprocity that apply therein, and the strategies that individuals adopt, in terms of the instrumentality and expressiveness found in their social exchanges (e.g. Befu 1989). On the other, there are studies of the institutionalised relationships among firms (particularly, but not exclusively, among those involved in outsourcing and sub-contracting relationships). Such clusters of companies are marked by ties of affiliation, long-term relationships, multiplexity, extended networks and symbolic signification which effectively help them adjust to external shocks and fluctuations in the economy, promote high rates of capital investment, and often lead to preferential

trading. This kind of network organisation has been called ‘alliance capitalism’ (Gerlach 1992).

The problem of defining the exact relationship between individual and organisational networks is exemplified, perhaps, by Chie Nakane who, some years ago now, argued that the primary function of occupational networks is to permit the communication of information at the small group level (Nakane 1978:52-3). According to this British-trained Japanese anthropologist, such networks in Japan differ from individual-centred networks usually discussed in anthropology since their links are *not* based on individual members, but on the small groups to which such individuals belong.⁸ Because group membership takes precedence in Japanese people’s social interaction, ‘the effectiveness of networks is extremely weak’. Japanese networks thus differ in both function and size from, say, Chinese or south-east Asian networks (Nakane 1978:62-72).

Although it is clear that individual Japanese do often network as members of a small or primary group, as Nakane suggests, this is equally clearly not the case *all* of the time. Japanese mentally separate those contacts that are being used for ‘group’ purposes and those that are being used for ‘individual’ aims, but keep all options open. Certainly, in the world of advertising at least, Japanese often do network as individuals – in much the same way as do people in the south-east Asian countries discussed by Nakane, if not always with quite the social manoeuvring of Chinese *guanxi* (for example, Yang 1994; Kipnis 1997).

The challenge for network analysis, it seems to me, is in its simultaneous application to *both* individuals *and* organisations. Earlier, I mentioned how the method of distributing advertising accounts in Japan encourages informal contacts between agencies and their clients, and it is on this aspect of relations *between* organisations that I wish to focus here in my discussion of networks. Given the nature of advertising work and its demands for the acquisition and relaying of information, as part of the five ‘Ps’ of persuasion, promotion, prestige, profit and power (Moeran 1996:33), interpersonal relations have come to play a crucial part in the lives of those employed in advertising agencies and related organisations.

Such interpersonal relations take a number of different forms and have a number of different aims. In the first place, they are used to obtain – and then increase – accounts. These do not appear out of thin air, but need to be massaged out of corporate managers who are never really sure whether advertising ‘works’ and who may well be more worried about their own jobs and promotion than about their company’s best interests. This massaging is done by the account executive who spends a lot of time visiting prospective clients, first trying to get his foot in the door, then slowly building a suitable ‘atmosphere’ (*fun’iki-zukuri*) of trust and friendship that will encourage them to part with their money. To this end, account executives (and other members of the Agency – in particular, media buyers and managers) will do all sorts of things not normally seen to be connected with advertising *per se*. For example, they will go out of their way to attend, or even assist in the preparation of, funerals of those connected with client or media organisations. They will pay the occasional visit to the wives of those with whom they are conducting business (to give them free magazines, for instance, or hand out tickets to some cultural exhibition organised by the Agency). They have even been known to help business partners find a suitable plot of land on which to build a family home (whereupon, as neighbours, they can exert moral pressure on the partner to give the Agency a larger advertising

account).⁹ And then, of course, there are all those other ‘extra curricular’ activities for which Japanese businessmen are known: late night drinking in *karaoke* bars, the occasional round of golf, and a strenuous string of lunches and dinners when (potential) customers are entertained at the Agency’s expense.¹⁰

Such extra-curricular activities are designed to lead to informal, long-term relationships and are thus instrumental by nature. But this part of the Japanese advertising man’s business ethic is not just an ideological dream. Trust, partnership,¹¹ friendship even,¹² *can* exist. There were three or four occasions during the course of my fieldwork when I was invited to join a senior manager for meals with would-be clients and noted there a warmth and mutual personal understanding that went far beyond everyday flattery. On at least two occasions, those being entertained were not in a position to begin to think of offering their advertising accounts to the Agency (because they worked for multinationals that had a world-wide policy with regard to contracting of their advertising campaigns). Yet members of the Agency continued to meet them from time to time, to exchange information and perhaps a little gossip, to talk about the latest opera, to worry about the economy, and so on. It is this kind of ‘human chemistry’ that is a vital part and ultimate aim of every good advertising man’s dealings with his potential clients. The (in)ability to work well with one’s opposite number can help win (or lose) an important account.

A second aspect of these interpersonal relations is also instrumental, but more obviously for others than for oneself. An advertising man does his best to create a web of contacts (or *jinmyaku* in Japanese), not only for his own use, but to enable himself to be of use to others in his network (and thus, of course, hopefully further his own ends in the give-and-take of personal relations).¹³ An advertising man who can recommend and obtain favourable rates at a resort hotel, who can locate a much-sought-after antique, or who can find the right sort of job in the right sort of company for a client’s recently graduated daughter, is a man who has a ‘broad face’ and is thus afforded a certain mixture of envy and respect. It is this web of informal contacts that not only helps others achieve their aims and desires, but also provides an advertising man with social stature.

Thirdly, interpersonal relations have structural implications. Precisely because the Agency is awarded accounts because of the *personal* relationship established between an account executive and his opposite number in a client company, the *institutional* relationship between Agency and corporation needs to be cemented. After all, personal relationships can go awry. The advertising manager in a client company may be promoted and his replacement may not take to the Agency’s hitherto successful account executive. Alternatively, an account executive may inexplicably say the wrong thing at the wrong time and alienate his business associate in such a way that trust between them breaks down and the client calls for a competitive presentation that the Agency loses. To avoid such repercussions, the Agency needs to create *direct* back-up lines of communication between itself and the client company. This it does, firstly, by ensuring that the immediate bosses of the account executive and advertising manager get together and start to cement their personal ties; and secondly, by arranging in due course for what it calls ‘*shachō* [CEO] play’ where the Agency’s CEO will meet the president of the client company over lunch or dinner, thank him for being so kind as to allow the Agency to take on part of his business, assure him of the Agency’s fullest attention and respect, and generally try to ensure that he leaves the other with such a favourable impression that, in the event of

personal conflict at a lower level of their respective organisations, he will rule in the Agency's favour.

Such high level contacts can also be used in an *indirect* manner to help the Agency when it is in trouble with a client's account. For example, when faced with the prospect of making a competitive presentation to a European car manufacturer, because of its failure to satisfy its client, the Agency's CEO spent considerable time in the company of directors of a Japanese car manufacturer which was already one of the Agency's largest and oldest clients. The aim here was to persuade senior managers in the Japanese client company to talk directly to those in the European company – something that they were well able to do because of a research and sales tie-up that had recently been agreed between the two organisations. Since the Agency did not have direct access to its European client's top management in Europe, it prevailed upon its Japanese client to act as a 'pipe' and to put in a good word on its behalf – as it turned out, to no avail – prior to the presentation.

In other words, although we tend to think of networking in Japanese business in terms of individuals lubricating the wheels of social interaction at an interpersonal level, we must also realise that such networking is carried on at an institutional level. Networking thus creates and sustains an ongoing dialectical relation between individual employees and organisational units in Japanese society. This, I suspect, is what Nakane meant when she argued that individuals always interact as members of a 'group'.

Frames

All societies consist of acting people and social life may therefore be seen as consisting of the actions of separate individuals, collectivities whose members act together in a common cause (for example, a pop music group or baseball team), or organisations acting on behalf of a constituency (a business corporation or professional association) (Blumer 1986:85). This means that everybody everywhere 'impinges' on other people. The problem, for advertising man as well as anthropologist, is who impinges on whom, when, where and why (cf. Barnes 1969), and how to study such impinging processes.

One formidable proponent of the study of face-to-face situational interaction and public behaviour was Erving Goffman (e.g. 1959). Impression management, performance, face work, front and back stage are just some of the microsociological terms that he introduced and made stick in anthropological theory (Hannerz 1980:204).¹⁴ Many of these terms are directly applicable to the study of Japanese society where 'situationalism' has been one focus of anthropological attention from Nakane (1970) to Bachnik and Quinn (1994).

Goffman's idea of 'frame' was borrowed from Bateson (1972:177-193), and applied to what Goffman himself referred to as the examination of the organisation of *experience* (Goffman 1974:10-11). In frame analysis, as elsewhere, Goffman ended up telling us a lot about the ground rules (including keys and keying, laminations, out-of-frame activity, and so on) that surround the ritual order of everyday life, but rather little about what participants hope or aim to get out of whom, when and why. We thus learn more about strangers and acquaintances than about long-term relationships (Hannerz 1980:214). My suggestion is that we should use frame analysis to look at different aspects of *social organisation*, even though Goffman himself said that the

latter has been and can continue to be studied quite nicely without any reference at all to frame (1974:13).

Goffman's work is particularly pertinent here because of the way in which frame has been used to analyse Japanese society, albeit more in terms of space than of performance (e.g. Lebra 1992). In a classic work, Nakane (1970) started her discussion of the nature of Japanese society by distinguishing between attribute and frame (*ba*) – initially used to refer to a concrete social group (such as a team, section, department, division, or whole company) – and proceeded to argue that, while most Westerners value persisting, context-independent attributes in social interaction, the Japanese prefer to emphasise contextual social relationships. Thus frame (*ba*) was seen to be of 'primary importance' in small group identification, while attribute was of a 'secondary matter' (Nakane 1970:3).

In our ordinary, everyday activities, all of us find ourselves going through a series of, often quickly, framed episodes, in which we tend to have different realm statuses or attributes. To each of these frames (a telephone call, a casual greeting in the street, a lecture, or goodnight story) we bring different attributes (as friend, neighbour, teacher, or father). In each of them we adopt different kinds of behaviour (informal, ritual, formal, or intimate, and so on) as we communicate with different sets of people. In this respect, our lives are like a strip of film, made up of dozens and dozens of laminated celluloid frames that are projected onto our own and others' consciousness as 'life'. Each frame can be analysed according to its channel of activity, the 'laminations' given to that activity (to make it seem other than it purports to be), and the status of its participants (Goffman 1974:561, 564-66). We need to be aware of this if we are to unpack, unravel and grasp the meanings that are openly revealed, merely implied, and/or concealed by participants in social actions.

As Nakane intimated, Japanese are very aware of the ways in which each frame affects their social behaviour. Indeed, they consciously mould both time and space to fit in with these frames – in the office, at school, during formal drinking parties, and so on – and they adapt their language (and body language) to each frame and stage of action therein (cf. Hendry 1993:123-32). It is this constantly shifting aspect of Japanese social behaviour, therefore, that I believe Nakane was quite right to emphasise by means of the concept of frame.

Unfortunately, although she defined a frame as being 'a locality, an institution or a particular relationship which binds a set of individuals into one group', Nakane (1970:1) was concerned primarily with *constant*, *stable* and *institutional* frames.¹⁵ This enabled her then to address issues such as ranking, leadership, fission, factions and one or two other aspects of Japanese social organisation, and to ignore the shifting variables of people interacting in different social contexts. There was thus a contradiction in her usage of terminology. Frame was established originally in opposition to what she perceived as the constancy and stability of a person's attribute, but was then given precisely the stable, constant features found in attribute¹⁶.

As part of this reconsideration of Japanese society, I want to suggest here that frames *enable networks*. By examining personal relations operating in a continuous interplay of cause and effect through a series of frames, we can begin to work out the paths taken by informal networks and formal organisations constituting, in this case, the advertising field. But frames also *enable organisations*. By participating in work-related frames, participants make sense of the Agency, its clients and their roles and actions in the field of advertising as a whole (cf. Schwartzman 1993:40).

Take, for instance, account teams. An account team is formed every time an agency plans a client's advertising campaign. Usually consisting of one or more people working in the different divisions of account sales, marketing, creative and media buying, an account team is always led by an account executive (AE), working in close association with a marketing (MD) and creative (CD) directors. Every member of an account team contributes a different expertise to the campaign in question.

The size and extent of a campaign determine, first, how many people from each division are opted onto the account team, and then who precisely attends which meeting with whom.¹⁷ For example, within an account team there is a creative team, consisting of CD, copywriter, art director and, usually, television producer. All four will meet in the very early stages of a campaign, but later on copywriter and art director may well find themselves interacting more or less continuously with the AE, appreciably so with the marketing team, hardly ever with the media buyer(s). They will also work alone. For his part, the AE will attend almost all account team meetings of one sort or another, both within the agency and when the account team meets the client. Meetings between agency and client will also consist of greater or lesser numbers of participants, from both agency and client sides. As many as a dozen – or as few as two or three – people may thus participate in each of the many frames that take place during the course of preparing a campaign.

Clearly those who participate in more frames with a greater variety of people have more opportunity to develop personal ties with other participants. People's behaviour in each frame tends to influence what comes next and to be influenced by what has gone before. Business frames thus socialise participants in certain patterns of behaviour and, over time, account teams develop a certain dynamic among themselves, as well as in the presence of the client. This dynamic enables individual members to reveal more or less of their 'selves' in an ongoing continuity of frames that ultimately contributes towards the maintenance and strengthening of networks.

For example, during the six months during which an account team was working on a contact lens campaign (Moeran 1996:116-168), it held 34 more or less formal meetings. 23 of these were with the client's manufacturing and/or PR division; five with a production company; and six were limited to internal staff. In addition, the creative and marketing teams had their own independent, informal meetings. Because of the difficulties experienced with the client, the AE and creative team, in particular, gradually formed a very close-knit team (three of whom even started playing weekend soccer together), so that many of the work-related frames began to take on regular 'frame breaking' activities (including, for instance, discussions of soccer matches). Continued interaction in these frames led to participants letting others know about, and giving them access to, their own personal networks.

Multiple frame interaction thus leads to a situation where individual members' networks can be tapped at any moment for *any* purpose. For example, during studio shooting of the campaign's television commercial, the CD discussed details of another commercial for a different account with the president of the production company. The stylist tried to arrange a date between the AE and the celebrity hired for the campaign. The assistant product manager on the client side asked the AE's senior account manager in the Agency about the possibility of buying life insurance at favourable rates, and his immediate boss, the product manager, sought advice on a Bernard Leach pot from the visiting researcher (who was present at all but one of the 34 meetings).

The split account system (referred to in the discussion of fields) ensures that every member of an agency account team is simultaneously participating in two, three or as many as six other account teams, each of which is – usually, but not necessarily – made up of different personnel. In each account team, similar kinds of frame activity and network integrating processes take place, so that the method of distributing accounts in the advertising field in Japan obliges membership of multiple frames and encourages dense participation in multiple networks. This not only gives participants a broader view of all the organisations constituting the field in which they operate; it contributes to the notion of Japan as a ‘network society’ (Kumon 1992).¹⁸

As is customary in much network and frame interaction, *structural equivalence* tends to be observed between Agency, client and media organisation, to enable those involved to have a common set of linkages to others in the system (cf. Knoke and Kublinski 1991:179). In other words, every frame sets a limit on *who* can participate therein. Thus, an opera performance arranged by the Agency on behalf of a client will be attended by the CEO, the chief account executive handling the client’s account, and relevant members of the Agency’s top management (usually from Account Services and promotions, but possibly including Marketing and/or Creative Offices), but not by junior account executives or media buyers involved in the campaign. In this way, frame participation rules strengthen members’ individual networks and ensure, in the context of an organisational hierarchy, that such networks remain socially independent of one another and thus complementary (cf. Burt 1992).¹⁹

Finally, the account system itself may also be analysed in terms of frames. Accounts are placed on offer by advertisers. Each is competed for by invited agencies, in a presentation which itself is subject to all kinds of bracketing devices, before being formally awarded to one agency which then has to revise its proposals in the light of the formalised relationship between itself and its client. Accounts lead to campaigns, each of which involves certain formulaic activities (orientation, market analysis, creative ideas) and leads either to further contracting or, in the event of discontent on the client’s part, to a new round of competitive presentations. Loss of an account by one agency tends to lead to an overall shift in competing accounts among other agencies and to result in the former gaining a new, similar account to ‘replace’ the one it has lost (Moeran 1996:91-96). Accounts thus frame an agency’s economic, social and cultural capital in the field.

Conclusion

The study of business organisations – in particular, of business organisations operating globally – is fraught with difficulties. Most businesses are understandably reluctant to allow researchers free access to their premises, employees, or written records. If they do permit an outsider into their midst, they may well demand and obtain the signing of a confidentiality clause that effectively prevents dissemination of a researcher’s more insightful findings. They will almost certainly place restrictions on the amount of time s/may spend in a particular company or organisation. Consequently, while there are, of course, in-depth studies of business organisations of various kinds throughout the world, a considerable part of what passes for business or management studies is based on structured interviews that do not usually allow for more than a scratching on the surface of corporate organisation. As a result, there is comparatively little reflection on the actual mechanisms of the social organisation of business.

It is this lacuna that this essay has tried to address. I was extremely fortunate in being allowed free access to a Japanese advertising agency, in having my stay there structured in such a way that I got to spend a month or so in almost every one of its different divisions, while also being permitted to follow my interests (a case study of an advertising campaign, for example, or the making of a *manga* cartoon series) as they developed. It was this lucky combination of structure and agency, I think, that eventually enabled me first to understand, then to analyse, the various levels at which a corporation like an advertising agency functions – hence, this essay’s integration of three different theoretical approaches to the explanation of social and business organisation in Japanese society. At the macro-level, Bourdieu’s concept of field was introduced as a way of explaining how large corporations operating in advertising and media are structured and inter-relate among themselves. Following this, the concept of network was discussed as an intermediate level of organising both corporations and individual employees working therein. Finally, Goffman’s concept of frame was taken up at the micro-level of personal interaction.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this essay, it has, perhaps, been a somewhat ambitious project to introduce the work of such different scholars and apply them to the field of Japanese advertising, as well as to the organisational frameworks and personal and institutional networks of a large Tokyo advertising agency. Precisely because the three concepts of field, network and frame extend from macro- to micro-analysis, it is virtually impossible to use all three simultaneously. However, what I hope is that researchers can see the need to hold all three methods of analysis as complementary explanatory tools.

My use of the concepts of network and frame in particular has been at variance with that usually adopted by other anthropologists, since I have stressed, firstly, that frame *can* usefully be applied to the analysis of social organisation and, secondly, that neither frame nor network should be limited to *interpersonal* relations. Rather, both concepts should be extended to embrace *inter-organisational* relations. This, indeed, is their strength. It is this inter-organisational aspect of their applicability that integrates them with the macro-level concept of field.

One aim of the essay has been to show that each of the three co-ordinates of business organisation in part inflects and is inflected by the other two. Frames inflect the membership and operation of networks, which themselves inflect the fields in which they operate, and vice versa. Fields, networks and frames are thus mutually constitutive, interacting processes that can help us understand and explain the working of contemporary Japanese society.

At the same time, I have followed Hannerz’ outline of the usefulness of frames and networks to the study of urban society and suggested here that they are equally pertinent to our analyses of *business* organisation as a whole. Given that business consists to a large degree of corporations and given that such corporations are usually located in cities, this extension of Hannerz’ ideas is both logical and appropriate.

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Notes

¹ My use of the preterite, rather than present perfect, form of the verb here is prompted by the news today (January 24, 2002) that Pierre Bourdieu has died of cancer at the age of 71. I, for one, will miss his inspiration.

² Cf. Gerlach (1992:87) on the perceived characteristics of corporate groups in Japan.

³ Doraemon book sales amount to 110 million copies, while its 17 films have been seen in cinemas by more than 60 million people. The weekly television programme handled by the Agency has been running in Japan for thirty years and may now be found on television screens in many other parts of Asia (cf. Shiraishi 1997). Merchandising connected with the cat can be found on clothes, stationery and household goods – even on a school bus. Royalties connected with such merchandising came to US\$153 between 1979 and 1994 (Schodt 1996:217). On all this the Agency has had a share of the profits.

⁴ This is where Bourdieu (1993:34-5) differs from Howard Becker (1982) who, in his analysis of ‘artworlds’, limited his discussion more to a network of cooperative links among participants therein.

⁵ Lorenz (1991) describes a rather similar set of relationships and social outcomes between client firms and subcontractors in the French engineering industry located round Lyon.

⁶ Thus, the split account system also indirectly supports what is referred to as the system of ‘permanent’ employment in Japan and practised by the Agency.

⁷ Such personal relations are often carried over into the contents of the advertisements themselves, where certain images may be suggested by an agency precisely because they are known to appeal to the private taste of the client’s product manager (Schudson 1984:44; Moeran 1996:89).

⁸ Nakane argues (1978:38-9), however, that *structurally* the ‘small group’ (*shōshūdan*) in Japanese society has the same functional characteristic as does the ‘individual’ in European and American societies. It should be added, perhaps, that Nakane’s analysis is rooted in her comparison of Japanese and Chinese family systems and the relation of kinship and marriage to household organisation in Japan.

⁹ The importance of the kinds of resources, assistance, and support that businessmen can mobilise in their networks is also noted by Atsumi (1979:69).

¹⁰ As every good account executive knows, he should expect to ‘eat three lunches a day’ if he wants to be successful (*mido meshi o kuwanai to dame*).

¹¹ This idea of ‘partnership’ extends from the account executive to the organisation as a whole. Ultimately, the Agency – like most Japanese corporations – is concerned to create what in another context has been called a ‘value-adding partnership’ with each of its clients and with those companies and personnel that it subcontracts, so that together they can manage a flow of goods and services along an entire chain stretching from production to consumption. Ideally, in such value-added partnerships, each organisation realises that it has a stake in the success of the others (Johnston and Lawrence 1991). The Agency manages relationships among clients, media and production houses, solves problems, carries information, negotiates the supply of materials, and generally gets involved in all aspects of sales, advertising and promotional activities.

¹² Atsumi (1979:64-5) argues for a clear-cut distinction between personal relations (*tsukiai* in Japanese) and friendship.

¹³ An effectively networking advertising man tends, too, to create diverse, but sparse networks that make the most of ‘structural holes’ connecting non-redundant contacts (Burt 1992:67). The same principle operates at an institutional level, where an advertising agency tries to ensure that it is a central player in the field, able ‘to see new opportunities created by needs in one group that could be served by skills in another group’ (ibid. p. 70) and so link clients to media organisations.

¹⁴ Hannerz (1980, Chapter 6) provides a very useful summary of Goffman’s work and shows how it may be used in urban anthropology.

¹⁵ It is clear that Nakane’s interest is in ‘small groups’ (*shōshūdan*, a term that she prefers to ‘primary group’ [1978:22]), which are defined quite simply as ‘co-operation in work and sharing of space’ (*shigoto no kyōryoku to ba no kyōyū*). She recognises, moreover, the variable nature of such small groups resulting from the different purposes for which they are formed and the different people who

make up their membership (ideally between five and seven persons to maximise a full expression and free exchange of individual opinions and emotions) (Nakane 1970:12; 1978:22-4).

¹⁶ Although it is the institutional rather than interpersonal, or individual, point of view that Nakane stresses throughout her argument.

¹⁷ Meetings are here treated as clearly defined frames, because of spatial separation and verbal and non-verbal rules applying thereto.

¹⁸ Some years before Castells (1996), Kumon argued that since the term 'network' was being used to characterise social phenomena as varied as government-business relations, relations among business firms, and relations among departments or individuals within a firm, Japan itself might be referred to as a 'network society'.

¹⁹ Although the examples of framing given here have focused on individuals participating in particular activities, we should realise that a similar process takes place at an organisational level between agency and client, each of which brings to the account its participation as a player and an organisation-role formula. Both people and organisations can be said to develop a 'style' as players (so that agencies come to be known for their 'intelligent', 'human' or other qualities), enabling them to systematically modify any strip of activity by virtue of their participation as performers (cf. Goffman 1974:288).