tal (in all of the forms mentioned above), it is most doubtful whether any
country in Asia could make significant progress in the foreseeable future.
The Report lists among the “existing sources of outside aid” governments,
business, voluntary and philanthropic organizations, the various com-
misions and organs of the United Nations, the International Bank for Re-
construction and Development, and the International Monetary Fund. The Re-
port suggests the relative roles which these various agents are apt to play, but
is unable to indicate the extent to which they may be expected to participate
in the reconstruction and development of Asia. Of course, this point is of vital
importance: in their activity (or inactivity) governments will continue to be
influenced by political considerations and business by profit motives, while
the United Nations commissions and organs lack means and the interna-
tional financial agencies are restricted by their specific functions, which may
not be well suited to meet the needs of the area.

Neither can much be expected from the “Economic Commission for Asia
and the Far East”, organization of which is the basic recommendation of the
Report. In contrast to the Economic Commission for Europe, which has been
given well-defined functions and powers for the integration and operation of
resources and facilities, the proposed Economic Commission for Asia and
the Far East will be primarily an organ of research and information with
purely advisory functions of coordination. Apart from political considera-
tions and problems, this distinction may be attributed to the differences be-
tween the economic structures of Europe and Asia. The former is an eco-
nomic unit containing the basic materials, means and organization neces-
sary for its reconstruction, while the latter lacks unity and is dependent upon
outside sources for the technical and financial means required for its recon-
struction and development.

The Report closes on a practical note, recommending a field survey of the
devastated areas with which it is concerned and which the Working Group
in charge of the preparation of the Report did not have an opportunity to
visit.

Washington, D.C., April 1947

Frank M. Tamagna

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword. By Ruth Benedict. Boston:
Houghton, Mifflin. 1946. pp. 324. $3.00.

It must be said at the outset that this is the most important con-
temporary book yet written about Japan. Here, for the first time, is a serious
attempt to explain why the Japanese behave as they do.
Book Reviews

Miss 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.

In normal circumstances no one would think of writing a serious book of this nature without first spending a considerable time observing at first hand the actual behaviour of the people concerned. The war made this impossible in the present case; and while, unlike most parts of the world in which anthropologists normally choose to work, the literature concerning Japan is enormous, this does not altogether compensate for actual contact, which makes it possible to check theories against observed behaviour. Miss Benedict did, however, have one advantage in that she was able to obtain a great deal of information from the many United States citizens of Japanese ancestry resident in America, to whom she expresses her gratitude. It is particularly pleasant to be able to note this because these people, at the beginning of the war, were given an exceptionally raw deal by the United States government.

The author herself is well aware of the handicap under which this book has been prepared; and while she would, I think, have modified some of her views in other circumstances, the real wonder is not that this book leaves some matters unexplained, but that it is as complete and convincing as it is. The Chrysanthemum and the Sword is, in point of fact, a complete triumph for Miss Benedict’s particular method of approach: it is obvious that it “works”, and the sceptics must admit defeat.

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.

Miss 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. A man’s indebtedness (on) is not virtue; his repayment is. Virtue begins when he dedicates himself actively to the job of gratitude."

Arising out of on is the reciprocal obligation of giri. Giri itself is of two kinds: first of all that which one owes to the world and secondly that which is
due to oneself. In the first category are such matters as duties to a liege lord; duties to affinal family; duties to non-related persons. What Miss Benedict calls "Giri-to-one's own name", which is a Japanese version of die Ehre, includes such things as the duty to clear one's reputation of insult or imputation of failure, i.e., the duty to carry on a feud or vendetta; one's duty to admit no professional failure or ignorance; and finally, one's duty to fulfil the Japanese proprieties, e.g., observing all respect behaviour, not living above one's station in life, curbing all displays of emotion on inappropriate occasions, and so on.

Miss Benedict takes each of these categories of required behaviour in turn and explains how together they are responsible for the formation of the complete pattern. This part of the book is inevitably difficult to read, but it repays the closest study because, once the reader has grasped the general principles, he can attempt in his own mind to forecast how the Japanese would behave in any given situation; and in the majority of cases he will be so nearly right as makes no matter.

There are one or two minor points in which Miss Benedict seems not quite accurate, particularly in her references to homosexuality. It is, for example, not correct to state that "Japanese are especially shocked at adult passive homosexuals in the United States", since this particular inversion is extremely common among Kabuki actors. Nor are male geisha necessarily homosexual.

My only real criticism of this book, and it is more a criticism of anthropological methods in general, is that in order to support her thesis Miss 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 my own experience in Japan since the war leads me to believe that 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.

In conclusion there remains only to add that every responsible official at present serving with the Allied occupation army in Japan should be made to read this book. Such mistakes as are being made are almost entirely due to the American inability to see things from the Japanese point of view and tendency to judge everything by their own standards. This is a very normal and natural reaction since the average person is not a trained anthropologist. Now that this remarkable guide has been made available, we can at least hope that it will be read and re-read by all those whose duty takes them to Japan; used intelligently, it provides nearly all the answers.

London, January 1947

John Morris