Hawaii’s Japanese.: The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.

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BOOK REVIEWS

study. Its interest lies in the sixteen pages of revealing photographs and in the use of rich life history material. Its significance lies in its light on fundamental problems of adjustment. Some may be disappointed in its lack of quantitative data. But it presents a convincing case for the point that "studies of children should be studies of children in their life situations." For this reason it has an important bearing on the future of research in the field of child development.

HOWARD Y. McCLUSKY

University of Michigan


Professor Lind reports on the situation of the Japanese in Hawaii during World War II, Professor Benedict analyses the old country of these Hawaiian residents.

Hawaii's Japanese is primarily a reporting job to the American population at large in answer to the persistent question, "What of the Japanese Residents?" As such it is concerned largely with the interactions between the Japanese community and the Caucasian or Haole community just before, during and just after the war with Japan.

The report includes a useful introductory summary of prewar attitudes, and a good chapter on the mushrooming of fifth column rumors after December 7 which were soon officially denied by the local intelligence agencies but which had a life of their own and played a part in bringing about the evacuation of mainland Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast. After this nadir in prestige the Japanese community gradually recovered public esteem on the basis of the general law abidingness of the Issei and the active co-operation in the war effort of the Nisei. Finally, with the army policy of first admitting Nisei volunteers and later re-establishing the regular draft of Japanese Americans on the same basis as other Americans, the position and security of the local Japanese reached its zenith. The excellent record of the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Combat Team had a good deal to do with this rise.

With the end of the war new crises arose and Professor Lind describes and analyses the break in morale of the Issei following the utter defeat of their homeland. One result of this defeat was the springing up of unorthodox religious movements having as their dogma the idea that Japan did not lose the war and that the Japanese spirit is superior to all others. These movements drew fire from the larger American community and also from the returning Nisei veterans who saw their newly won prestige going up in smoke. As of late 1946 the messianic movements were on the wane and orthodox Buddhist priests were reappearing to provide for the spiritual needs of the older generation, but with the postwar reconversion of social relations and the general difficulties of the returned veterans in coming to terms with life in postwar Hawaii, the future status of the Japanese community remained in doubt. There was already a drop from the high prestige level of 1945 and there was no sure way to foretell future relations in the face of shifting economic and political conditions.

The book demonstrates, among other things, the strength of a public attitude. In Hawaii there is a sort of official public attitude that race relations are harmonious and democratic. During the entire war, despite many private and unpublicized floutings of this dogma, there was at no time a public breaking of this sentiment—no local business organization such as the Chamber of Commerce, no labor union, and no educational or religious body made any public statements critical of a racial group as such. Army officers in charge in Hawaii believed that the public's and the authorities' expectation of loyalty on the part of the Japanese would increase and strengthen the actual loyalty behavior of the population of Japanese ancestry. Lind feels that subsequent events proved that the officers in charge were correct in this regard. He points out some of the evidence and indicates, for instance, that the great positive response to the army volunteer program in 1944 in Hawaii, in contrast to the rather negative response in mainland relocation centers, is in part attributable to the fact that Hawaii—publicly at least—assumed loyalty whereas, by the act of relocation, the mainland assumed disloyalty.

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword provides the background for understanding some of the behavior of the Japanese in Hawaii. For example, the law abidingness of the first generation and the determination of the second to make good soldiers are both instances of behavior calculated to "clear one's name" in the larger community. Professor Benedict's primary
aim is to analyse the cultural values of the Japanese in Japan as a means of explaining their behavior in war and in peace. The book is the outgrowth of a study begun as a war project to aid in a government program of psychological warfare against Japan.

The extensive treatment of the varied forms of social obligation and duty toward various family members and toward the nation as a whole with the Emperor conceived of as the nation’s father provides a good background for understanding the behavior of Japanese soldiers and civilians in wartime and their reactions to various postwar conditions. Dr. Benedict has done a cultural analysis of Japan in this book comparable to, but more extensive than the pattern analyses of primitive societies which she made in Patterns of Culture.

The time has certainly come to take such studies of national cultural patterns even though we do not always have all the necessary evidence and sometimes must depend on secondary sources. One weak point in the present study is the repetition of certain remarks made by Geoffrey Gorer in his pioneer analysis of Japanese child-training. It is doubtful, for example, whether it is a general trait of childhood training in Japan to tell children not to walk on sills or to regard the house as dangerous. On the contrary the house is a very safe place protected by grandmother and by the ancestral spirits. Nor do we have adequate evidence to indicate whether or not toilet training is any more rigid in Japan than in Western culture.

Such overgeneralization is perhaps inevitable in any analysis which stresses national cultural patterns. It is still, unfortunately, true in the field of social studies that the simpler and broader a generalization about behavior, the more likely it is to be in error when it comes to application to the individual case. Japan has a number of national traits, yet each region has its own customs. The problem is to separate the national traits such as stress on family obligation from regional custom such as avoiding stepping on a lintel (about on a par with not stepping on a sidewalk crack in some regions of Western culture). The everpresent danger is to attribute national trait significance to a regional culture trait. At present the only way to know the difference is to accumulate comparative data on the basis of a series of field studies in different areas of the culture in question. So far these are lacking for Japan.

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword is an illuminating study based on available data in the United States as of 1946. It provides a valuable set of generalizations for any future field work in the Japanese area. It should also be of great assistance to any Westerner who must live in Japan either as an occupation official, a business man or a diplomat. If we Americans had taken the trouble to analyse Japanese culture—as Professor Benedict has done—before the war instead of making wise-cracks about the paradoxical natives, there is a bare possibility that Pearl Harbor might have been avoided.

John F. Embree

University of Hawaii


Mexico South does not cover all of southern Mexico but centers, as the secondary title suggests, on an area somewhat neglected by scholars, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. It is easy to understand why the first printing of this book sold out rapidly. The clear, vigorous prose, illustrated with paintings and drawings by the author and with photographs by Rose Covarrubias and others, make it recreational reading.

As long as Covarrubias describes what he has actually seen, interest remains high: his journey from Vera Cruz to the Isthmus, the phosphorescent Cocuyo beetles which are worn alive by local girls as hair or dress decorations, the houses and costumes of the Indian village of Cosoleacaque illustrated with a brightly colored painting, a word picture of Catholic saints “gone native” (p. 42), a trip into the virgin jungles with their wealth of plant and animal life. But when he makes substantial use of secondary sources in describing Indian groups, archeological stages or historical struggles, reader interest and sociological significance wane.

About half of the book is devoted to first-hand observations, drawings, painting and photographs showing the present-day life and customs of the Zapotec Indians on the “Pacific plains” of the Isthmus. This is Covarrubias’ contribution to the social scientist.

The ecological structure of Juchitán, “a great sprawling town of over 20,000 pure or nearly pure Zapotec Indian inhabitants,” corresponds to the older pattern that was widely characteristic of Mexican cities both in pre-Cortesian and