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SEX AND GRAMMAR IN SIKUANI (GUAHIBO) KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract. The creation of words in the Sikuani language rests heavily on processes leading to derived and compound forms. This permits us to shed light on certain aspects of the semantic and cognitive mechanisms which govern the organization of several delimited areas of the lexicon. Such an approach is attempted here on kinship terminology, so as to show that the latter notably distorts, to its own advantage, the grammatical means available to it in the structure of the Sikuani language.

0. This paper is an attempt to develop certain points which were briefly touched on in the last section of an earlier publication on Sikuani kinship (Queixalós 1980; an earlier study of Sikuani kinship is in Morey (1970)).

The Sikuani are a group composed of nomads and sedentary agriculturalists living in the savanna region to the west of the middle course of the Orinoco.

First I shall present the kinship terminology in a concise manner (*1*). After which I shall treat the definition of relevant categories which underlie the classificatory system (*2*) with a certain precision, in order to pass on to an examination of the lexicogenic processes at work in the nomenclature (*3*). I shall then formulate a hypothesis on the underlying meaning of the apparently unexpected use of certain linguistic forms at the core of one of the terminological subsystems (*4*).

1. The network of designations of Sikuani kinship bifurcates collaterally the avuncular terminology and the preferred form of marriage is between bilateral cross-cousins. Table 1 lists the central terms of the terminology. By "central" I mean those which are subject to inalienable possession in which the marks — prefixes — are different in Sikuani from those of alienable possession. The kinship terms subject to alienable possession are used redundantly in relation to those in Table 1: either they are generic terms such as *(my) relative* and *(my) young relative* or they are specific references to the sex of the spouse, such as *(my) man, (my) woman*. (For the complete list and morphophonology of possessives, cf. Queixalós 1980. I will be pleased to send a corrected copy of that article to anyone who is interested.)

The terms in Table 1 represent the linguistic forms as they are used in everyday speech. From the point of view of address/reference they are bivalent. The following points

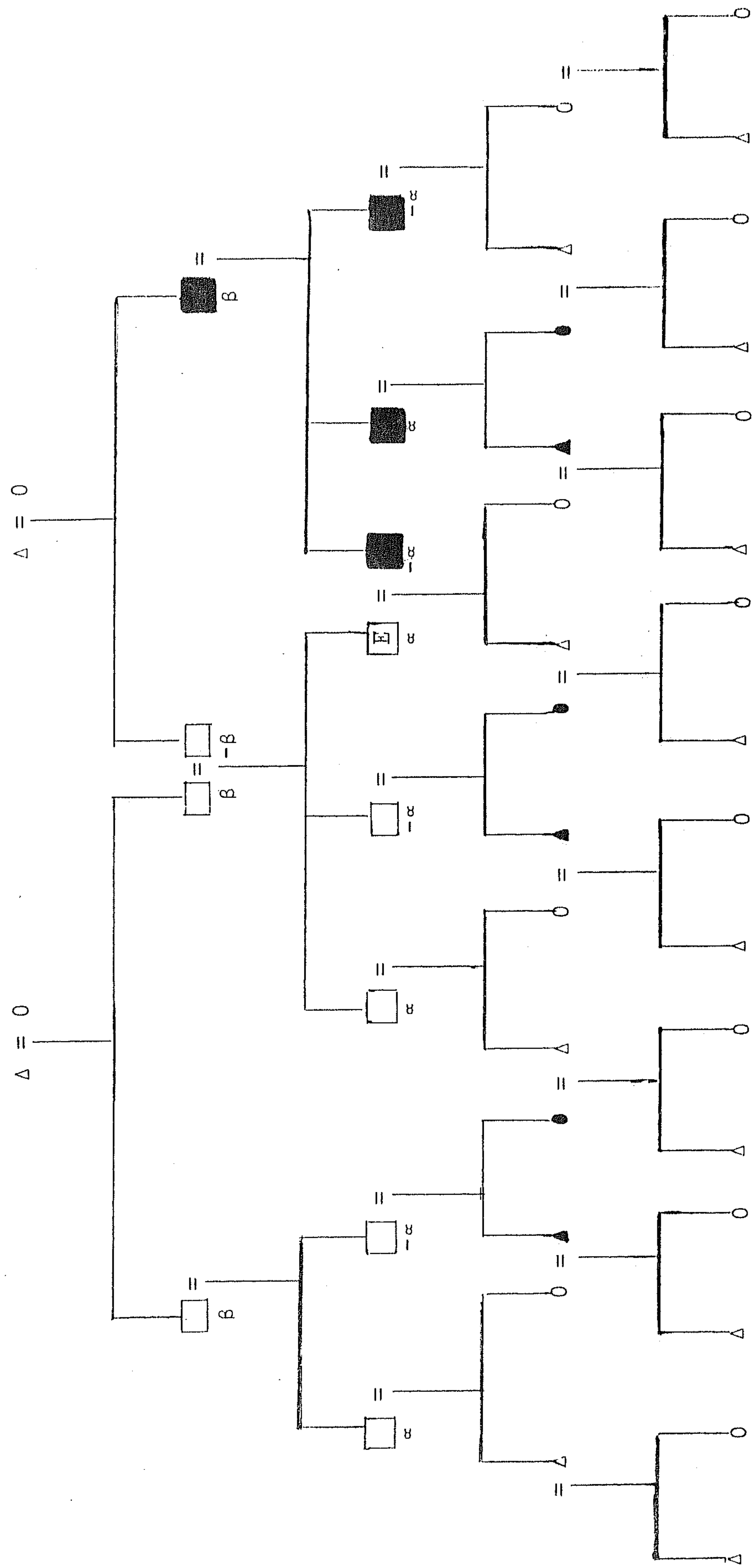
should be noted:
(1) In reference, the inalienable possessive prefix is used for 1st person (2nd, 3rd in the case when Ego ≠ Speaker);
(2) In address, the inalienable possessive prefix of the 1st person is used with the exception of the following terms which appear without prefix: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Ego ♀), 6, 7 (Ego ♀, in the form of axu), 8, 9, 10; a feature [+ deference] which takes into account the group of terms without prefix is proposed in Queixalós 1980 (p. 94).

Table 1

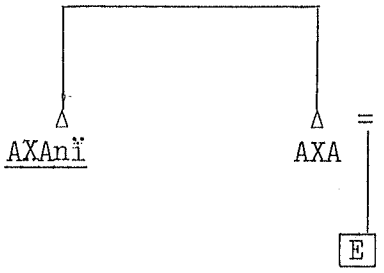
1.	amo	FF, MF
2.	akue	FM, MM
3.	axa	F
4.	ena	M
5.	axuanï	FB, MH
6.	enawa	MZ, FW
7.	axuyo	MB, HF, WF
8.	ame	FZ, HM, WM
9.	anï	B (Ego younger)
10.	owa	Z (Ego younger)
11.	ewatiyo	B (Ego older)
12.	ametiyo	Z (Ego older)
13.	matapihinï	FBS, MZS, FS, MS (Ego younger)
14.	matapihiwa	FBD, MZD, FD, MD (Ego younger)
15.	huyapihinï	FBS, MZS, FS, MS (Ego older)
16.	huyapihiwa	FBD, MZD, FD, MD (Ego older)
17.	amoho	FZS, MBS, ZH, WB (Ego ♂)
18.	amohowa	FZD, MBD, BW, HZ (Ego ♀)
19.	kotiwa	FZS, MBS, ZH, HB (Ego ♀)
		FZD, MBD, BW, WZ (Ego ♂)
20.	mono	H
		W
21.	xïnato	S
22.	xïnatiyo	D
23.	xianï	BS, WZS, WS (Ego ♂)
		ZS, HBS, HS (Ego ♀)
24.	xianïyo	BD, WZD, WD (Ego ♂)
		ZD, HBD, HD (Ego ♀)
25.	opaxa	ZS (Ego ♂), BS (Ego ♀), DH
26.	ekophena	ZD (Ego ♂), BD (Ego ♀), SW
27.	momo	SS, DS
28.	momoyo	SD, DD

The work cited above also includes an attempt to reconstruct certain lexemes based on phonological processes which are still in use today. Thanks to the hypothetical reconstruction of linguistic forms such as those which appear in Table 2, we can undertake an in-depth study of the system of designations. Even though I do not refer frequently to the list in Table 2 until *3* is reached, I have included it here to facilitate the reading of *2*.

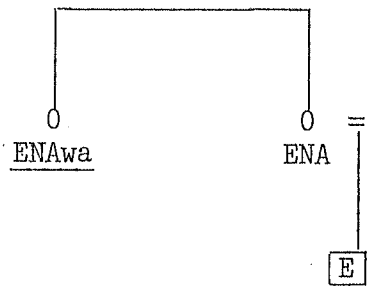
Table 3. Consanguines and Affines According to Relative Sex



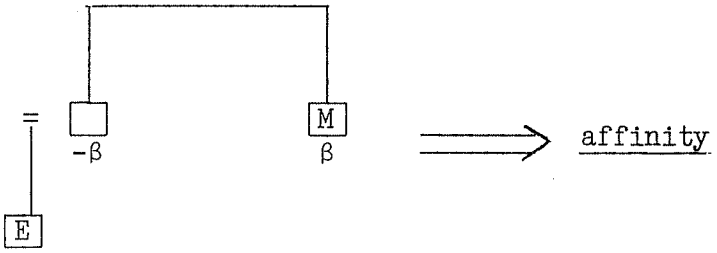
if β = ♂ then



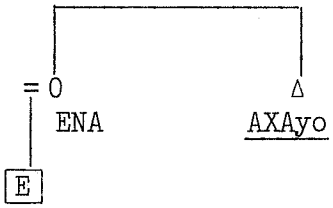
if β = ♀ then



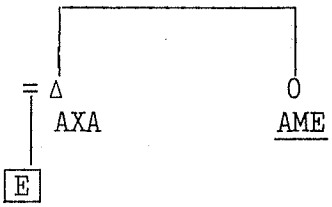
b.



if β = ♂ then

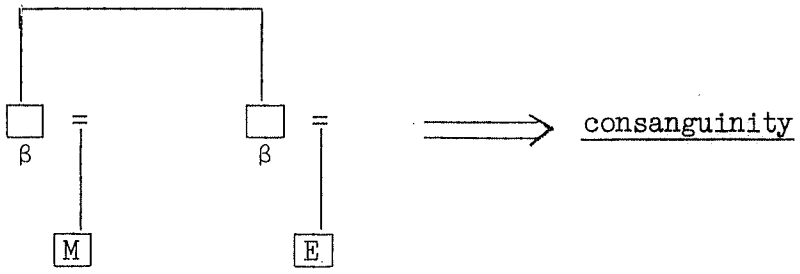


if β = ♀ then



(2) Ego in relation to a member of G_0

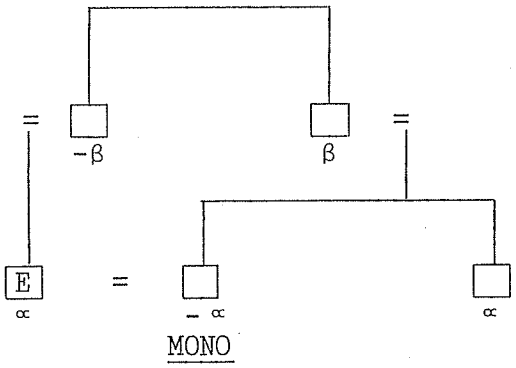
a.



(∝) (-∝), i.e., KOTIWA, can be translated at *marriageable*, defined as *affine of the same generation of the opposite sex*; it is, in effect, the cross-cousin who represents the ideal alliance to be sought. The form of the term is the same for the two sexes. (∝) (∝), i.e., AMOHO, is an *affine of the same generation of the same sex*. The term is then specified in regard to the absolute sex of AMOHO.

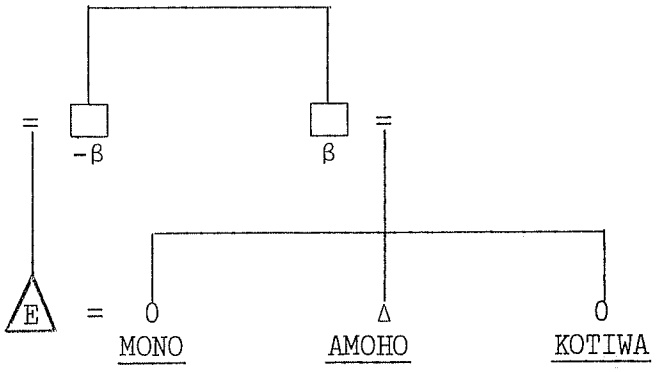
MONO is a special case of the KOTIWA relation in which among the group of marriageable individuals, one has been married.

d.

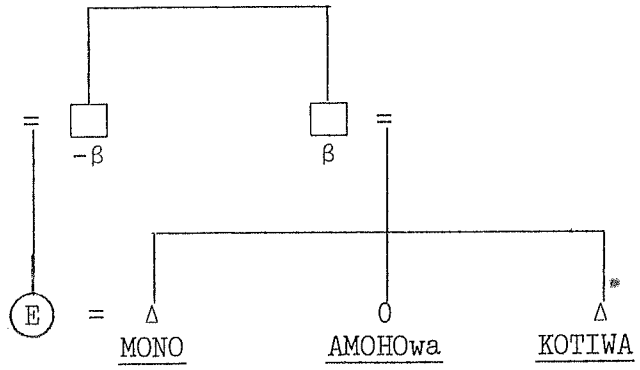


It is also a term which has the same form for the two sexes.

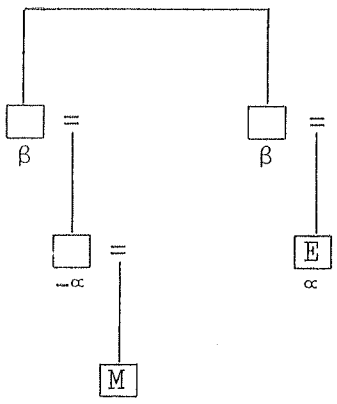
For (c) and (d), if ∝ = ♂ , then:



if ∝ = ♀ then

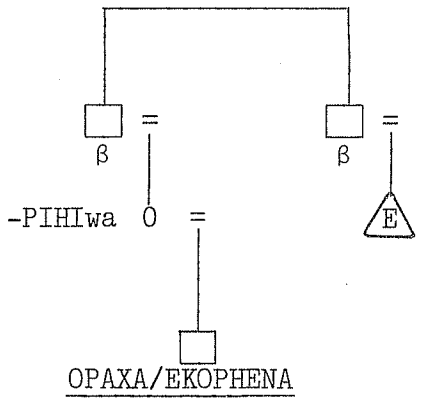


b.

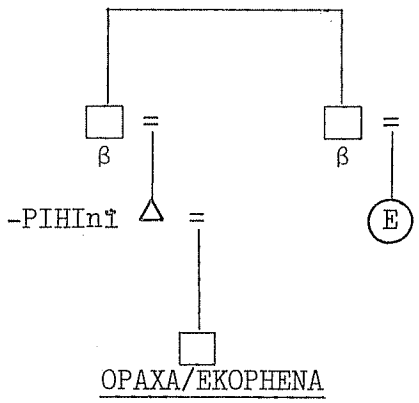


(β) (β) = (+)
(−α) (α) = (−)
(+) (−) = (−) ⟹ affinity

if α = ♂ then



if α = ♀ then



An examination of Table 3 verifies that the application of (A) to other positions of G_{-1}, with the exception mentioned above of consanguines$_1$, results in the categorization of all members of this generation as consanguines/affines (the position of affines is marked in black on Table 3). It should be noted that to determine the status of the children of Ego's siblings, the path of the genealogical lines does not bring in the variables of G_{+1}.

I will now comment on the calculation of ties of consanguinity/affinity based on the recognition of relative sex; one can assume that such a calculation is being made, in one manner or another, by the speaker.

Table 3 contains only a minimum of information necessary to make explicit all types of relationships. In a sense, it suggests perhaps on oversimplified image of reality because the group of generations affected by the sex variable could be said to be too restricted.

We will take as an example the relationships of consanguinity (4) as seen in Table 3. The path which will enable M in (a) to designate E, namely AXAnĭ/ENAwa according to the

non-related Sikuani groups enter into contact, a fictive relationship of AMOHO's, *brothers-in-law*, is first established between two men of the same age class; between men of different age classes, a relationship of *father-in-law/son-in-law*, or AXUyo/OPAXA is established. By systematically extending the kinship nomenclature as the need arises, according to the constraints established by the first contact, a vast fictive genealogy is created which allows any member of a group to place himself exactly in terms of any member of another group. Thus I call M' according to the term M' uses to call me; furthermore, and by transitivity, I call M'' according to the term M' uses to call M''.

To return to the problem raised by (5b), it is clear that the two solutions are not mutually exclusive and it is likely that in reality, they work together. As in all classificatory systems, kinship terminology is as much or more an a priori conceptual framework that the society imposes on its environment as it is the result of an elaboration carried out on an empirical fact.

3. Let us now look at Table 2. I will discuss certain characteristics of the group of lexical roots. For a justification of the details of the reconstructed forms, see Queixalós 1980, pp. 93-95, 97.

One sees at once (1) that the nomenclature relies greatly on derivation, (2) that this phenomenon is much more developed in the terminology of consanguines than in that of affines.

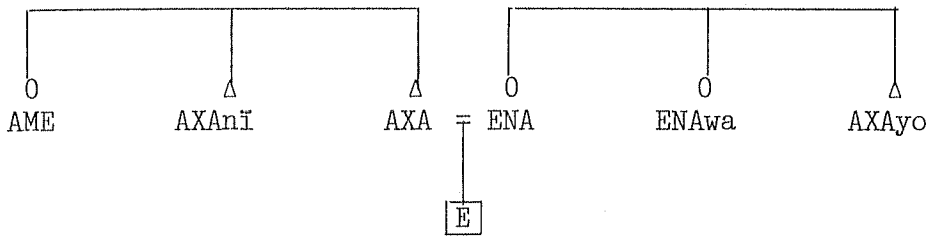
As far as (2) is concerned, in the generations which distinguish the consanguines from the affines, one counts, for the latter, six original lexemes for eight terms, i.e., a ratio of 3/4: AME, AMOHO, KOTIWA, MONO, OPAXA, EKOPHENA.

In the opposite way, the consanguines are made up of four real original lexemes for sixteen terms, i.e., a ratio of 1/4: AXA, ENA, A-, XÏNA-. The rest of the lexemes derive from two sources: (1) from the kinship nomenclature itself (EWA-toyo, whose root, Morey claims (1970:143-46), appears in a generic term which is used for all members of G_{+3} and G_{-3}; however he does not see this derivation; moreover he assumes a derivation AMO → MOMO, on the erroneous basis of superficial tamo, tamomo forms, respectively t(a)-AMO, ta-MOMO where t(a)- is the first person possessive; (2) from the stock of morphemes outside the nomenclature (-PIHI-, *group of individuals united by an external characteristic, such as perhaps ecology*, XI-, antonomasia of -xi, diminutive plural syncretic suffix).

This difference in the lexicogenic means put into effect by the nomenclature could reflect the idea that the sphere of consanguines is perceived, obviously at an unconscious level, as a relatively homogeneous group with a strong internal cohesion.

The subsystem G_{+1} illustrates, in part, this assymetry in terminology. The two terms for consanguines$_2$, AXAnï/ENAwa, are strictly derived from the terms for consanguines$_1$, AXA/ENA,

(7)



We have seen that -nĭ/-wa introduces the indicator of sex of denotatum, e.g., A-nĭ (♂)/A-wa (♀). In the couple terminologically derived: AXA-nĭ (♂)/ENA-wa (♀), this function of the suffix is entirely tautological since AXA is already specified as male and ENA as female by the contents of the lexeme itself.

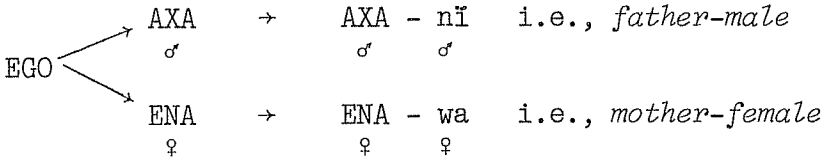
The situation is even more curious with the couple AXA-yo (♂)/AME (♀). Here, we observe:

(1) a blockage in the process of derivation in which AXA → AXAyo, ENA → *ENA-x, where *ENA-x → AME;
(2) the slightly incongruous use of the originally diminutive suffix in the designation of a member terminologically determined as older than Ego;
(3) above all, the presence of the suffix which in kinship terminology determines the feminine in the designation of a member of the male sex.

These anomalies become intelligible if one makes the hypothesis that the suffixes in G_{+1} are a figuration — in a more or less pictorial sense — of the presence of variables of sex β in the positions to be examined.

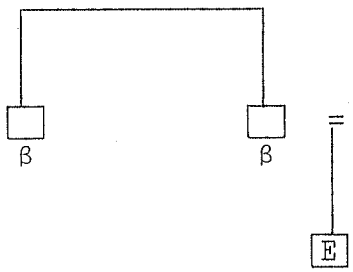
If we accept that AXA contains ♂ as a feature of signification and ENA contains ♀, we arrive at the following diagram:

(8)



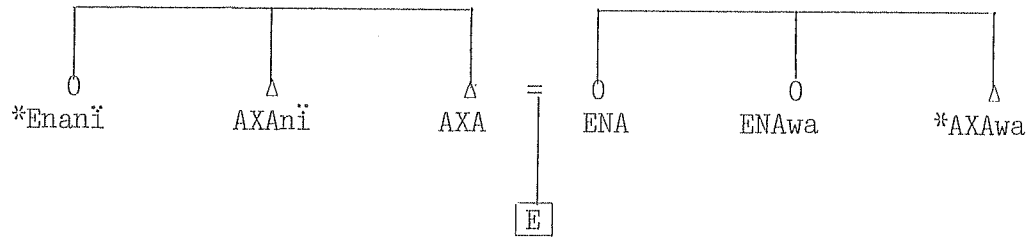
We see here exactly the contents of the part (9) of Table 3, namely: same relative sex.

(9)



which develops in (10).

(14)



My explanation for the absence of (13) is:

(1) a subsystem such as (14), and in spite of the fundamentally logical function which we have assigned to suffixes, seems out of the question because of the probable oddity to users' ears of terms marked by *;

(2) there is nothing available, either in the kinship nomenclature or in the language in general, which resembles the hypothetical suffix -x; nor is there a hypothetical process of the suffixation of a masculine morpheme to an intrinsically feminine noun root.

On the other hand, the inverse of (2) — a feminine suffix on a masculine noun root — is banal in the nomenclature and in the language. This, of course, is because of the unmarked character of the masculine in the making of distinctions according to sex within the animate. In one sense, this makes sound the presence of the feminine -yo in a derivative implying a male denotatum.

The kinship system of the Sikuani conforms to the Dravidian type and is therefore governed by a classificatory principle in which the dominant feature is the calculation of consanguinity/affinity on the basis of relative sex of individuals belonging to the same generation. It is affected by a nomenclature which is characterized by a very marked formalism on the linguistic level. This transparence of linguistic forms is due to the extensive use of derivational processes of which some conform to general patterns of the language and others to ad hoc adaptations at the core of kinship terminology. Others seem to show an apparent tautology or antinomy but, in fact, they use grammatical formants to play the role of binary type logical variables, thus leaving at the most explicit level the traces of the computation which underlies the system.

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