

Reading “The Chrysanthemum and the Sword”: Social Anthropology of Ruth Benedict

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Abstract:

This paper tried to delineate the major arguments in Ruth Benedict’s book “The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture” and show how she approached to understand a society and culture in a specific anthropological method. Being a citizen of America at the time war she had certain restrictions on applying her methods to decipher the cultural meanings of Japanese everyday life. However she made an effort as a war assignment to capture the staple disparities in the views and conceptualizations of both Americans and Japanese about diverse forms of human life and how they are giving meaning to symbolic expressions.

Using the qualitative method of research this paper attempted to find out the distinct criticisms raised against her work and how that book achieved a fascinating endorsement even among the Japanese and why it is taught in every course about the Japanese culture. Tracing the way of hierarchy, emperor worship, child upbringing and obligations an individual has to play in a society she depicted the prominent theme on which a culture is embedded in a highly regimented society. After the Boasian tradition of cultural relativism she diverts into looking at the cultural patterns as a distinct form of analyzing the culture of a separate society through the lens of psychology and the influence of a culture in the development of a personality. The paper concludes with a retrospect into the Japanese unique way of transmitting their chronic culture into the next

generation and the value they endorse to their superiority even over other nations.

Key words: Japan, culture, social anthropology, hierarchy, obligation

Introduction

In June, 1944, when the United States faced the early prospect of the invasion of Japan, and when it had become imperative to understand the enemy's behavior in order to devise means of dealing with it, Ruth Benedict was called upon to use all the techniques of a cultural anthropologist in an effort to comprehend Japanese habits of thought and emotion and the patterns into which these habits fell. As a war assignment, the task was the more difficult because of the pressure of time and because "there were violent disagreements among those [in America] who knew the Japanese best. What began, however, as a war assignment, now appears as an even more vital addition to our literature on the peace. This is one of those rare books which sets forth the basic moral values of a national culture in a comprehensive pattern after careful and penetrating analysis of many facts of human relationships. It is the elaboration of a work undertaken for the Office of War Information and other governmental agencies, and, as such, it provides a dependable analysis of Japanese behavior, which may be used as a basis of prediction. In this sense, it can be considered a success and a very valuable contribution to our knowledge, even though there are points at which the analysis may be imperfect. Part of the author's success in this is due to the fact that she is an anthropologist as well as a skillful writer and as such she is an old hand at studying and then conveying to others what she has learned about the "culture patterns" of exotic peoples, whether the group under consideration be American Indians or an Asiatic nation.

The title of this book itself suggests the conflicting patterns in Japanese culture. It implies that patterns of beauty function in conjunction with patterns of warfare. But neither chrysanthemums nor swords have the same meanings in Japan as in the United States. For example, a sword does not necessarily stand for aggression; it means that its wearer "is responsible for its shining brilliancy" and that "each man must accept responsibility for the outcome of his acts." Indeed he must accept all natural consequences of his weakness, his lack of persistence, his ineffectualness. The sword thus is a symbol of self-responsibility. In defeat today the Japanese have "an abiding strength in their concern with keeping an inner sword" of self-responsibility "free from the rust that always threatens it. It is pertinent to recall that the preparation of "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword" was undertaken at a time when the American image of Japan was a distorted and confused one-the summer of 1944. The O.W.I's Foreign Morale Analysis Division assigned her the task of formulating a more adequate appraisal and explanation of Japanese modes of behavior. While this book was not published until after the close of the war, its findings were used prior to that and it has had and continues to exercise influence among those who govern occupied Japan.

In the outset of the book, the author states her problem, details the methods and techniques used, and describes her sources of information. In the middle chapters she deals with Japanese notion of hierarchy, indebtedness, obligation, taking one's position and she delineates the reforms of Meiji rule through a broader analysis of everyday life of a citizen in Japan. One chapter deals with the processes whereby a Japanese child acquires his culture. The patterns of Japanese culture are here viewed dynamically, as they are impressed by education and training upon Japanese children. The final chapter, attempts an evaluation of United Nations administration of the conquered Japanese. In general, the

author finds that this has been successful; that it has met the spirit of Japanese civilization and followed the procedures most likely to stimulate Japanese progress toward democracy. She closes with a forecast and a warning that requires endless repetition, not only in regard to the Japanese but also elsewhere. The Japanese have taken the first great step toward social change by identifying aggressive warfare as an "error" and a lost cause. They hope to buy their way back to a respected place among peaceful nations. It will have to be a peaceful world.

Methodological point of view

Benedict is already well known to anthropologists for her theory of cultural patterns, which she has expounded in a previous book. In dealing with the Japanese she uses this same method, but the intervening years of research have enabled her to push her theories a stage further. She deals definitely with culture, and equally definitely with psychology. In her own manner the two are interfused; the cultural value standards are stated as such, and so too it is stated how normal individuals act under them. The skilful inter- weaving of the many facets of a large culture hardly lends itself to summary or to concept concentration, especially since the Japanese tend to view life as consisting of so many "circles" or departments.

Benedict points out that the cultural anthropologist has some unique contributions to make toward an understanding of the Japanese that will make it possible to know what to expect of them. One of these is that his/her knowledge of other cultures and the operation of institutions in them enables him/her to point out Japanese motivations and the functions of institutions found in Japan. The study of similarities and dissimilarities even in trivial details of daily life is valuable in this respect. Another unique contribution of the anthropologist is his/her knowledge that all aspects of a culture are

systematically related to each other. There are few traits which are not integrated into the total pattern of living which people regard as the basis of their universe. The consistency of these relationships enables the cultural anthropologist to predict future and unknown behavior from what has been studied and is known. He/she must, however, remain objective, generous toward differences with his/her own culture's traits, tough-minded in recognizing the influence of those differences. Thus she tries to reconcile the Japanese interest in raising and admiring chrysanthemums and their equally absorbing interest in swords and swordplay.

She has also brought together a number of observations, many of which, while not new, serve a very useful purpose in interpreting the reasons for given action. Among these observations probably the most cogent are the extreme sense of the importance of social hierarchy and the sense of compulsion to observe the conventions which such a hierarchy imposes, a greater sense of shame than guilt on occasions of mistake or failure, and the effect or result of such an attitude under conditions of strenuous competition, the preoccupation with this life rather than the next and the duty of the individual to master completely both mind and body, especially the control of the emotions. Apart from its usefulness to those who are in direct contact with the Japanese, the study is a worthwhile experiment in the derivation of the distinctive and characteristic patterns of a large-scale, complex civilization. Hence the book has methodological interest to all those concerned with this area of inquiry. The projected task was not a broad social survey of Japan nor an intensive detailed account of its institutions, but rather, it examines Japanese assumptions about the conduct of life. It describes these assumptions as they have manifested themselves whatever the activity in hand. The goal of such a study as this is to describe deeply entrenched attitudes of thought and behavior. It is instructive to inquire how the author achieved these ends. As

nearly as the reviewer can reconstruct the process, the findings stem from the perceptive qualities of an author who can discern from a collection of a wide assortment of social facts, the significant cues to human behavior. These are ingeniously explored to trace through their cultural foundations and consequences for social conduct. What needs to be emphasized here is that the way Japanese culture is studied has taken a distinctly "national" approach, i.e. nationally characterizing Japanese, ignoring Japan's own diversity as well as its colonial empire. In that approach, the Benedictian paradigm is firmly preserved in Japanese studies in general and in the anthropology of Japan in particular.

Major patterns of Japanese culture

Among the basic factors in the behavior of the Japanese analyzed by the author are: (1) their use of hierarchy as a social mechanism which places each person in his proper station; (2) their conception of obligations and the intricate rules for repayment which vary widely, depending on (a) whether their indebtedness is to the emperor or to their parents (debts which can never be fully repaid), or (b) whether they grow out of favors received during the daily routine of life (which are to be repaid with mathematical exactness); (3) the necessity of clearing one's name either by avenging insults or by suicide as an act that atones for any fault; (4) the emphasis in the Japanese code upon self-discipline; and (5) their rigid system of child training designed to bring about complete conformity to adult patterns of life.

The Japanese conceptions of pleasure, virtue, and self-discipline, and how these emerge from their notion of righteousness are very pertinent to analyse. Righteousness, according to Japanese cultural belief, is parceled into separate "circles of behavior," and a man is judged by specifying the circle of behavior he has not lived up to. It follows, then, that it

is especially important, to recognize that the "circles" into which the Japanese divide life do not include any "circle of evil." This is not to say that the Japanese do not recognize bad behavior, but they do not see human life as a stage on which forces of good contend with forces of evil. They see existence as a drama which calls for careful balancing of the claims of one "circle" against another and of one course of procedure against another, each circle and each course of procedure being in itself good. If everyone followed his true instincts, everyone would be good.

The Japanese have little sense of guilt, but a strong sense of shame. They avoid overt competition because the loser is shamed; they feel it as an aggression. Their hierarchical system naturally minimizes competition, much as the institution of the intermediary go-between cuts down shame if negotiations fail. Politeness is a means of preventing shame and the need of clearing one's name. Revenge for slight is "a kind of morning tub" by a people passionate about cleanliness. They are vulnerable to failures and slurs, and harry themselves over them, even to suicide. In Benedict's contention, shame-based behavior is a type of performativity, involving the satisfaction of externally institutionalized social requirements. For this, no inner principle — "one's own picture of oneself" — is quite necessary. Rule-boundedness and the capacity to come up to the socially set standard are all that are required. Benedict is not denying the positive values of shame culture. Because of the shame mechanism, postwar Japan found it easy to shed the dream of the Greater East Asia and switch to a different set of performance criteria, those involving peaceful coexistence within the community of (certain) nations (in the Cold War). This type of easy change Benedict calls "situational ethics."

Strength to meet one's obligations is the most admired of all qualities. Hence the Japanese love the tragic ending. *Shuyo*, self-discipline, "enlarges life"; it polishes away "the rust of the

body” and makes one like a sharp sword. Mental training (*muga* in Zen cult) promotes expertness of any kind by obliterating the “observing” or “interfering” self (self-consciousness, presumably), until there is “not even the thickness of a hair” between will and act, and the act is “one-pointed.” This training, though the exercises were derived from China and perhaps ultimately from India. They train for mastery of this life. They ask a great deal of themselves.

World of various forms of obligations

The main thesis of the book is based on certain fundamental obligations which every true Japanese acknowledges. The carrying out of these obligations implies certain reciprocal behaviour, and it is the working out of these two attitudes in the social life of the people which forms the whole basis of the Japanese pattern of culture. Once the way in which they operate is understood, much that to the Occidental seems meaningless and out of character is seen in its proper perspective. Benedict notes:

“On is a Debt and must be repaid, but in Japan all repayments are regarded as falling into another category entirely. The Japanese find our morals, which confuse these two categories in our ethics and in our neutral words like obligation and duty, as strange as we would find financial dealings in some tribe whose language did not separate 'debtor' from 'creditor' in money transactions. To them the primary and ever-present indebtedness called on is worlds apart from the active, bowstring-taut repayment which is named in a whole series of other concepts.” (Benedict, 1946)

The obligations or *on* of an individual are fivefold: those received from the emperor, from the parents, from one's lord, from one's teacher, and through the contacts of daily life. Each *on* has its reciprocal payment but the payment is of two kinds, those which have no limit in time or space and which can never

be fully repaid (i.e., duty to the Emperor, to one's parents, and to one's work) and those which can and must be specifically repaid. The first is termed *gimu* and the latter *giri* or debts which are repaid "with mathematical equivalence." Such *giri* payments are of two types: *giri*-to-the-world, which involves duties to one's liege lord, duties to one's family, duties incurred as a result of gifts of money or favors, and finally duties to closely related kin such as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces; the second type of *giri*, that to one's name, involves the clearing of "one's reputation of insult or imputation of failure." This *giri* involves also two other factors: "One's duty to admit no (professional) failure or ignorance" and "One's duty to fulfill the Japanese proprieties, e. g., observing all respect behavior, not living above one's station in life, curbing all displays of emotion on inappropriate occasions, etc." A great deal of space is given by Benedict to an explanation of this basic Japanese pattern, all of which involve "obligations" in one sense or another: such as *chi*, loyalty to the emperor; *ko*, filial loyalty; *giri*, a whole category of special obligations; *on*, a group of "incurred obligations." It is in concepts, such as these only, an understanding of Japanese behavior may be found.

Admiration to the emperor

Her book explained the fanatic loyalty of the Japanese to the emperor as a matter of cultural psychology, not as simple madness; it explained the extreme militarism of the Japanese, which was far beyond that of western military training, in accordance with indigenous cultural rationality, not as irrational frenzy; and it explained the national belief in Japan that Japan would be victorious in the war (a belief that was, needless to say, utterly false) in terms of national character that could be understood in its own right, not as pathological illusion or sheer lack of reflexivity. The emperor was all things to all men but always thought of as not directly to blame for

anything that happened, including the war. Defeat or no defeat, the Japanese people still would revere the emperor: "Only his words can make the Japanese people accept a defeat and be reconciled to live for reconstruction," said the Japanese soldiers who were made prisoners of war. (Benedict, 1946) So the Emperor is inseparable from them, and therefore above criticism; but all others are expendable without salvage. Hence the standard of no surrender in war, but of full cooperation after peace is acceptable for them.

Japanese notion of hierarchy

Chief of their cultural pattern is their belief in hierarchy-in taking one's proper station. The proper station of Japan was at the head of all nations; therefore other nations must be persuaded to take their rightful places lower down in the structure. Within Japanese society, too, hierarchy based on sex, generation, and primogeniture is part-and-parcel of family life, and hierarchy determines the position of persons in class and caste also. To effect a change it was a major condition that the emperor be put back in his proper place ("restored") in 1868, that progress be resumed by "expelling the barbarians." But, when the barbarians proved the superiority of their techniques by naval bombardments of *Satsuma* and *Choshu*, it was clear that an error of calculation had been made and that to "resume progress" it was necessary to learn the barbarian techniques and to embrace them wholeheartedly. Realistically viewed, the war resulted in a defeat. But the war was merely a means to an end-the putting of all nations in their proper places, with Japan at the apex of the control structure. If war failed and the other nations became powerful enough to secure control, then the techniques used by Japan must be wrong. So they were renounced. American methods and skills must be superior, so these must then be acquired. Hence, when our troops arrived, they found a people prepared to welcome sincerely their late

enemies. The superior ways could be learned only from the conquerors, and hence peace and the other techniques which go with it were indicated and accepted by the Japanese. The Japanese had tried to export their formula for safety, but other peoples objected strenuously and successfully. Now she is determined to master the ways which seem to be successful for others. The constant goal of the Japanese is to secure honor, respect, and status; if the means prove ineffective, adopt others which are effective, however different they may be. There is also a hierarchy of nations, and in this Japan senses strongly that the eyes of the world are upon her. By reason of this it is necessary that the Japanese soul be trained above matter, and that all contingencies be foreknown and planned for it.

The model Benedict abstracts from Japanese social hierarchy is based on a type of tight-knit group such as the family or the army. What creates and maintains rigid hierarchy within such a group is the relationship individuals hold to each other, notably, the principle of occupying “one’s proper rank”. Hierarchy, however, does not always function oppressively. In Benedict’s depiction:

“In the family, children are loved by parents, and at the same time, must obey them. The hierarchy internal to Japanese groups involves at once protection and submission, supported by the notion of debt (on) that individuals supposedly owe to their parents, ancestors, community, the emperor, and the society at large. She discusses the mechanisms which made the Japanese accept the idea of hierarchy; namely, the idea of obligation, or on, and its reciprocals, gimu, or obligation to one's government, one's emperor, or one's parents and ancestors, and giri, or obligations of a contractual nature, such as to one's liege lord, one's affinal family, or non- relatives who had given one work or gifts, or one's duty to keep his name or family reputation clean. The stress laid upon these feelings of obligation makes clear their significance to Japanese behavior, and the explanations given clear up some perplexing problems.” (Benedict, 1946)

Comparison between Japanese and American cultures

Both Japanese and Americans were in two distinct corners in their attitudes towards various dilemmas and their approach to the everyday forms of conceptualizing the facts of social reality. For instance consider the differences in attitudes toward law: the act of obeying the law is viewed by the Japanese as "repayment upon their highest indebtedness," namely, to the state; whereas in the United States laws are considered by many citizens as "interferences with individual liberty." In consequence, Americans judge Japanese "to be a submissive people with no ideas of democracy," while the Japanese judge that "we are a lawless people." The distinction between the two sets of behavior patterns is to be found in the different ways in which the common and universal trait of self-respect is attained. Americans secure their self-respect out of the ways in which they manage their own affairs, and the Japanese win a similar degree of self-respect out of repaying what they owe their accredited and great benefactors of the past and present generations. Interestingly the humiliation techniques in any aspect of life which might be culturally acceptable in Western ethics would lead to trouble in Japan.

Japanese personality and character is very distinct from western notions primarily during the periods of response to emotional stress, as Benedict points out "All the ways in which the Japanese departed from Western conventions of war were data on their view of life and on their convictions of the whole duty of man." (Benedict, 1946) By far the most valuable aspect of this study was the analysis of the Japanese sense of loyalty, especially as this involves the incurring of obligations and their repayment. However the three generations following the Meiji restoration introduced many new facets from the West into the Japanese way of life. These doubly complicated the already marked internal contradictions of gentleness and harshness implicit in the Japanese way of life. Ruth Benedict was able to

comprise within one harmonious survey a sympathetic introduction to all these contradictions, and make others aware of the continuously growing synthesis in Japan.

Through this comparison Chrysanthemum played a certain role, intended or not, in promoting U.S. hegemony, by effectively expressing the U.S. way of life to the Japanese as a better way of life; the Japanese who had just been defeated by the U.S. took to this ethos under the umbrella term “westernization” or “Americanization.” More importantly, by homogenizing Japanese culture and by seeking an historical explanation within a bundle of characteristic behaviors of the Japanese, Chrysanthemum occluded the colonial responsibilities and postcolonial compensations that the Japanese government should have faced at the end of the war. After all, Chrysanthemum was part of wartime and was produced as a study by a member of the victorious nation about a defeated nation. In this sense, it is understandable that it became a verdict for Japanese — a kind verdict, for that matter — as to why Japan had to be defeated by the U.S. and how it could make itself more like the U.S., in order to salvage itself and its culture.

Strength and weakness of the work

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword has been described by many people as a book with a strange fascination. Part of this is probably a result of Benedict's unique writing style; however, more important than this is the fact that many of the points she made about Japan are relevant even today. Also, the book acts as an historical record of events that led to great change after the war. The path from "Japanese Behavior Patterns" to The Chrysanthemum and the Sword is a record of the challenge Benedict herself faced. It is likely that because the policies recommended in "Japanese Behavior Patterns" were adopted and worked out the way she predicted. However,

Chrysanthemum is written more freely and with more confidence and, more than anything else, with more humanity. It is well known that Benedict never visited Japan nor did she have knowledge of the Japanese language and, because of this, the book's value has often been questioned. However, in any academic course on Japanese culture, her book is indispensable and still continues to be widely used in Japan. The author has sought to meet the handicap by a threefold program of extensive reading, the generous use of well-qualified informants, and the employment of modern techniques of critical analysis. She has also attempted to turn this handicap into an advantage by using the data as a demonstration of what a trained observer can do with secondhand data at long range.

One of the reasons Chrysanthemum is so widely read in Japan is its title. In Japan, the chrysanthemum is the symbolic crest of the Emperor; however, Benedict's use of chrysanthemum has a rather different significance. She writes:

“When he [a serious observer] writes a book on a nation with a popular cult of aestheticism which gives high honor to actors and to artists, and lavishes upon the cultivation of chrysanthemums, that book does not ordinarily have to be supplemented by another which is devoted to the cult of the sword and the top prestige of the warrior. So too, chrysanthemums are grown in pots, and arranged for the annual flower shows all over Japan, with each crooked petal separately disposed by the grower's hand and often held in place by a tiny invisible wire rack inserted in the living flower” (Benedict, 1946)

This passage depicts the images of the chrysanthemum and the sword as symbolic of the debate surrounding the two conflicting aspects of Japanese character. The book deserves special commendation for not taking the all too easy step of arguing that the Japanese have such and such culture patterns therefore they indulge in aggressive wars. On the contrary, the author points out that there are many strengths in Japanese

culture which may serve as a foundation for a prosperous and peaceful future if given the economic opportunity. The very techniques of "knowing one's proper place," and the need to "clear one's name" can be as powerful incentives toward leadership in peace as they been in aggressive war.

There are problems in Benedict's study seen from the standpoint of today's scholarship, given especially that anthropology has come a long way from the Boasian culture and personality school of Benedict's time. As with other culture and personality scholars such as Margaret Mead, Benedict saw culture too in close correspondence with personality types. In this way, culture becomes a closed system that houses finite personalities. She fails to pay due attention to the politico-economic transformations Japan went through, especially in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries: that is, in a word, -modernization- a process that brings about not only societal transformation but also the individuation of people who now emerge as critical self-reflexive subjects, albeit with relative cultural differences. Rather, what matters to Benedict is "culture," which, in her view, stands aside from or above history, society, and economy. As a result, she ends up "explaining" such a complex entity as Japanese society by using fragmentary sources of words, isolated ideas, quaint literature, and partial observations based on second-hand information. The result is inevitably to identify an unchanging Japanese cultural essence. The consequent reductionism marks the book from cover to cover.

The total disregard for the extent to which environment and in particular Japan's weak and vulnerable economy is also one of the greatest critique of the work. The only reason given for Japan's policy of aggressive expansion, especially on the continental mainland, and for participation in World War II is the transfer of this extreme sense of social hierarchy from the national scene to that of East Asia. Japan's reasoning is explained as follows: " There was anarchy in the world as long

as every nation had absolute sovereignty; it was necessary for her (Japan) to fight to establish a hierarchy- under Japan of course, since she alone represented a nation truly hierarchal from top to bottom and hence understood the necessity of taking ' one's proper place.'"

Another weakness of the study is its failure to lay sufficient emphasis upon the shifting character or personality of the Japanese as expressed in terms of their response to changing circumstances. No one can question the author's realization that Western influences, economic competition, the stunning effects of defeat, and the completely changed outlook of the people have dimmed the external expressions of conventional cultural patterns. Apparently, however, the extent of this dimming process is not realized, for it is likely that the casual observer in Japan today would scarcely recognize the traditional code as outlined in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, so much have they been over- shadowed by current forces and influences. To the trained observer, however, they would still be visible and still be active, but who can say how long some of them will survive. One staple criticism of this book, and of anthropological methods in general, is that in order to support her thesis Benedict is forced to assume that all Japanese conform to the pattern. This does not, however, invalidate the thesis, which remains correct for the majority of people. Yet it should be realised that, as in every other culture, there are a great many people who do not conform to the authorised pattern, and in that country the proportion is much higher than one would expect to find in such a heavily regimented society. It is perhaps well that it is so, because these "misfits" are likely to play an important part in the reorganisation of Japan.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to recall that the author made this study during the war years and thus was handicapped by not being able to enter Japan and study the people and culture at firsthand. If she could have done so, she doubtless would have perfected and rounded out her interpretations at a number of points. She does not raise the question of the psychological origins of Japanese culture patterns, but assumes that these patterns are learned by each generation although granting that certain thought-habits are deeply ingrained in the lives of individuals and cannot be changed overnight. As an anthropological treatise, it is unique in the fact that it was written without any residence abroad among the people studied. Because of the war situation, the author was compelled to rely largely upon interviews with Japanese residing in the United States, a method with obvious limitations which were at least partly overcome by her skill in analysis and broad knowledge of other Pacific peoples.

However, they seem to be more appropriate to the feudal than to the modern period in many ways, and the infiltration of European culture has undermined them more than Benedict indicates. This is understandable in view of Benedict's inability to make a field trip. The informants with whom she conversed were frequently *Issei* who had been in Japan in youth and left years ago. Changes have occurred since they migrated to the United States, and these apparently were not adequately described to the author by informants who had been there more recently. On the whole, Benedict stresses strongly those aspects of Japanese culture and character which are reciprocal, have to do with the interrelations of persons. She passes much more lightly over those which are primarily expressions of the self. Perhaps that is why there are only transient allusions to the obtrusive and compulsive Japanese cleanliness, neatness, frugality, economy of means and finish. These are primarily self-satisfying qualities, as shame, obligation, and hierarchy are

turned toward others. This is not stricture only a reminder that no book is completely perfect. This one eminently does enlarge understanding and polish away the rust of the mind.

The antiquity of this “culture,” when she examined Meiji history she argued that oligarchs had not reinvented or changed Japan, nor even tried to. “They did not take their task to be an ideological revolution at all. It was the opposite of revolutionary. It was not even progressive.” Japan remained entrenched in its old ways. Indeed, framing the very purpose of *Chrysanthemum*, she argued that the family–state hierarchy, emperor worship, and the associated values of Japan’s shame culture were “rooted in traditional Japanese character and it is the chief object of this book to discuss what that character was and is.” Benedict concludes that *Chrysanthemum* would show that Japanese hierarchy, inequality, and “old and dangerous patterns of aggressiveness,” were timeless aspects of Japanese character, not recently engineered and inculcated through propaganda.

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