

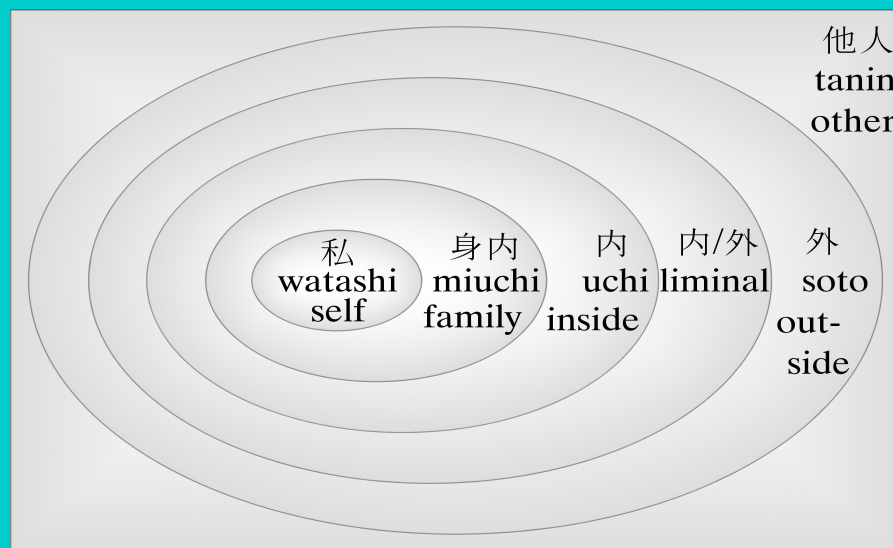
Privacy and Data Protection in the Global Village: Anglo-Japanese Comparisons

Hosted by Meiji University, Japan

Dr Andrew A. Adams

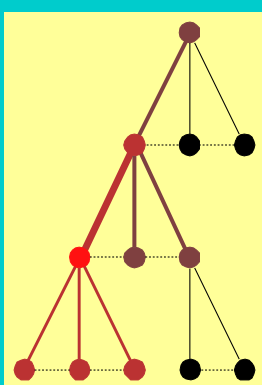
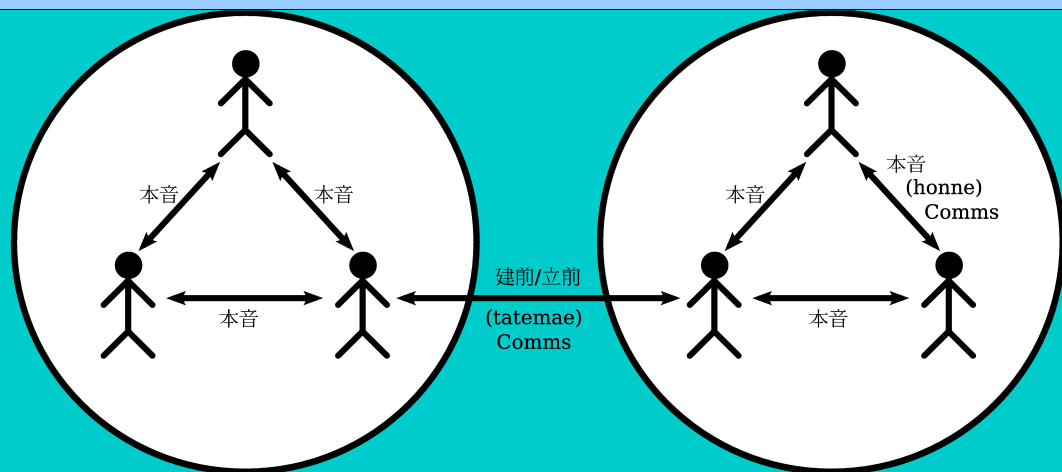
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The Japanese Sense of Information Privacy



The academic myth that the Japanese have “no sense of privacy” is incorrect. Their sense of *information* privacy is very strong and was enforced by strong social norms before the advent of networked information processing (delayed in Japan until the mid-90s due to the “Kanji Problem”). This strong commitment to information privacy is demonstrated by the *Uchi-Soto* distinction drawn in information dissemination.

Within the *Uchi* group, true (*Honne*) communication is used, but to those in *Soto*, sales talk (*Tatema*) is used. This is understood by Japanese people, and hence the Japanese word *Usu* (“lie”) does not have such strong negative connotations as in English. Information “overheard” is often treated “as-if” not known in order to maintain group harmony. Information passed to *Tanin* (The Other) was not regarded as dangerous since *Tanin* have no ongoing connections to the self. However, in the information age, *Tanin* and *Soto* can easily share information, hence the need for Data Protection legislation.



The very strong vertical relationships which distinguish Japanese hierarchical organisations depend on revelation of personal information, held “in confidence” with a small portion being passed on one further link in the hierarchy but no further. As with the Western world, the information age requires not secrecy to preserve privacy, but confidence. Japanese data protection law seeks to develop sector-specific regulation covering the necessary confidentiality to build confidence among data subjects. Law replaces broken social norms.

Joint work with Prof Murata of Meiji University and Dr Orito of Ehime University.