

# *Chrysanthemum*'s Strange Life: Ruth Benedict in Postwar Japan

Sonia RYANG

## Abstract

Revisiting Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, I follow in this article the postwar controversies in Japan over the book. Although enormously significant in the formation of postwar Japanese cultural identity and social scientific discourse, the book has gone through a strange life, subjected to diverse interpretations which reflect historical changes in Japan's self-perception. I propose that what is most strange about the reception of the book is the complete omission of the fact that the book ignores Japan's colonial and imperial history before 1945, thereby opening up the ground for postwar amnesia by the Japanese government of its prewar and wartime domination and atrocities in Asia. I examine the role that this book plays, albeit indirectly, as an historically produced text in helping to shape today's Japanese obliviousness towards its colonial past.

## Introduction: The Benedictian Paradigm

Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* has played a crucial role in postwar social scientific discourse on Japan. Japanese anthropologist Aoki Tamotsu has noted that *Chrysanthemum* served as the starting point for the holistic approach to Japanese culture taken by so many

---

**Sonia Ryang** was born in Japan to Korean parents. She is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University, and received a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University. She is author of *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity* (Westview, 1997) and editor of *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin* (Routledge, 2000). Her e-mail address is: Sonia.Ryang@jhu.edu.

postwar analysts (Aoki 1990: 42).<sup>1</sup> Aside from such holistic approaches as those of Chie Nakane (1970) or Joy Hendry (1993), the whole range of works that study Japanese senses of self or patterns of behavior such as those of Takeo Doi (1971) or Takie Lebra (1976) are influenced by Benedict's paradigm in one way or another. As recently as 1992, David Plath and Robert Smith emphatically placed *Chrysanthemum* as one of the most (if not the single most) influential books in the western anthropology of Japan. Smith went as far as to suggest that "there is a sense in which all of us have been writing footnotes to [*Chrysanthemum*] ever since it appeared in 1946" (Plath and Smith 1992: 206). He also stated that all Americans who study Japan are "Benedict's children" (Smith 1989). More recently, Jennifer Robertson has stated: "It seems that cultural portraits contrary to the tenaciously normative template constructed by Benedict and subsequently reproduced can only always be 'alternative' or 'other' as opposed to unacknowledged facets of the complex, composite, and integrated whole of 'Japanese culture'" (Robertson 1998: 311). It would be safe to conclude preliminarily that Benedict shaped the postwar cultural discourse of Japan's self-representation, and *Chrysanthemum* thus became paradigmatic.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps of all the books written about Japan in modern times, *Chrysanthemum* has had the strangest life. One of the inexplicable contradictions about it is that despite the existence of harsh criticism from early on in Japan, to this day *Chrysanthemum* continues to be read and admired and to create debate about interpretation and reinterpretation of Ruth Benedict. It needs also to be noted that in this process of re-evaluation, some concepts that had been first proposed by Benedict and received self-critically by Japanese readers were revised and came to be understood as positive features of Japanese culture.

In 1984 the sale of the Japanese translation of *Chrysanthemum* reached 1.2 million copies (Nishi 1983: 12). In a more recent calculation, it is said that a total of 2.3 million copies of the Japanese version of *Chrysanthemum* have been sold in Japan (Fukui 1999: 173). One random survey has it that 33% of 944 adult Japanese respondents in an urban area have heard of *Chrysanthemum* (Befu and Manabe 1987: 98). Its pocket-size edition, first published in Japan in 1967, had its 101st printing in July 1995 (Kent 1996: 35). This shows a higher statistical interest than in the U.S., where 23,000 copies of *Chrysanthemum* were sold from 1946 to 1971 (Johnson 1988: 14), while Clifford Geertz records that a total of 350,000 copies were sold in all (Geertz 1988: 116).

Whereas in the U.S., interest and readership have been confined to business and academe, except perhaps during the initial postwar years, in Japan *Chrysanthemum* has been quoted even in high school textbooks (Lummis 1982: 2). Every decade saw important articles or books published with *Chrysanthemum* as their theme, mostly in conjunction with the thesis of Japanese cultural uniqueness, or *Nihonjinron* (see e.g. Suzuki 1967, Nishi 1983, Soeda 1993). With the recent release of the Ruth Fulton Benedict papers at Vassar College, Benedict's alma mater, debates on Benedict's life in close relation to the production of *Chrysanthemum* have been revived in Japan among scholars. The ways in which *Chrysanthemum* has been read in Japan are indicative of changing self-perceptions of Japanese intellectuals as well as the general public, a self-perception which was then interactively fed back into the western discourse of Japan (see Hendry 1996).

Clifford Geertz has emphasized that by the time one is done with the book, one may wonder if indeed it is the Americans, not the Japanese, who are strange — the tenacious insistence on the part of Benedict on juxtaposing Japanese and American cultures, according to him, delivers the effect of inverting our perception (1988). Such a reading, I suggest, is distinctly American. Japanese did not read *Chrysanthemum* as a book that compares Japan and the U.S. They read it and continue to read it as a book on Japan — Japan only and nothing else.

It is in this connection that I see a need for a new (and long overdue) critique: nowhere in *Chrysanthemum* is the vision of Japan's empire and former colonies included. Japanese culture is explained from within, not in interaction with its empire in Asia. The war's end was not simply about the Americans and the Japanese; it involved the former colonial subjects. Yet, as indicated by the way the U.S. occupation of Japan and postwar Japanese society ignored Chinese, Koreans, Okinawans, and other peoples forming the margin of the empire (although they were the ones first to be persecuted in case they caused trouble), the Japanese (as well as American) readership of *Chrysanthemum* has been completely oblivious to the fact of Japan's empire. This omission effectively granted the Japanese state a perfect alibi for not compensating for the atrocities and the exploitation it had committed against the peoples in Asia before and during World War II. This is not a coincidence — *Chrysanthemum* effectively presents Japan to its readers as a self-contained entity, having no link to any of the societies colonized beyond itself.

In this article I first discuss the contents of *Chrysanthemum*, and then

follow the postwar reception of the book and the 1980s debate in Japan about the book. I then revisit the issue of the book's historical omission, an issue that has not been discussed by the existing critics of *Chrysanthemum* in and outside Japan: an issue that points to the ongoing neglect by the Japanese state of its colonial and wartime responsibilities.

### ***Chrysanthemum* — A Master Narrative**

What *Chrysanthemum* explores most impressively is the hierarchy that is embedded in Japanese culture and society. 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" (1946: Ch.3). 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 (1946: Ch.4).

Another concept that fascinated Benedict is *giri* (1946: Ch.8). Benedict maintains that *giri* is distinguishable in two ways: one is *giri* to one's name, the other, *giri* to society. The former is a kind of self-respect, but deeply embedded in the notion of hierarchy. It does not necessarily mean the act of pursuing the possible highest achievement in terms of one's social success. Rather, it is more closely related to the notion of "taking one's proper place" within a circle that is already set up in a hierarchical order. The latter is a public duty that one has to pay. A loyalty to the feudal lord may result in leaving one's father or in opposing him. But it is a public *giri* that ultimately justifies such a deed.

By far the most important notion that Benedict formulated about Japan, which became heavily influential in both academic and popular discourses on Japan, is the notion of shame culture — although the actual portion in the book dwelling upon shame culture is very brief (1946: Ch. 10). 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 Coprosperity Sphere 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.”<sup>3</sup>

Although enormously successful in reviews, with Alfred Kroeber praising it for being “a book that makes one proud to be anthropologist” (Kroeber 1947: 169; see also Bowles 1947, and Morris 1947a and 1947b), 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 in too close a correspondence with personality types. In this way, culture becomes a closed system that houses finite personalities (see Handler 1986). 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.

In contradistinction to the above, one can perceive that Benedict is a “culture giver” to postwar Japan. When she refers to American freedom, American informality and openness and therefore genuine human relationships, and American moral democracy, she effectively places them, intended or unintended and despite her relativist principles, one step above those of Japan. They become something that Japanese, even with their peculiar ethics, can hope to aspire to, no matter how much she insists that her American readers be patient, tolerant, and understanding of Japan in its peculiarity. After all, *Chrysanthemum* was part of wartime “enemy morals studies,” 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.

Those shortcomings aside, at a time when Japan was seen as a society of sub-human monsters, the significance of Benedict's words was immense: she salvaged Japanese humanity, by trying to render its "monstrosity" comprehensible and logical. 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.

## Postwar Reactions

Before the Japanese translation of *Chrysanthemum* was published, Tsurumi Kazuko's critique of the English original attracted Japanese readers' attention to the book. Tsurumi had been educated in the U.S. and repatriated during the Pacific War. In her brief but critical review, Tsurumi first credits Benedict's skill in isolating Japanese patterns of behavior in contrast to American patterns of behavior. But Tsurumi then charges Benedict with superficial observation and methodological flaws in tracing national culture back to child-training without paying attention to socio-historical processes that Japan had gone through, from feudalism to capitalism (1947: 222–224). She criticizes Benedict also for her selective use of examples; examples that fit her hypotheses are preserved, while counter-examples are simply dismissed. Tsurumi states: "... in Benedict's method [of studying] patterns of culture ... changes in the means of production and the conditions arising thereby are left totally unconsidered" (1946: 224). Tsurumi further points out that Benedict mistakes the official discourse engineered by the state in order to disseminate emperor worship (for example, the Imperial Rescript for Soldiers), that is, "the ideology of the ruling class," for the representative view held by the Japanese people at large (ibid.).

Following the publication of the Japanese translation of *Chrysanthemum* in 1948 (Benedict 1948), *Minzokugaku kenkyū*, the most widely

circulated academic journal of ethnology in Japan, paid tribute to the book in a cluster of articles entitled "What is offered in Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." Five scholars, starkly divided into supporters and denouncers of the book, presented their views (see Bennett and Nagai 1953). Among the supporters, Kawashima Takeyoshi, a Tokyo University law professor known for the study of the family system and family law (Kawashima 1950a), expresses his admiration for *Chrysanthemum* as follows:

Perhaps for those of us Japanese who were taught to blindly accept our own tradition and our own viewpoints and to judge others on the basis of our [own standard] ... this book would be immensely shocking. This book was originally written for the wartime purpose of conquering and governing Japan, but for us, it is a book of lessons through and through. (Kawashima 1950b)

Unlike Tsurumi, Kawashima credits Benedict as having abundant data pertaining to Japanese culture and commends her for her analytic capacity, which is displayed in her method of connecting various phenomena that may first appear as contingent and unrelated, but which make sense when carefully connected. Benedict thereby presents a picture that captures Japanese culture in its totality, which Kawashima calls "structural understanding of Japanese behavior and ways of thinking" (1950b: 2). This is what Aoki later called a holistic approach (see above).

However, Kawashima also notes inconsistencies in Benedict's work. For example, he argues that the hierarchy Benedict discusses is not unique to Japanese society. He also suggests that feudal patriarchy was supported by the Meiji totalitarian government and forcefully imposed on people, while people themselves had their own form of patriarchy away from the state-imposed norm. In other words, Benedict's understanding of Japanese hierarchy is buying into the official propaganda of the state, and is simplistic and ahistorical in perspective. On this point, Kawashima is in agreement with Tsurumi, who has no praise to give to Benedict. More importantly, Kawashima is reading *Chrysanthemum* as a critique of the Japanese feudal legacy and looking toward Benedict as a provider of ideas that would lead Japan into democracy by eradicating feudalism. Nowhere in *Chrysanthemum* do we find such a stance, but for Kawashima's postwar frame of mind, aspiring for Japan's reconstruction, *Chrysanthemum* becomes a manual for enlightenment. Furthermore, Kawashima misses the point of the culture and personality school and Benedict's technique by trying to read into *Chrysanthemum* the assumptions of evolutionist history,

according to which one historical stage must be discarded and replaced by the next stage.

Another contributor who positively reacted to *Chrysanthemum* is sociologist Ariga Kizaemon, also highly acclaimed for his studies of family, household, and kin group in Japan. Ariga endorses Benedict's approach to Japan as anthropologically valid, complimentary to the existing studies of primitive societies. Similar to Kawashima, Ariga is impressed with Benedict's attention to the Japanese concept of hierarchy. But unlike Kawashima, who regards the hierarchical aspects of Japanese culture as a legacy of feudalism, Ariga interprets Benedict to be suggesting that hierarchy is an inherent part of everyday life of Japanese across different historical periods (1950: 16). For Ariga, Benedict's originality lies in her synchronic approach. Ariga emphasizes that Japanese hierarchy is distinct in the sense that its structural base resides in kinship organization: even Japanese capitalism developed from kin-based hierarchy that historically evolved together with the land-tenure system (see Ariga 1943). Ariga concludes his essay by suggesting that "in order for democracy to grow [in Japan], the conditions [that create hierarchy] must be overcome and an individual-oriented lifestyle needs to be established" (1950: 22).

The other three contributors read Benedict in a more negative light. Social psychologist Minami Hiroshi's critique revolves around details of Benedict's interview technique. He questions the appropriateness of samples that were supposedly taken from Japanese-Americans who were born in Japan during the Meiji period and, with emigration to the U.S., have preserved the old customs, while the reality in Japan itself has moved away from the old norms. Similarly, for Minami, the Japanese films Benedict studied for writing *Chrysanthemum* were biased from the outset, given that those films were made for specific propaganda purposes, and were designed to be exported to the U.S.

Minami then takes up Benedict's contention that the Japanese have a dual personality, one personality performed in front of others and the other for oneself — this being the psychological basis of shame culture — and that this dual personality derives from abrupt discontinuity between indulgent childhood and strict adulthood (Benedict 1946: Ch.12). Pointing to the fact that this contention was first published by Benedict in her article "Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning" (1938), Minami suggests that Benedict teleologically applied this conclusion first to "the abstract type called the Japanese" and then tried to avoid examples that did not suit her interpretation, thus resonating with Tsurumi's critique

(1950: 12). What underpins Minami's critique is that he basically sees shame culture as a negative trait and resists accepting it as an inherent principle of Japanese culture.

Folklorist Yanagita Kunio takes a similar line as Minami, although Yanagita is more detailed in counter-examples that are drawn from linguistic data. For example, Yanagita points out that the term *on* that plays a central part in Benedict's understanding of hierarchical human relations in Japan is in fact not part of daily language in today's Japan; the term originated in China. Yanagita suggests that Benedict misunderstood the term *on* used in state-engineered propaganda as a term used by ordinary people, another point that had already been made by Tsurumi, Kawashima, and Minami (1950: 33). He attributes the cause of Benedict's misunderstanding to the false self-representation that the Japanese state disseminated to the world through prewar and wartime propaganda.

By far the most critical or indeed dismissive reader of Benedict among the *Minzokugaku kenkyū* contributors is Watsuji Tetsurō. An important thinker of prewar Japan, whose philosophical investigation of Japanese culture, *Fūdo: ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (Climate: A study of human science), first published in 1935, is in fact very similar to *Chrysanthemum* in its quest for fundamental Japanese-ness, Watsuji seems almost displeased to have had to read *Chrysanthemum* in order to make a contribution to the journal.<sup>4</sup> Watsuji bursts out in complaint, stating that the book "has no academic value whatsoever" (1950: 23). His essay took the form of a letter to Ishida Eiichirō, anthropologist and the editor of *Minzokugaku kenkyū*.

Watsuji's first point of criticism is on the principle of generalization, or lack thereof. For him, Benedict unmethodically generalizes the ideas that the military fanatically manifested to the world as those of Japanese as a whole — a criticism resonating with those of Tsurumi, Kawashima, Minami, and Yanagita. Considering that the media were under strict state control, Watsuji suggests, it would have been impossible to determine what Japanese were really like behind the representation given by the military and the jingoist state (1950: 24–25). Watsuji criticizes Benedict's statement concerning the Japanese wartime belief in a will power that would be able to overcome material scarcity and even death, as if dismissing the materiality of technology (a view corresponding with Japanese behavior displayed by kamikaze bombers: Benedict 1946: 25). Watsuji suggests that such a belief did not exist in Japan prior to the Manchurian incident of 1932; it was only after the military took hold of state affairs that the Japanese media came to be imbued with such extreme views (Watsuji

1950: 25). As such, these views were the product of the military operation, “patterns of military ideas,” not patterns of Japanese culture, he argues (ibid.).

Watsuji then suggests that in Japan people do not express their thoughts in direct action, but rather simply let things happen as they do; because of this habit it was possible for a handful of fanatics to control people’s behavior during the war. Nonetheless, Japanese people knew all along that it was not their idea; they simply followed. Watsuji connects this to the “multiple layers of Japanese culture” where not only feudalism but also primitivism are found side by side with modern culture (1950: 26), which in fact is almost precisely what Benedict suggests. Watsuji concludes his letter by asking Ishida to teach him where in the book Ishida as anthropologist finds academic value.

What is interesting in the early critiques of *Chrysanthemum* is that positive reaction and negative reaction rest more or less on the same points, which are portrayed from completely opposite positions. For example: Benedict is majestic in analyzing Japanese hierarchy that is a feudal legacy; Benedict is missing the unique nature of Japanese culture where feudalism always exists with other modes, including capitalist economy and modern culture; Benedict is ahistorical in her approach to Japanese culture; it is her strength that she explores Japanese culture from the present-day point of view; Benedict is precise in understanding Japanese culture as a whole and this is all the more admirable considering that she never undertook fieldwork; since Benedict never undertook fieldwork, her empirical data cannot be true or credible and her use of wartime propaganda of the military as a truth pertaining to the Japanese is not acceptable.

There seems to be a certain emotional charge found in common between opponents and supporters of Benedict, either welcoming the fact that an American anthropologist wrote a study of Japanese culture that has quite a few things to teach Japanese about their own culture, or indignant about that same fact. Those who welcomed the book tended to see Benedict, and the U.S. for that matter, as the leader of Japan’s postwar democratization, whether that was seen to involve eradication of feudal remnants in Japan, or abolition of kinship-based hierarchy and the creation of civil society.<sup>5</sup> Those who denounced the book aimed their disgruntled voices at Benedict’s and the U.S.’s failure to distinguish between the establishment (the ruling class, the military, official discourse, the oppressor, the state, etc.) and the people. This failure was seen as a failure to understand the linguistic discrepancy between the written, classical, and

formal Japanese of Chinese origin and the spoken, informal Japanese of everyday life (Yanagita); it was seen as a failure to distinguish between actual Japanese behavior and official state policy and militaristic slogans (Watsuji, Minami); it was seen as a failure to distinguish between the ruling class's conspiracy and ordinary people's innocence (Tsurumi), or between the state-imposed norms and the people's grass-roots lifestyle (Kawashima). In other words, according to the logic of the postwar critics, people — whomever that might refer to — had been either forced by the state and military to join the war, or were exercising a dual behavior pattern (which Benedict did not see), distinguishing the façade loyal to the government from their true selves.

This certainly is an interesting mutual misunderstanding between Benedict and her opponents. If we remember Benedict's notion of shame culture, in which individuals are governed not by internally autonomous moral principles, but by externally imposed sanctions, the complaints that her opponents make of her, that is, that she failed to see the dual behavioral principle of Japanese, and failed to distinguish the formal façade from inner "true" thoughts or feelings, are not justified — this duality is indeed the basis of shame culture. Benedict does not necessarily presuppose the existence of inner principles behind the behavior that adheres to social norms, but neither does she dismiss such a possibility. Her notion of "situational ethics" captures the ambiguity pertaining to interpreting Japanese behavior, warning that we must avoid hasty conclusions on the basis of external presentation alone.

What appears to me more interesting in the early Japanese critique of *Chrysanthemum* lies elsewhere. If, as critics suggest, there was indeed such a clear-cut distinction between the official and the unofficial during the war, how is it that some extraordinary personal sacrifices such as kamikaze bombing took place? Were they all simply presentational performances on the surface? In any case, in the reading of these critics, Japanese "people" were exempt from wartime responsibility and postwar repayment; it is "the establishment" that needed to go through self-criticism. One might, of course, wonder where these intellectuals placed themselves — on the side of the working class (in the case of Tsurumi) or "the people" (as in Yanagita and Watsuji and to some extent Kawashima), for example? One must not forget that "people" were indeed soldiers also; except for a minority who had been jailed for treason, almost all Japanese individuals — including men, women, children, and the elderly — were involved in the war effort in one way or another. I do not intend to offer blame here —

that is far too complex an issue to fit within the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, to conveniently separate people and the military after the war *ex post facto* is an act of avoiding personal moral responsibility in the name of the collective, that is, external sanction — precisely the trait that Benedict attributes to shame culture.

Early reactions to *Chrysanthemum* were closely connected to the post-war political situation of Japan's defeat and the U.S. occupation. The ambivalence toward the foreign-induced democratization and social pressure for intellectuals to oppose in public the prewar and wartime policy of the military government underpin the critiques — both pro and con — of *Chrysanthemum*. It is here that the postwar readership found an agreement: readers read the book as a guide or manual for Japan's self-criticism and revision of its prewar and wartime militarism. While Benedict wrote *Chrysanthemum* in order to provide Americans with a better understanding of Japan in the future, including the understanding required to better occupy Japan, the early Japanese readers read it in close connection to the near past: the war. Criticized or welcomed, there is no doubt that *Chrysanthemum* was read — as well as to some extent, written — not simply as a study of culture but as a political intervention.

This is not to say that *Chrysanthemum* has no academic value, as Watsuji emotionally declared. But this is to say that it was a project in applied anthropology that served the specific needs of the war and the aftermath of the war. Although Benedict used, as the bulk of her research, data that had been collected during the war, she actually wrote the book after the war. Hence, there was a different ethos in the reception of the book as compared to the wartime enemy morals studies in which Benedict and many other anthropologists in the U.S. had participated, including Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, in order to assist the Office of War Information in securing the upper hand in psychological warfare (see note 2). By the time Benedict published *Chrysanthemum*, two atomic bombs had been dropped on Japan, wiping off the horizon hundreds of thousands of lives, and Japan's defeat was complete. In other words, sympathy for Japan and Japanese culture was a real possibility.

Benedict herself listened in tears to the news of the Japanese emperor's radio broadcast announcing the defeat, and wrote to Robert Hashima, her research assistant: "I wish I knew how to say to Japan that no Western nation has ever shown such dignity and virtue in defeat and that history will honor her for the way she ended the war.... Now I hope and pray that America will play her part with restraint and dignity too; it will be difficult

for many Americans because they are so different” (Hashima 1949: 69). *Chrysanthemum* provided explanation for the defeat on the one hand and saved Japan's face in starting over on the other. Blaming the war on the military or feudal legacy, the ruling class, or the Japanese habit of dual behavior in group situations that Benedict even supposedly missed, were all part of the process of rebuilding Japanese culture as depicted by Benedict in the name of shame culture or situational ethics.

### ***Chrysanthemum* as a Political Intervention**

There have been a number of debates over *Chrysanthemum* since the postwar period, including some controversy over whether Benedict visited Japan or not, despite the clear statement of Benedict herself that it was not the case (Fukui and Ueda 1995; Sargent and Smith 1949: 139). With the publication of recent biographies, the life of Ruth Benedict is attracting increasing attention in both Japan and the West.<sup>6</sup>

Of many controversies and debates over Ruth Benedict and *Chrysanthemum*, a critical reading by Douglas Lummis and reactions to this may offer an appropriate point of departure in considering how *Chrysanthemum* and Benedict are approached in Japan from the 1980s onwards. The 1980s was a time by which Japan's long-lasting economic boom originating in the Korean War (1950–1953) was consolidated, and the material life of ordinary Japanese had become remarkably affluent as compared to the postwar devastation. Japan's economy grew from 1964 to 1973 by a yearly average of 10.1%, as compared to the U.S.'s 4%, Britain's 3.1%, France's 5.4%, and West Germany's 4.7% (Masamura 1988: 234). Its thriving cities and businesses gave rise to the globally-appreciated “Japanese-style management.” Already from the 1970s on, the body of discourse on Japanese cultural uniqueness had been pervasive in the Japanese print market, offering domestic readers clues to indulge in their senses of cultural superiority as against others in the world who were suffering from a poorly-growing economy and social and political chaos. It was a time, predictably, at which the cultural traits Benedict offered in *Chrysanthemum* as Japanese uniqueness — that is, the uniqueness that led Japan to the war's defeat — were turned around and re-endorsed as positive factors that brought Japan's remarkable national economy out of the ashes.

Lummis, an American professor at Tsuda Woman's College in Tokyo, published a full Japanese version of his critique (1981) and a shorter English version (1982). Lummis's major argument rests on two points:

Ruth Benedict wrote *Chrysanthemum* as an obituary for a dead Japanese culture, and she wrote it as a work of political education. His first point stems from the interpretation of Benedict's other life as a poet, whose main theme was death, and the sorrow and beauty of death. Benedict lost her father early in childhood and thereafter, the ritualistic commemoration of his death was forced on her by her mother, who expressed her sorrow in hysterical crying whenever the bereaved family mourned him. This commemoration became a point at which the young Ruth Benedict distinguished between the world of death as calm and beautiful and the world of living as disturbed and ugly (Benedict 1959 [1935]). Based on the poems of Ann Singleton (Benedict's pen name as a poet), poems that were by and large extremely cryptic but that often alluded to the serenity and beauty of death, Lummis sees Benedict as being fascinated with dying cultures, both the Native Americans in the Southwest and the war-torn Japanese. This is how, in Lummis's view, *Chrysanthemum* was written: the secret of its success lies in the fact that Benedict wrote it as an elegy to the disappearing past of the Japanese, who now faced the task of completely wiping away this past and building a brand-new culture, an American-style democracy.

This reading does not contradict the ways in which Kawashima and Ariga read *Chrysanthemum*. As has been shown, both scholars regarded the Japan depicted in *Chrysanthemum* as something that the Japanese had to do away with: Ariga with reservations and with a realistic estimation that despite the ideal of an individual-based democratic society, Japan's kin-based hierarchy would persist; Kawashima with optimism that the disappearance of prewar oppressive Japanese culture would be an historic necessity that no force could stop, especially with the aid of the American occupation.

However, Lummis's point is slightly different from these two. For him, to declare the death of Japanese prewar culture is morally wrong: Lummis sees *Chrysanthemum* as a book written entirely on the basis of the victor's logic of cultural domination and neocolonial re-molding, assuming that the only way for Japan to survive culturally would be to become like the U.S. According to Lummis:

The element in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* which has overpowered its critics is not its "scientific" conclusions but its brilliant and unforgettable imagery, and the indispensable role which that imagery has played in the ideology of the post-war Japan-U.S. political relationship.

....

This is the importance of defeat: defeat means being shamed in the eyes of the

world, and that is something the Japanese can understand. Therefore only defeat can teach the Japanese to change their ways for the better. And “change for the better” of course means change to more closely resemble the U.S. (1982: 3–4)

Lummis emphasizes that what Ruth Benedict took to be Japanese culture was in fact the state ideology, resonating with what earlier critics of *Chrysanthemum* wrote. But they are fundamentally different in their interpretation; whereas early critics blame the state and military as falsely representing Japan and claim that Benedict's flaw was her overgeneralization of Japanese culture on the basis of the ruling class ideology, Lummis charges Benedict with having selected the state ideology that was expressed through her Japanese-American informants' words and presented it as if it were scientific data. Lummis understands more clearly than did early critics that what might have been originally a state ideology was embodied and internalized by ordinary Japanese in general, and by Benedict's informants in particular. For him, the responsibility of Benedict as a social scientist would have been to critique the ideological component of the native understanding of Japanese culture, revealing the mechanism by which the dominant ideology that reflects the interest of only a section of the society is successfully internalized by individuals and generalized as a national culture; however, Benedict fails to deliver such a critique.

Lummis's more pointed critique is that Benedict was not scientific enough or not scientific at all in her account of Japanese culture. Therefore, for him, it is odd that *Chrysanthemum* is read as an accurate account of Japanese culture, since it is ultimately a piece of political propaganda endorsing the American way of life and placing the U.S. as superior to the Japanese. This does not mean that Lummis thinks Benedict was racist. On the contrary, he denies that. But what complicates his view is not what Benedict directly believed, which was in fact very explicitly anti-racist (see e.g. Benedict 1943, 1942a, 1942b, 1942c, and 1940), but rather the effect of *Chrysanthemum*, which was to teach “a new and subtle form of racism” (1982: 7).

I differ from Lummis in that I do not think *Chrysanthemum* presented Japanese culture as dead, and I do not think that probing into the author's true intention — assuming such a thing can be done — is a productive exercise. Contrary to what Lummis believes, as I have proposed, *Chrysanthemum* gave birth to Japan's national culture: by uncovering the internal cultural logic that led Japan to the war and to its extremely destructive

behavior in the war, Benedict presented the justification of Japan's past as well as future direction toward a new democratic (read "Americanized") Japan, that eventually would form Japan's postwar cultural identity. Contrary to Lummis, I do not believe that *Chrysanthemum* created a new form of racism implying American superiority; after all, the book created senses of Japanese superiority over other cultures in its Japanese readers and critics. But Benedict cannot be directly held responsible for this, since this is the product of the Japanese consumers of *Chrysanthemum*. The problem lies elsewhere, as I hope to show in the final segment of this article.

I disagree with Lummis in his method of directly connecting Benedict's biographical history with *Chrysanthemum*. Ruth Benedict may be the author of *Chrysanthemum*, but also of *Race: Science and Politics* (1940), and *The Races of Mankind* (1943 with G. Weltfish), the text that outraged white supremacists in the South, earning her the label "communist," and preventing her from obtaining top-level security clearance at the Office of War Information (Lapsley 1999: 290–291). All texts, once produced, have their own lives in the process of public reading, as emphasized by Umberto Eco (1992). And if this is the case, we must consider *Chrysanthemum* not in simple and unproblematic connection to Benedict's private life, personal character, proclivity, and taste, but to see *Chrysanthemum* as a text that is a product of historically conditioned social relations embodied in a specific writing position, and as a text that was and is *read*, read by Americans, but above all by the Japanese. Using the biographical data of the author in evaluating the historical role of a book requires caution. In fact, what seems to me more interesting regarding *Chrysanthemum* is that regardless of what Benedict intended or might have intended, it has been read in certain — sometimes quite contradictory — ways in Japan, as can be seen in Lummis's own experience of re-reading it — "My own understanding of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* has gone through several stages" (1982: 7).

My third point about Lummis is related to his understanding of anthropology. It seems that Lummis understands anthropology to be a scientific — objective — account of culture, and opposes science to politics, by classifying *Chrysanthemum* as a work of political literature and hence, not "real" anthropology. This view is both out-of-focus and out-of-date, seen from the standpoint of today's understanding of anthropology; few socio-cultural anthropologists would call anthropology a purely objective science, while the majority would positively acknowledge that anthropology and especially the writing of ethnography are in good part political

intervention. When *Chrysanthemum* was written, anthropology may have occupied a position in scientific disciplines, but today, ethnography is read more not as science but as an interpretive text crafted by anthropologists within the given socio-historical conditions of textual production through interaction with natives and informants (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986, Clifford 1988). *Chrysanthemum* itself is now read as an interpretive text, not as a scientific account of Japan; there is an unresolved tension between the literary endowment of Benedict and her scientific aspiration to be objective — and perhaps, politically neutral (Geertz 1988).

This said, Lummis offers valuable insights concerning the Japanese reception of *Chrysanthemum*. He points out that the Pacific War was a war between two imperialist powers over the dominant position in the world, and not a war between different “cultures” or “ways of thinking” as depicted by Benedict (1982: 77). He clarifies that the political background to *Chrysanthemum*'s publication must not be forgotten in considering Benedict's book. But this makes it all the more curious that Lummis tries to explain the political nature of *Chrysanthemum* from within Ruth Benedict's personal life.

Lummis's reading was enthusiastically accepted by many Japanese readers, and was endorsed as a critique of the American creation of Japanese stereotypes (Saitō 1981, Mutō 1981, Nishikawa 1994). But it was also received with strong criticism, two of which I introduce here. In his historical overview of *Chrysanthemum* and its critiques, Nishi Yoshiyuki denies Lummis's statement that *Chrysanthemum* “tends to make many Japanese uncomfortable or angry” (Lummis 1982: 5), and states instead that “it seems that there are hardly any Japanese who are displeased or made angry by *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*” (Nishi 1983: 15). He argues that Japanese readers are generally impressed with the book in multiple ways, while nonetheless amused over Benedict's minor misunderstandings (1983: 16).

The Japanese readers of *Chrysanthemum*, by the time Nishi published his book, were no longer members of a defeated nation, but were rather flexing their muscles as members of a nation that had risen up from the debris of the war and entered the ranks of the world's most advanced industrialized societies. In Nishi's view, therefore, those readers might generously and knowingly be amused at an American anthropologist who did not quite understand the finesse of Japanese life thirty-five years ago. For Nishi, Lummis's reading reflects nothing other than Lummis's own personal and political predicament:

I think Mr. Lummis belongs to the generation whose hopes for their homeland were destroyed by the Vietnam War. These people were disillusioned by the fact that their ideal of “the American sacred war” and “American democracy” had been betrayed; they thus turned against their own homeland. This does not mean they became communists. They are in a halfway house, so to speak. And when those people arm themselves theoretically with Marxism, their disease of U.S. denunciation becomes more serious. For them, the U.S. appears arrogant and detestable. They smell in Benedict, who was a cultural relativist, the arrogance of prioritizing the U.S.; their sense of smell ... has a pathological air. (1983: 131–132)

Nishi dismisses Lummis’s view of the Pacific War as an imperialist war by stating that such a view is obsolete and laughable. He wonders if Lummis is a Marxist — as if this were an important criteria through which to judge him as good or bad (1983: 155).

In Nishi’s view, Lummis’s critique of *Chrysanthemum* is pathological and political — more political than *Chrysanthemum* itself — mainly because he is still talking about imperialism (which, of course, the Japanese government has long forgotten). At a glance, Nishi’s critique appears to rest on what he sees as the overly politicized nature of Lummis’s criticism of *Chrysanthemum*. Instead, Nishi suggests that we read *Chrysanthemum* in its historical context, in which postwar Japanese readers were moved by its method of showing Japanese themselves what they really were like as seen from an American’s eyes. In Nishi’s view, politicalness is a stigma, as if Nishi himself were free from politics.

But of course Nishi’s stance is itself highly political. Why is it laughable to understand World War II as imperialist warfare? Koreans did not fight Americans as Koreans, but as soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army, Japan’s imperial subjects, and the emperor’s children — yet, many Koreans were executed as war criminals, while many Japanese top leaders, including the emperor himself, were pardoned by the Americans. Okinawans did not sacrifice their lives as free citizens, but as imperial subjects and for the protection of the mainland and the sacred emperor — yet, Okinawa was offered to the American military after the war as part of the settlement between the imperialists, while the main islands of Japan flourished. What was the Pacific War other than an imperialist war?

Attitudes like Nishi’s are symptomatic of the Japanese government’s amnesiac dismissal of colonial compensation. One wonders why Japanese readers such as Nishi were impressed by *Chrysanthemum* when reading it in the postwar years. Perhaps this was because they found a ray of hope in

a book that said that the Japanese had their own internal cultural logic that could be used for cultural reconstruction, and that said nothing about Japan's colonialism, annexation of Taiwan and Korea, the Manchurian incident, the Nanjing massacre, the fifteen-year war with China, the invasion of southeast Asia, the forced labor mobilization of men and women from the colonies including the army "comfort women," and so on.

Nishi's critique is echoed perhaps even in stronger terms by Pauline Kent, a Japan-based Australian scholar. From the outset, Kent is highly critical of Lummis, stating that "in Japan, commentary on Benedict, fuelled by Lummis's arguments, includes some outrageous suppositions" (Kent 1996: 34). Kent tries to disentangle what she sees as Lummis's erroneous suppositions about Benedict, emphasizing that Benedict was discussing the Japanese ethics system in order to explain Japanese behavior; therefore, *Chrysanthemum* should not be taken as "a fully comprehensive and fully guaranteed introduction to Japanese society as a whole" (1996: 47). In other words, in Kent's view, it would be unfair to blame Benedict for not having accounted for everything about Japan and every aspect of Japanese culture. But in my view — and as has been shown above — Lummis's point is different from this: he is questioning Benedict's stance and not her lack of comprehensiveness.

Kent describes *Chrysanthemum* as follows: "the book, written for the American general public immediately after the Second World War, led to a wider understanding of the Japanese as a people — as opposed to a previous image of an exotic people or a fierce enemy which seemed to defy all understanding" (1996: 33). "Benedict had, during her time at OWI [Office of War Information], learnt the value of shunning propaganda for objective data and thus was also able to shun the 'politically correct' image of the day of the imbecile and inhuman Japanese. And yet, Lummis would have us believe that 'what she creates ... is America's natural enemy' (Lummis, 1982: 64) because she arranges the facts to fit her purpose to finally produce a simplistic but 'neat and orderly pattern of values'" (1996: 56). It is interesting to see that Kent holds Lummis responsible for this last point — many others before Lummis, including Tsurumi as we saw, had criticized Benedict for the selectiveness of her data. No doubt *Chrysanthemum* rendered Japanese more humane. But *Chrysanthemum* did other things, too — occluding Japan's wartime and colonial responsibilities over its Asian subordinates and failing to explain Japan's historical position with reference to international political economy. These are important omissions seen historically and I shall raise this more fully below.

What is common in Nishi's and Kent's criticism is that they blame Lummis for misleading the readers of *Chrysanthemum*, the basis of which is nothing other than Lummis's misreading. According to Nishi, Lummis is waging his own anti-American ideological struggle by using Benedict as scapegoat, while Kent criticizes Lummis for not crediting Benedict for having humanized Japanese against the context of World War II. Nishi appears to wage his own political struggle by dismissing Lummis as pathological and Kent seems to be oblivious to the fact that *Chrysanthemum* was not published during World War II, but *after* the war, *after* the Japanese devastation was complete and America was in the position of shaping Japan into its Cold War ally. Both Nishi and Kent take it for granted that Benedict did a good thing, and take the tone of salvaging Benedict from abusive misunderstandings. This itself is a form of ideological consumption of *Chrysanthemum*.

### ***Chrysanthemum's* Omission**

In a brief but masterful review and critique of the historical consequences of *Chrysanthemum*, Jennifer Robertson points out that Benedict "collapsed past and present, and fused shreds and patches of data in formulating a unique and timeless janusian core ... that was 'the Japanese' cultural personality" (1998: 304). According to her, "Benedict made getting to know Japan look too easy, and the Japan she profiled seemed all too knowable: once inscrutable, the Japanese were suddenly crystal clear" (1998: 302). Robertson suggests that western anthropological approaches to this "knowable" Japan took the method firstly of focusing on internal contradictions, paradoxes, and conceptual opposites found in Japanese culture, and secondly, in contrasting juxtaposition with the U.S.: what happened is that the conceptual properties Benedict proposed as the key to Japanese culture, including *on*, *giri*, and shame, became a primary site for anthropologists and scholars to work and re-work in interpreting Japan (e.g. Lebra 1969, Kawashima 1951). In this process, the key concepts that Benedict offered as descriptive tools are converted into explanatory tools of Japanese culture.

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.

This leads us to the main critical point of this article: by “nationalizing” studies of Japan, i.e. by forgetting about Japan’s empire, sections of Japan’s nationalist scholars have consistently omitted Japan’s postwar negligence of colonial settlement and moral obligation to the formerly colonized peoples from the peripheries of the empire in postwar Japan. *Chrysanthemum*’s omission or occlusion of this was the first of the long list of postwar cultural discourses of Japan, including those that climaxed in the *Nihonjinron* literature of the 1970s and 1980s.

As Lummis’s critique shows, *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. In the critical years following World War II, *Chrysanthemum* postulated the problem that needed to be examined in connection to the history of Japanese imperialism as a problem that existed internally in a Japanese cultural essence, as if to say that all Japanese needed to do to reform themselves was to re-study their own national character.

The Japanese government even to this day has not properly compensated the former colonial subjects, including the wartime military “comfort women.” Indeed, after half-a-century, new forms of discourses that justify the evasion of postwar responsibilities — different from a simple amnesia — are emerging, including the right-wing trend that is loosely clustered around organizations such as *Jiyūshugi shikan kenkyūkai* and *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukurukai*, roughly translated as the study group for historical liberalism and the association for the making of new history textbooks, respectively. These organizations are participated in by the so-called *bunkajin* or cultural personnel of varying degrees of visibility in Japan’s public milieu. All in all, they stand on the premise that the dispute over war responsibilities is finished; they emphasize how Japan also suffered in the war — Hiroshima and Nagasaki — and hold that the demand for reparation by the former military “comfort women” is motivated by material greed.

Needless to say, the above trends needs to be seen in opposition to conscientious historians represented by the late Ienaga Saburō, who fought

against the distortion of the history of Japan's war crimes by the Ministry of Education's systematic engineering of school textbooks. More succinctly, these manifestations of what might be called "the new right" are different from the more outright right-wingers, who would call for the revival of militarism, recovery of the empire (including Sakhalin and the northern territory that Japan lost to the Soviet Union after the war), and a return to "primordial Japan." Their "new right" ideology comes in the guise of progressivism, forward-looking discourse, and user-friendly presentations, with the publicly expressed support of TV celebrities and comic writers. Obviously, they aim at a broad mass appeal, unlike sectarian ultramilitarism, and here lies a more serious danger of Japan's right turn.

Benedict's failure to expand her discussion more consciously toward the historical processes of empire-building, rather than probing into the inherent and internal Japanese national character, has a certain bearing on today's reality. I am not blaming Benedict as an author; it is her text, in its historical positionality and popularity, and more importantly, its reception that matter here. It is significant that Benedict, an American anthropologist writing from the vantage point of the victorious nation, completely overlooked Japan's need for adjustment towards its former colonies, the people Japan had made to serve its empire and then left with miniscule or no reparation. This is even more significant in light of the fact that Japan became the U.S.'s ally in the Cold War in Asia, a setting in which Japan's cooperation with the U.S. became more important than Japan's reparation to its former colonies. Although these developments happened after Benedict's death (in 1948), it is undeniable that *Chrysanthemum* heralded the age of the U.S.–Japan security treaty.

In the historical context of the U.S. military occupation of Japan, issues of Japan's war responsibility and postwar reconstruction have been reduced to a dyadic dialogue between Japan and the U.S. The rest — the Asian peoples Japan had colonized or subjugated — did not count. The inward-looking self-inquiry of *Nihonjinron*, analyzing "Japanese and their uniqueness," that dominated Japan-related discourse in the 1970s was a by-product of such an historical reconfiguration of postwar lay and intellectual patterns of discussion (see Dale 1986 and Mouer and Sugimoto 1986 for a critique). In this process, the marginals inside and outside Japan, such as Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, Okinawans, the economically dispossessed (the homeless, day laborers, etc.), the socially disenfranchised (the disabled, women who did not fit the standard middle-class norms, the elderly, etc.) have been systematically silenced — or at least this was the case until

recently and even now to some extent continues. Of course, I do not suggest that *Chrysanthemum* single-handedly created this situation. But I do suggest that *Chrysanthemum*, with its graceful prose and clear-cut reductionism in portraying Japan as a homogeneous nation with a unique culture, played a key role in its creation.

A Korean critic in Japan, Suh Kyung Sik, notes that new forms of racism justifying the war are recognized among Japanese college students today and adds, appropriately in my view, that: "Japanese who do not belong to the wartime generation may not possess consciousness of guilt, but at least they must take the responsibility to go beyond 'shame'" (Suh 1997: 192). Indeed, it is another paradox of Japanese society that the conventional understanding that Japanese are shame-oriented is blatantly defied by the Japanese state's ongoing refusal to grant citizenship and/or voting rights to the former colonial subjects who continue to live in Japan, and by systemic discrimination against foreign guest workers. Whether Benedict intended this ugly reality or not is irrelevant, for the situation transcends the intention of any one author — *Chrysanthemum* is a text produced within the field of historically-conditioned power relations between the U.S. and Japan, where the postwar military occupation helped to create the amnesia of Japan's former colonial oppression and aggression in Asia, while imposing on Japan the American logic of the Cold War and its power games.

Clifford Geertz suggested that we read Benedict along with Jonathan Swift, not with Margaret Mead (1988). I would like to suggest also that next to Swift, we add Frantz Fanon, Primo Lévi, Jean Améry, and many others who bring our reading position one step closer to the pain of the colonized, the persecuted, the oppressed, and the exterminated. Then — and only then — can *Chrysanthemum* become a text that speaks to humanity at large, and not just a graceful bestowment of license for self-obsession and self-consolation by the victor to the vanquished.

## Notes

*Acknowledgments.* I wish to thank Professor Mark Selden for criticism and suggestions for the early version of this article. My students in "Ruth Benedict: Life and Work," the course I offered in Fall 2001 at Johns Hopkins University, gave me wonderful ideas. Likewise my teaching assistant for that course, Hussein Agrama, was a great inspiration for me. Professor Sidney Mintz, as usual, gave me valuable insights regarding Benedict, for which I am grateful; she was one of my teachers at Columbia. I particularly wish to thank anonymous reviewers for *Asian*

*Anthropology* for their comments and Professor Gordon Mathews for his time and help in improving my text.

1. Japanese names are listed according to Japanese custom, i.e. with the surname first, except those whose publications appear in the English language with their names cited following the western convention, i.e. the surname last. All translations of Japanese texts quoted in the article are mine.
2. Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, first published in 1946, was the product of her involvement with the Office of War Information (OWI) during World War II. It was Geoffrey Gorer who was responsible for involving Benedict in the work of the OWI: when Gorer, a British citizen who was working in the OWI, moved to the British Embassy, he suggested Benedict as his replacement. In the OWI, Benedict wrote a short piece analyzing Japanese films (Benedict 1944) and another short study, "Japanese Behavior Patterns" (Benedict 1945). It would be fair to assume that both provided the basis for *Chrysanthemum*. Gorer was a British anthropologist specializing in national character. His influential thesis on Japanese national character proposed that the aggressiveness Japanese soldiers displayed during the war could be traced back to their strict toilet training during infancy (Gorer 1942, 1943). Neither Gorer nor Benedict spoke, read, or wrote Japanese.
3. The coinage of Japanese culture as shame culture came as much from later rereadings of the book by Japanese scholars as from *Chrysanthemum* itself. As with other traits of Japanese culture presented in the book, such as hierarchy and obligation, that had first been accepted as negative in the postwar period and then later re-interpreted, shame culture also was later understood as a positive trait of Japanese culture, especially against the historical background of Japan's postwar economic recovery. Pauline Kent suggests that Benedict never intended to portray Japanese culture primarily as shame culture (Kent 1994, 1999). In my view, whether Benedict truly intended it or not is less of a concern than how it is that the notion of shame culture has become, over fifty years, so important in the Japanese reading of Benedict and in Japanese self-perceptions. For reasons of space, I am unable to dwell on this further, but see Sakuta (1967), Hamaguchi (1977, 1982), Saeki (1984), Creighton (1990), Soeda (1993), Shimada (1994), and Yoshizaki (1995), to cite a few scholars discussing this matter. My book in preparation, *The Case of Japan, or the Predicament of National Anthropology*, presents a more detailed discussion of *Chrysanthemum* and its implications for the anthropology of Japan.
4. Watsuji's *Fūdo* (Climate, 1979 [1935]; for an English translation, see Watsuji 1961) is seen by some as the origin of *Nihonjinron* in the postwar period. *Nihonjinron* is the vast body of literature that explores Japanese cultural uniqueness. Very similar to Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* in approach (Benedict 1934), Watsuji's book explores Japanese and other cultures through

classification with reference to climactic adaptation types, including the monsoon type, typhoon type, desert type, pastoral type, and so forth.

5. It is interesting to note that one of the Japanese reactions to the defeat in World War II and the shock thereof was compensatory identification with the occupation forces, i.e. Americans, the victor (Kitahara 1984).
6. Perhaps no other anthropologists have had so many biographies written about them as Benedict. In addition to Margaret Mead's two books on Benedict's life (1959, 1974), which are more of a collection of Benedict's papers than Mead's original study, Modell (1983), Caffrey (1989), and Lapsley (1999) wrote biographies of Benedict. They are all idiosyncratic in approach. Modell's is more of a eulogy of Benedict's life (see Stocking (1983), Kuklick (1984), Barnouw (1984), Langness (1984), Handler (1984), for reviews; see also Babcock's (1986) critique of Modell's depiction). Caffrey suggests Benedict was a feminist and modernist (see Landman (1991), Glazer (1990), Clairmont (1990); see Babcock's (1990) critique of Caffrey's depiction). Lapsley, perhaps the best biography of these, places emphasis on Benedict's lesbian identity.

## References Cited

- Aoki, Tamotsu. 1990. "*Nihonbunkaron*" no henyō, sengo nihon no bunka to *aidentiti* (The transformation of "Japanese cultural studies": Culture and identity in postwar Japan). Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha.
- Ariga, Kizaemon. 1943. *Nihon kazoku seido to kosaku seido* (The family system and tenancy system in Japan). Tokyo: Kawade shobō.
- Ariga, Kizaemon. 1950. "Nihon shakai kōzō ni okeru kaisōsei no mondai" (The question of stratification in the Japanese social structure). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (4): 275–284.
- Babcock, Barbara A. 1986. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*." *Signs* 11 (2): 409–411.
- Babcock, Barbara A. 1990. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*." *American Anthropologist* 92: 1093–1094.
- Barnouw, Victor. 1984. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*." *The Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology* 7 (3): 299–302.
- Befu, Harumi and F. Manabe. 1987. "An Empirical Study of *Nihonjinron*." *Kwansei Gakuin University Annual Studies* 36: 97–111.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1934. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1938. "Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning." *Psychiatry* 1: 161–167.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1940. *Race: Science and Politics*. New York: Modern Age Books.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1942a. "We Can't Afford Race Prejudice." *Frontiers of Democracy* 9: 2.

- Benedict, Ruth. 1942b. "Victory over Discrimination and Hate: Differences vs. Superiorities." *Frontiers of Democracy* 9: 81–82.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1942c. "Pre-War Experts." *New Republic* 107: 410–411.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1944. "Japanese Films: A Phase of Psychological Warfare." Report No. 1307. Washington D.C.: Office of Strategic Services.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1945. "Japanese Behavior Patterns." Report No. 25. Washington D.C.: Office of War Information.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1946. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1948. *Kiku to katana* (The chrysanthemum and the sword). Hasegawa Matsuji tr. Tokyo: Shakai shisō kenkyūkai.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1959 [1935]. "The Story of My Life ..." In Margaret Mead, ed., *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Benedict, Ruth and Gene Weltfish. 1943. *The Races of Mankind*. New York: Pacific Affairs Committee.
- Bennett, John W. and Michio Nagai. 1953. "The Japanese Critique of the Methodology of Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *American Anthropologist* 55: 404–411.
- Bowles, Gordon. 1947. "Review of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 10: 237–241.
- Caffrey, Margaret M. 1989. *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Clairmont, Don. 1990. "Review of Margaret M. Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 27 (4): 553–555.
- Clifford, James. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus (eds.). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Creighton, Millie R. 1990. "Revisiting Shame and Guilt Cultures: A Forty-Year Pilgrimage." *Ethos* 18 (3): 279–307.
- Dale, Peter N. 1986. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Doi, Takeo. 1971. *The Anatomy of Dependence*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Eco, Umberto. 1992. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fukui, Nanako. 1999. "Background Research for *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *Dialectical Anthropology* 24 (2): 173–180.
- Fukui, Nanako and Ueda Yoshimi. 1995. "From 'Japanese Behavior Patterns' to 'The Chrysanthemum and the Sword'." *Kansai daigaku bungakubu ronshū* 44 (4): 555–580.

- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. "Us/Not-Us: Benedict's Travels." In Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Glazer, Penina M. 1990. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*." *The Journal of American History* 76 (4): 1310.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. 1942. *Japanese Character Structure and Propaganda*. New Haven: Institute of Human Relations. Yale University.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. 1943. "Themes in Japanese Culture." *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, series II, 5: 106–124.
- Hamaguchi, Eshun. 1977. "*Nihonrashisa*" no *saihakken* (Re-discovering "Japaneseness"). Tokyo: Nihon keizai shinbunsha.
- Hamaguchi, Eshun. 1982. *Kanjishugi no shakai nihon* (Japan: a society of human-to-human relations). Tokyo: Tōyō keizai shinbunsha.
- Handler, Richard. 1986. "Vigorous Male and Aspiring Female: Poetry, Personality, and Culture in Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict." In George W. Stocking Jr., ed., *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hashima, Robert S. 1949. "Ruth Benedict joshi no tsuioku" (In memory of Ruth Benedict). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (1): 68–69.
- Hendry, Joy. 1993. *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation, and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hendry, Joy. 1996. "The Chrysanthemum Continues to Flower: Ruth Benedict and Some Perils of Popular Anthropology." In Jeremy MacClancy and Chris McDonough, eds., *Popularizing Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- Johnson, Sheila. 1988. *The Japanese Through American Eyes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kawashima, Takeyoshi. 1950a. *Nihonshakai no kazokuteki kōsei* (The familial structure of Japanese society). Tokyo: Nihon hyōronsha.
- Kawashima, Takeyoshi. 1950b. "Hyōka to hihan" (Praise and criticism). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (4): 263–270.
- Kent, Pauline. 1994. "Ruth Benedict's Original Wartime Study of the Japanese." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 3: 81–97.
- Kent, Pauline. 1996. "Misconceived Configurations of Ruth Benedict." *Japan Review* 7: 33–60.
- Kent, Pauline. 1999. "Japanese Perceptions of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *Dialectical Anthropology* 24 (4): 181–192.
- Kitahara, Michio. 1984. "Japanese Responses to the Defeat in World War II." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 30 (3): 178–187.
- Kroeber, Alfred L. 1947. "Review of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*." *American Anthropologist* 49: 469–472.
- Kuklick, Henrika. 1984. "Ourselves and Others: *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*, by Derek Freeman and

- Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*, by Judith Schacter Modell." *Contemporary Sociology* 13 (5): 558–562.
- Landman, Ruth. 1991. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*." *Anthropological Quarterly* 64 (2): 97–98.
- Langness, L.L. 1984. "Review of *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*." *American Anthropologist* 86: 1025.
- Lapsley, Hilary. 1999. *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Lebra, Takie S. 1969. "Reciprocity and the Asymmetric Principle: An Analytical Reappraisal of the Japanese Concept of *On*." *Psychologia* 12: 129–138.
- Lebra, Takie S. 1976. *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lummis, C. Douglas. 1981. *Uchinaru gaikoku: "Kiku to katana" saikō* (A foreign land within: Rethinking *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). Tokyo: Jiji tsūshinsha.
- Lummis, C. Douglas. 1982. *A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Tokyo: Shōhakuisha.
- Masumura, Kimihiro. 1988. *Zusetsu sengoshi* (Postwar history by chart). Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.
- Mead, Margaret. 1974. *Ruth Benedict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mead, Margaret (ed.) 1959. *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Minami, Hiroshi. 1950. "Shakaishinrigaku no tachiba kara" (From social psychology's point of view). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (4): 271–274.
- Modell, Judith Schacter. 1983. *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Morris, John. 1947a. "Review of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *New Statesman* 33: 436.
- Morris, John. 1947b. "Review of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*." *Pacific Affairs* 20: 208–210.
- Mouer, Ross and Yoshio Sugimoto. 1986. *Images of Japanese Society: A Study in the Social Construction of Reality*. London: Kegan Paul International.
- Mutō, Ichiyō. 1981. "'Tatakau tabi' kara kotenteki nihonbunkaron o hihan" (Criticizing classic Japanese cultural studies from a 'journey of struggle'). *Asahi Journal* 23 (July 10, 1981): 69–71.
- Nakane, Chie. 1970. *Japanese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nishi, Yoshiyuki. 1983. *Shin "Kiku to katana" no yomikata* (The new reading of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). Tokyo: PHP Books.
- Nishikawa, Nagao. 1994. "Chikyūjidai no minzoku-bunkariron" (An ethno-cultural theory of the global age). *Ritsumeikan kokusai kenkyū* 6 (4): 158–176.
- Plath, David W. and Robert J. Smith. 1992. "How 'American' Are Studies of

- Modern Japan Done in the United States?" In Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner, eds., *Othernesses of Japan: Historical and Cultural Influences on Japanese Studies in Ten Countries*. München: The German Institute for Japanese Studies.
- Robertson, Jennifer. 1998. "When and Where Japan Enters: American Anthropology since 1945." In Helen Hardacre, ed., *The Postwar Development of Japanese Studies in the United States*. Leiden: Brill.
- Saeki, Shōichi. 1984. "Teki no imēji" (The enemy's image). In Saeki Shōichi, *Nichibeikankei no naka no bungaku* (Literature amidst Japan-U.S. relations). Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha.
- Saitō, Shōji. 1981. "Gyaku nihonjinron eno shiza" (Setting an eye on the inverted Japanese uniqueness thesis). *Tosho shinbun*, March 7: 1-2.
- Sakuta, Keiichi. 1967. *Haji no bunka saikō* (Rethinking shame culture). Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.
- Shimada, Hiromi. 1994. "Haji no bunka toshite no nihon" (Japan as a shame culture). In Shimada Hiromi, *Nihon to iu mōsō* (A crazy fantasy called Japan). Tokyo: Nihon hyōronsha.
- Smith, Robert J. 1989. "Beikoku ni okeru nihonkenkyū — minzokugaku" (Japanese studies in the United States — ethnology). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 54 (3): 360-374.
- Soeda, Yoshiya. 1993. *Nihonbunkashiron Benedict "Kiku to katana" o yomu* (An essay on Japanese culture: Reading Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). Tokyo: Shinyōsha.
- Stocking, George W. Jr. 1983. "Character as Culture: Review of *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life*." *New York Times Book Review* 88 (21): 12-13, 24.
- Suh, Kyung Sik . 1997. *Bundan o ikiru — "zainichi" o koete* (To live in division: beyond zainichi). Tokyo: Kage shobō.
- Suzuki, Mitsuo. 1967. "Nihonbunkaron to gendai jinruigaku — 'Kiku to katana' no hōhōron o megutte" (Japanese cultural studies and modern anthropology — On the methodology of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). *Shisō* 522: 113-130.
- Tsurumi, Kazuko. 1947. "'Kiku to katana' — Amerikajin no mita nihonteki dōtokukan" (*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* — Japanese moral concepts as seen by an American). *Shisō* 276: 61-64.
- Watsuji, Tetsurō. 1950. "Kagakuteki kachi ni taisuru gimon" (A suspicion about the scientific value of [*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*]). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (4): 285-289.
- Watsuji, Tetsurō. 1961. *Climate: A Philosophical Study*. Geoffrey Bownas tr. Tokyo: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government.
- Watsuji, Tetsurō. 1979 [1935]. *Fūdo—Ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (Climate — Humanistic investigations). Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Yanagita, Kunio. 1950. "Tsūjōjin no jinseikan" (The concept of life for ordinary Japanese). *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 14 (4): 290-297.

Yoshizaki, Yasuhiro. 1995. “‘Haji no bunka’ no chōwashikō” (A tendency for harmony in “shame culture”). *Hikaku bunmei* 11: 157–167.