The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.

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This study of the patterns of Japanese culture by a well-known anthropologist makes available to western readers an interesting explanation of Japanese behavior, attitudes, and way of life. 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.

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.

While the book is very stimulating and can be profitably read by students of things Japanese as well as by the general public, it gives the impression of being an intellectual analysis with undue emphasis upon uniformity of behavior and too great reliance upon the social code as the sole determinant of human attitudes and conduct. Moreover, this presentation of Japanese traits is perhaps truer of feudal days than of recent years. Through decades of contact with the western world, the Japanese way of life has become too complex to be fully explained by reference to its traditional code of behavior.

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As a sequel to the "treacherous" cataclysm of December 7, 1941, in Hawaii, the status of the Japanese in and out of continental U.S.A. has revealed polarization of attitudes. Swing from the fear of "yellow peril"