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# KYOTO LECTURES

Tuesday, January 26th, 18:00h

**Pauline Kent**  
***The Chrysanthemum  
and the Sword***  
A relic of the past?

SPEAKER

*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is now often relegated to the pile of quaint or exotic studies on the society of Japan. However, ever since its first publication in English (1946) and Japanese (1948) it has never been out of print and, recently, has enjoyed a renaissance as it has been translated into many more languages. The book itself was the product of, not only wartime studies, but also the social and professional background of its author, Ruth Benedict. Benedict, one of the pioneers of cultural anthropology, introduced a number of new ideas and methods during her studies on cultures. Ironically, her rejection of racial determinism and attempts to demonstrate the relativity of cultures has led to criticism of her own studies as culturally deterministic. There are now many (often uncritical) criticisms of both *Chrysanthemum* and Benedict, but this talk will try to elucidate some of the background surrounding the continuing success of the book, which, in its latest reincarnation, has recently enjoyed much popularity in China.

**Pauline Kent** teaches at the Faculty of Intercultural Studies, Ryukoku University, Japan. She is presently Director of the Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Ryukoku University. Publications on Benedict include "Misconceived Configurations of Ruth Benedict: The Debate in Japan over *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*", in *Reading Benedict/Reading Mead: Feminism, Race, and Imperial Visions* (Johns Hopkins Press, 2004); and "*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*: The use of radical comparisons to enhance mutual understanding" (Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies Working Paper 33, 2008).

**This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room, 1st floor).**

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